

WHITEFIELDS

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STONES THAT TELL STORIES

A GOI missionary learns a powerful and resonant lesson from her young student.

By Jane Dong

TALKING FAITH AT WORK

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Knocked Askew

Two signs hang precariously on a street in Beirut. Moments before, an enormous explosion rocked through the entire city, shattering windows and rattling apartments even hundreds of kilometers away. By the following day, the apparent toll would become more clear: over 137 dead, 5000 wounded, and over 300,000 people displaced from their homes.

The Lord has a way of knocking our lives askew with explosions large and small. Some explosions are literal, some are figurative, but all shift our circumstances in such a way that challenge some of the things we thought we knew. Who is the Lord? Who are we? And what does it all mean? In this issue, we explore some of the ways the Lord disrupts our

circumstances and understandings of what it means to follow Him. We also share testimonies of some of what God is doing in the midst of disruption, and offer some helpful insights as to how God can use you at work to speak life into colleagues who are undergoing disruption.

We may find our lives have been rattled and knocked about, but one thing we know: our solid Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, remains unshakable through the ages. GOI's partners in Lebanon root themselves into this truth as they seek to help the people of Lebanon and share the gospel with them. May we know it as well as we respond to God's call wherever we may be.

Chris Chu
07 August 2020



THE LITTLE STONE THAT SPEAKS

Stephen, a participant in the "Wings of Dream" discipleship and entrepreneurial training program, displays stones he painted to sell as souvenirs. Photo by Jane Dong.



Jane Dong is a GOI missionary serving in Uganda with her husband Joshua and their five children. Together, they serve as the directors of GOI's affiliate, Gospel Operation Africa (GOA).

By Jane Dong

“Whom amongst you has the best penmanship?” Everyone pointed to Steven and asked him to write on the bulletin board of the “Wings of Dream” fellowship. Steven is one of the students who graduated from high school this year. He is usually quiet, but surprisingly, he is also the best competitor in boxing class after Saturday fellowship. I asked him the other day, “Is there any news from your job search?” He shook his head, he hasn’t even had a chance to haul cargo at the docks. (Stephen used to go to the docks every day to see if there are any containers. If he has the opportunity to haul cargo, he can earn \$2.50 USD a day.) Whenever Stephen is not working, he comes to the ministry center. Pastor Winston asks him to come over and read “The Purpose-Driven Life.” I asked Stephen, “Would you like to try painting stones? I will provide paint for you. Help yourself to the stones in the ministry center’s garden, paint whatever you want.”

Steven dreams of studying art in university. First he must take his A-levels, a standardized test high school students take upon graduation. High A-level scores could qualify Steven for a scholarship. If he cannot get a scholarship, he will have to work and save money for tuition and

"When Stephen speaks of perseverance in the face of difficulties, I feel that he is mature beyond his years."

living expenses. Unfortunately, it's very difficult for high-school graduates in Uganda to find a stable job. Steven's family of ten originally lived in a slum in Kampala. His father was a security guard, his mother sold tomatoes, and Steven was the third child out of eight siblings. Dad was a Muslim and opposed him going to church, but Steven became a Christian after joining a choir. Seven years ago, his father had cholera. Because there was no money to treat the illness, Steven's mother took his father and other brothers and sisters back to the countryside. Steven stayed in Kampala by himself, living at the school apart from his family, in order to take his elementary school entrance exam. That year, he was 15 years old.

They later told me that my dad passed away three days after returning to the country. That day my mother asked my sister to fetch water for dad. By the time she returned with the water, dad was gone." Stephen's tears fell as he remembered losing his father seven years ago. "I loved my dad so much, and my dad also loved me very much. Whenever I milked the animals back in the village, Dad gave me the first cup of milk. They didn't notify me when my dad died. When I finished taking the exam, they just told me that he was buried. I asked why they didn't tell me. They said that they didn't want to affect my exams." Steven lowered his head and continued to paint his stones.

Steven hopes to earn a little bit of money by painting stones and selling them, wanting to save enough for his travel expenses to go back to the countryside and see his family. He also hopes to share his faith through the words he writes on the stones. Steven showed me a set of stones on which he painted, "Alpha & Omega". He believes that God will help us face the



difficulties of life, because God is the first and the last. When Stephen speaks of perseverance in the face of difficulties, I feel that he is mature beyond his years. Steven experienced the passing of his loved ones, experienced loneliness, and earned money to survive through his own hard work. Steven said that God has been helping him through different people, and Steven is very grateful. I asked him why he painted the Chinese flag. Steven



(Left) Rev. Joshua and Jane Dong serve as the directors of Gospel Operation Africa, the Ugandan affiliate of Gospel Operation International. Photo by Winston Mukasa. (Top and bottom) Different stones painted by Stephen for sale as souvenirs. One of the goals of the "Wings of Dream" discipleship program is to develop leadership skills and entrepreneurial initiative in its participants. Photos by Jane Dong.

smiled and said, "I like it, and I am grateful to the people in your country for always helping me." Seeing him holding the red stone, I said, "You should always pray for our country. Give this stone to the teacher who teaches you Chinese language, she will like it very much."

The day after I finished talking with Steven, the morning news reported that Uganda had recorded the first confirmed case of coronavirus. Schools and churches had to be closed for at least one month. Ten hours later, the entire country was closed off and everyone was prohibited from entering or leaving Uganda. The day before lockdown would be the last time we would gather for worship for the foreseeable future. In these times, everyone in the world is going through the same thing with similar concerns in our hearts. The home I share with my family is very safe; our children have fun, eat, and study online. But what we are most worried about is that the virus will appear in the Kampala slums, where there are super-dense communities, overlapping mud houses, open sewage ditches, and no running water. How is someone supposed to wash their hands for 20 seconds? How are they supposed to share about their feelings of isolation with others? One month after lockdown, will the children of our "Wings of Dream" fellowship be okay?

As Steven reminded me, "He is the first and he is the last." All of this is in God's hands.

PROFILE WINSTON MUKASA



Pastor Winston Mukasa is a mission co-worker of Gospel Operation Africa (GOA), GOI's field affiliate in Uganda, and works with the GOA team to disciple at-risk youth in the slums of Kampala through the "Wings of Dream" discipleship and leadership training program. He is Ugandan by descent, born in Nairobi, and has served the Lord as a pastor and missionary in multiple nations. In addition to being a pastor, Winston is also a prolific musician and writer. His music can be found in multiple places, including at SoundCloud at <https://soundcloud.com/winstonmukasa>.

Winston, can you tell our readers about yourself?

My name is Winston Mukasa, I am the last born in a family of six. I was born in Nairobi-Kenya to Ugandan parents. I was raised by a single mother who I will forever cherish for her love and teachings, which still impact my life up until today. I am a missionary and my assignment is to raise up the next generation of young people. I love traveling, reading, hiking, sightseeing, networking, and music. Music is life! Let's have black tea together at any time of the day. I would love to talk with you and get to know you!

How did your first come to work with GOI/GOA?

I would say my coming to GOI/GOA is a divine encounter. Surely the Good Shepherd led me here today. When the year 2020 began, my plans were to work towards using my music to come alongside initiatives that are transforming the lives of young people, especially young

teenage pregnant mothers. I was busy making plans with people and companies to get sponsorships so that we could have a benefit concert mid-year, and also traveling back and forth from Nairobi, Kenya to help my friend launch a youth church called Collective Worship. In the mornings I would go running in Kampala by a certain route, and in the evenings I would take walks by the same route, and each time I passed by the GOA mission center. God was telling me that I needed to go meet up with Josh and Jane (the GOI

field workers who lead GOA) to ask them about GOA. The day I finally listened to God, drove to the center and had a conversation with Josh and Jane, there was a connection. When I first spoke to the Ugandan students supported by GOA, I felt confirmation ministering with GOA's students was what I was born to do. Initially, I thought I would serve part-time with GOA because of my other plans. Little did I know that I would fall in love with the Wings of Dream community. This assignment could not be part-time; it had

A group of girls gather at the GOA mission center once a week for group devotions, praying together pray for GOA's operations in Uganda, the country as a whole, and the parts of the world affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo by Winston Mukasa.



(Left) Carol Apecho is a graduate of GOA's Wings of Dream program, who was previously sponsored by GOA supporters. Today, she studies social work at Makerere University, while caring for her sisters Rita, a high school student, and Evelynne, is taking a gap year before beginning university studies. Photo by Winston Mukasa.

"It is encounter with Christ that will lead the younger generation into action."

to be full-time! When I felt like doubting my decision, God helped me remember that He had been continuously reminding me back in the summer of 2019 that He would show me where I was to go. Since then I have always known that God brought me to GOA/GOI to be part of developing the next generation of transformational leaders.

God has given me the most incredible ministry partners in Rev. Josh and Jane Dong. I am grateful for the trust we have in each other, and I cannot wait for what the future holds for us here and beyond. All I can say is "Soli Deo Gloria."

What are some ways you are seeing God move through GOA?

Jehovah Jireh has been using us as His hands and feet to help provide for the local community's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am so grateful for the generous Christians who are supporting

the work and the provision. That's God right there. God has also been giving our ministry favor with key people in government and different organizations. We serve uniquely in slum communities where staying healthy can be a challenge for residents and for those of us who go there to serve. Praise God, we have been healthy. It is only by God's grace. We have heard and have been saddened by some deaths in our community recently, but we are truly thankful that we ourselves are still standing and alive.

What do you hope to see God do in the next 10-20 years?

I see God developing a new generation of transformational leaders across Africa who are authentic disciples of Jesus Christ, and whose influence will go beyond national borders to the ends of the earth. I desire to see young people mentoring, encouraging and cheering each other on to set a pace that they have envisioned for themselves.

We know 75% of Africa is made up of young people. I desire the gospel to go to these young people so that they will have their own personal encounter with Christ. It is encounter with Christ that will lead the younger generation into action, that they might participate in transformational change that is catered for their surroundings. I desire to see them become part of God's story as they pursue their different giftings and dreams as co-laborers within Uganda, and internationally. A passionate crop of next-generation transformational leaders would desire to further the gospel within our own communities, our own countries, and throughout the world. I long to see young Africans sold out to the Great Commission, equipped and ready to bring the gospel all over the world. I desire to see GOA as their sending platform.

I dream of seeing different mission centers emerge in West Africa, North Africa and Southern

Africa, and I sense that GOA will become that platform for many young innovators and dreamers. We can become a networking hub for solution providers and a resource center for many trades of life for equipping, training and empowering our communities. It will be great to see cooperation and collaboration between kingdom-minded next-generation African leaders who see, dream, and think the same. I would love to see them foster dialogues, supporting each other to have a lifestyle of sustainable continuity of God's agenda here on earth.

What are some projects you are working on in your own personal ministry that you can share about?

For now, it's mainly music and writing that I do in my free time. I want to model what I desire to inspire young people towards, using one's gifts and talents, knowing that when we are faithful with what God has given us, He opens more doors of





(Previous Page and Top Left) GOI's COVID-19 Relief Fund was used in part to provide charcoal, a necessary cooking fuel for many in Uganda. (Top Right) A student signs to receive emergency support to sustain her family through the quarantine. (Bottom Right) Jenny comes to the GOA center once a week to learn guitar and practice. Her parents attend the Chinese church, and her mother teaches Chinese to local students.
Photos by Winston Mukasa.



impact and influence. In this way, we can learn more about God and ourselves through our testimony, and God can use that to write a greater story for His glory.

Within this year and next year. I want to be able to finish recording three albums one will be a praise and worship album called Desert Worship Project. The album is dedicated to anyone that finds themselves at the crossroads of life. We want the listener to know that God is still concerned about them and is reaching out to provide direction because of the love he has for all his children. The first single, "Father God," is my personal testimony about how I found a Father in our God. It will be out by early November. The second album will be a world fusion album called Kilungi (So Good) Project. Our goal is to encourage listeners and remind us that we can all do something to restore

the earth back to its place of goodness. The last project is an album would be for the students at GOA's center titled The Wings of Dream Album.

I am also compiling my reflections. "Feeding your Faith" is the first small booklet I plan to publish to encourage people on their journey to be tenacious. Life is a marathon, not a sprint. There's another book that was birthed out of the So Good Project called "Create goodness." This speaks into the idea I live by that if we want to be able to create goodness on the outside of ourselves, it has to be a product of the goodness already existing within us.

What are ways that people can be praying for GOA and Uganda?

Pray for us that God will lead us to the right networks of people that will give us access for the gospel to the community here

in Uganda. Pray that God would mobilize and set apart the right team for His work in this season and beyond.

Pray for our people's mindsets to be receptive to what God is leading us into. Pray that we would all be open to what he is calling us into.

Pray for unity for everyone at GOA, our supporters and and people who come to serve with us. Pray for favor within the local communities and other grounds God will open up in the future.

Pray that God would prepare the right teams to come visit GOA's center, especially in the coming years once the pandemic lifts.

TALKING FAITH

7 Steps to Having Respectful Faith Discussions at Work

AT WORK

Sue Warnke is the Senior Director of Engineering Content for Salesforce Inc., and the Communications Chair of Faithforce Global, Salesforce's Faith Diversity Employee Resource Group. She is a speaker and avid blogger whose work can be found at her blog, Leanership. (<http://www.leanership.org/home>)

By Sue Warnke

Christians know that our core mission is to "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). Yet many companies have a "no proselytizing" policy. So how do we reconcile that apparent conflict? How does one "make disciples" without "proselytizing"? Find out in these seven steps.

Krispy Kreme, Trader Joes, Lululemon, and Costco all have something in common. They have almost zero advertising budget. Why? Simply put: they don't need it. People come to them. These companies are following a "pull" vs. "push" marketing model. Something about them pulls customers in, so they don't have to push advertising out. And that's my strategy when it comes to sharing my faith at work. Rather than pushing my views, I hope my behavior pulls people in who are interested in talking about faith, without annoying those who aren't. Here's that model.

Step 1: Out yourself

The first step in a "pull" model is actually a "mini push." As soon as I can, I have to "out myself" as a person of faith. Why? Because in order for people to want to have a faith chat with me, they first have to know that I am someone who has faith chats. Put another way, a store needs to at least put up a sign if it expects to get any customers. People need to know that you're a Christian and that you're open for business—the business of faith conversations.

We make other fundamental facts known about ourselves when we meet people, like if

we're married, are allergic to peanuts, or have two-year-old twins. It may seem self-serving, but it's a compassionate way to help the other person identify common ground ("Oh, I have twins, too!"). Work your Christianity in naturally like you work in other big facts when you meet someone new. You can do this by simply mentioning church, wearing a cross, or talking about a faith-based volunteer event. Then pivot.

Step 2: Ask "you" questions

As soon as you can, pivot the conversation to the other person. In hundreds of these faith chats over the past couple of years, I've found that the vast majority of people really do want to talk about faith. They've been mulling over the topic for years in some way or another, and they're relieved to finally find a safe landing place for their thoughts. Provide that opportunity by simply and directly asking them about their faith.

This is my all-time favorite opener: "What's your faith background? How did you grow up?" I ask these back-to-back, as if they're a single question. The person pauses, perks up, and then begins. It may be the first time anyone has asked them this, and certainly the first time at work. Here's what's happening. Since I'm asking about their "background" instead of their current beliefs, the topic is unthreatening. And the words "grow up" trigger specific childhood memories, which gives them instant content to share. And share they do, regardless of whether the memory is good or bad. Think about it: We enjoy gushing about good memories, but we

also enjoy venting about bad ones. If I ask you, "What was your best restaurant experience?" you'll eagerly relive this happy time. But you'll light up just as much if I ask, "What was your worst restaurant experience?" Venting is cathartic, especially when we find a sympathetic ear. Either way, these questions get to the heart of where they're at on their faith journey in a matter of minutes.

But here's the thing. When asking these questions, you must, with everything in you, mean it. Ask with absolute sincerity or don't ask at all. Asking simply to pivot the conversation to your position is manipulative. This dialog is now entirely, wholeheartedly, and profoundly about them. You are a servant, not a teacher, and this is holy ground. Treat the next few minutes with tremendous care. You are now on the clock for God.

Step 3: Be fascinated

The best business advice I've ever received was from a sales mentor a few years ago. One morning she and I were driving together to a big sales meeting at a gaming company in Silicon Valley. I was terrified that I didn't know the business well enough, wringing my hands as she drove. At a red light, she turned to me and said: "Sue: Never forget this. Your job is to be fascinated. Not fascinating. It's not about you." The light turned green, and she stepped on the gas.

These conversations are never about us. It doesn't matter how intelligent we think we are, how cleverly we turn a phrase, or how

much scripture we know. This dialog, this precious conversation, is 100% about the other person. Be fascinated in whatever they tell you. If they say they hate Christianity? Be fascinated. If they say they've never thought much about faith? Be fascinated. If they say they are devoted followers of a different faith? Be fascinated.

Whatever they tell you, remember that they are sharing their heart when they don't have to. That makes this moment a gift. They've handed you a seedling, a piece of themselves, and they're watching like a hawk to see what you'll do with it. One wrong move (like bragging, defending your position, or pushing your opinion), and you'll stomp on that seedling, possibly for good.

Shepherd it. Care about it. Protect it. And then move with absolute reverence to the next step: Watering.

Step 4: Water the conversation

Watering feeds a plant and helps it grow. Yes, you can and should be sharing about yourself, but the goal of that sharing is not for you to consume their empathy or attention. The goal is still completely to nourish them. They're looking for evidence that you've seen their seedling and that you're going to protect it rather than ignore it, as others have done. You may be the first person in their life to ever sincerely ask about their faith and likely the first to treat their answer with reverence. Water it. Be fascinated. Mean what you say. This is your chance to demonstrate what "Jesus-love" feels, looks, and sounds like.



Photo by H Ng Nguy on Unsplash

And it sounds like this:

Mirror what they've told you: "So it sounds like you were under a lot of pressure."

Ask a follow up question: "How did that impact you?"

Name the emotion you're sensing: "Wow, that must have felt isolating," or "Wow, your parents sound amazing. You must miss that."

Now they're really feeling loved. A perfect time to pivot to Jesus, right? Nope.

Step 5: Pivot to Jesus?

Not in the workplace. That is, I don't drive that pivot. If and only if the other person leads the conversation in that direction do I go there. They drive that critical step, not me. I can't

emphasize enough how important this is. If they don't ask or show interest in your faith, then keep the conversation on them. Ask questions. Be fascinated. Love them. You'll get farther by reflecting Jesus and thereby pulling people to Him than by attempting to push Him on them. We don't want others pushing their faith on us when we haven't asked for it. Neither do they. They know you're a Christian from Step 1. Give them love, and they'll feel Him. Ask questions, and they'll hear Him. Honor them, and they'll see Him. Then they'll want to come back to you: to feel, hear, and see more.

"God will multiply even the little nuggets. Give them a bite and let them ask for more."

Give them love, and they'll feel Him. Ask questions, and they'll hear Him. Honor them, and they'll see Him. And if they do ask about your faith, by all means "give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). Be prepared with a specific, relatable story, like a time you felt overwhelmed and how prayer changed something. Then explain how the story relates to something Jesus did or said. Speak scripture out loud, but don't overwhelm them with it. God will multiply even the little nuggets. Give them a bite and let them ask for more.

Step 6: Pray?

Sometimes. If they're struggling, and they're not in my reporting chain, I might say something like: "This might sound strange, but I pray

when I'm stressed. Would you like a 30-second prayer?" Why do I not say this to people in my reporting chain? Because a reporting chain represents a power dynamic. Asking faith questions puts people who are in that chain into a compromising position. They may feel pressured to say yes to your question, regardless of how they really feel. Compromising the psychological safety of a direct report violates our fundamental purpose as managers. Tread carefully with anyone in your direct chain. Pray if they ask for it. Follow their lead.

For everyone else, make a call in the moment, trusting God's leading. Always ask for permission. Most people eagerly accept and gratefully receive a short prayer. I offered to pray recently for a top executive in the midst of a crisis. "Lord, thank you for my brother. Such a burden he carries. Remind him how absolutely loved he is. This very day, I ask you to lift the weight of this from his shoulders and replace it with peace. Clarify the path and help him move forward. In Jesus's name. Amen." He lifted his head slowly and said that that was exactly what he needed to hear.

Step 7: Make yourself available

Let folks know that you're open to chatting about faith at any time. Actually say that: "If you ever want to talk about faith or religion or anything, just reach out." People who've connected with something I've written about or spoken on often contact me to chat, so I've started blocking time in the early mornings for "faith office hours." I prioritize these meetings above nearly anything else. Want to book one? Just ping me on LinkedIn. So far, God fills them

at just the right pace. But you don't have to set up office hours to let people know they can "talk faith" with you. Just remind them in subtle ways whenever it seems appropriate. Remember that you're in the business of "faith chats." Remind people as needed, and they'll think of you when they're ready.

Bonus Step: Say "I love you."

I was a guest speaker last year in an MBA class at Stanford, asked to speak about religious diversity in the workplace. As I was speaking, it became clear to me that the main thing I was supposed to tell these ambitious, intelligent, tenacious future CEOs at the top business program in the world was this: "This may sound crazy, but I actually love you. Each of you. That

is what faith means for me. It changes the way I see everything and everyone." I was the tenth and final speaker that semester. They had heard from CEOs, top community leaders, best-selling authors, and business experts. Weeks later, as the professor sorted through student feedback about the class, he emailed me, floored: "The thing they kept mentioning," he said, "was when you said you loved them. They believed you." Several students pinged me on LinkedIn after that class and set up faith chats with me.

We don't need to push our faith on others. But we can ask, and listen, and offer our time. We can stand unashamedly in who we are and offer a kind of love that kneels in absolute reverence for who they are. How would Jesus talk about faith at work? One word, I think: Respectfully.



Photo by Toa Héftiba on Unsplash

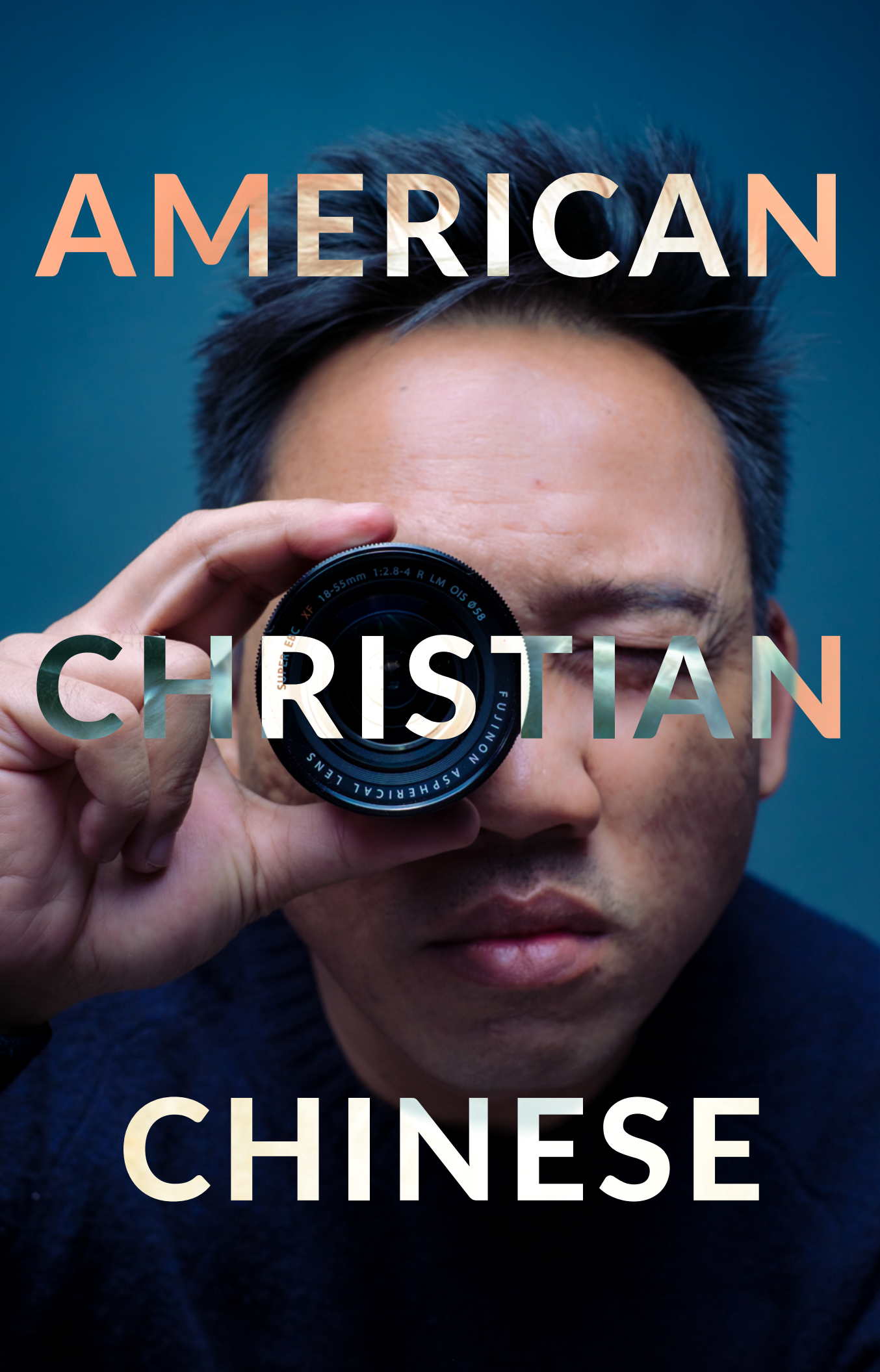


Photo by Yoel Peterson on Unsplash

David Chiu is a guest contributor. He is a Chinese-American Christian in his 30s who grew up in New York City, became a Christian in high school, and offers his own personal reflections on his faith journey. He currently lives on the East Coast of the USA with his wife and their newborn son.

By David Chiu

What does it mean for me to be Chinese and Christian in America? To answer the question, one might start by first asking what it means to be Chinese in America, which for myself is not a straightforward question.

I knew I was different than my American classmates early on. The food I brought to school was never quite right. It was hard to explain the red Chinese sausages my parents packed for me. It was hard to not be ridiculed for foods that looked and smelled different. I breathed a sigh of relief when I became another kid who just got lunch from the school cafeteria. However, there were other things too. My off-brand budget crayons were never quite the right color. My hand-me-down clothes never had quite the right styles, colors, lengths or newness that the clothes of some my American classmates wore. My classmates never wanted to share the snacks my parents would buy from Chinese supermarkets. One time, we had a class assignment to bring in different Italian pasta shapes to decorate a picture frame. My parents would give me Chinese flat noodles instead. Needless to say, my decorations weren't quite as nice as my classmates' fun shapes.

I couldn't name it at the time, but in retrospect I felt a deep shame from an early age about not being "American." I saw how my family lived, ate and thought, and I saw all the ways it was different than that of my classmates, and I very quickly tried to hide anything that made me different.

By the time I arrived in high school, I had become so used to dissociating from my Chinese identity that I generally forgot that I was Chinese unless someone pointed it out. I became a Christian in high school and never thought twice about the cultural framework from which Christianity was explained to me.

I was taught the basic tenets of the Christian faith; I was taught that sin separated man from God, and that Jesus lived a sinless life, died on a cross in my place and was resurrected on the third day to save my soul, and that I should now spread this news to anyone who doesn't know it. These concepts were not hard to understand, however, unbeknownst to me, the cultural way I was taught to live out my Christian life was very much detached from my authentic self. My discipleship journey of what it meant to live out the Christian calling in my

“The language of individual moralism did not speak my family's language of service and commitment to family.”

life was not primarily taught from a place of what it meant to practically represent Christ in my relationships. It was primarily taught from a place of knowledge acquisition, learning head knowledge about how sin is defined and how we must avoid it. Sin was taught to me in the context of American individualism, almost never in the context of the collective community. The sin that was emphasized was mostly what would be considered American social vice: substance abuse, alcohol, sex, lying, cheating, and stealing among others. Scarce were the mentions of sins of omissions regarding how we must act in the face of structures that contribute to poverty, economic injustice, and the treatment of the disadvantaged in society, or even how we are to address consumeristic and materialistic mindsets.

My faith felt like a set of expectations through which I felt I needed to live up to and put on in order to be accepted, similar to how I felt about fitting into American culture. Evangelism to my own family was hard, because the language of individual moralism did not resonate with my family's language of service and commitment to family. I didn't fully understand my feelings at

the time, but I couldn't shake the feeling that the evangelism methods I was taught to use and the words I used to talk about my faith felt foreign, and did not represent the experience I would have shared from my own life.

I had become adjusted to American culture, and lucky enough to have not personally experienced prejudice or racism, so I initially found it hard to understand the discussions around race and identity in the larger American discourse. But as I continued to engage in learning and discussing these issues, I began to wrestle with my own experience of adapting to "American" culture and values, while subjugating my own values and experiences. Up until this point, I assumed that the dominant "American" culture in my experience was a generic, universal American culture, as opposed to a particular form of American culture that came from a particular experience. As I learned more about who Jesus was in the Hebrew context, I started to see differences between the values of Jesus and the peculiar "American" values that had been taught to me as Christian values. Reflecting on what it means to follow Christ outside of the particular American framework I was taught has allowed



Photo by Zhang Kaiyv on Unsplash

me to reconsider my own authentic experience and identity, as opposed to the identity I felt I needed to put on to be acceptable.

My non-Christian parents spoke a language of love and meaning through acts of sacrifice for the family. I remember the years of inner turmoil, as I struggled to express the saving faith of Jesus to my parents through the language of individual moralism. My parents would have none of it. As I began to embrace other cultural lenses of understanding Jesus,

the ways by which I've shown my family who Jesus have changed as well – not by demanding that they must be a particular kind of person, but by modeling how Jesus shows up for the community in acts of service and humility. When I realized this, I began to serve my family by taking on work in the family business in a time of my family's need, in addition to meeting the demands of my own full-time job. Incredibly, I heard my father say, "I wish your sisters would go to church as well."



Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

"Jesus shows up for the community in service and humility."

As I gained a better understanding of the ways by which the Christianity I was raised in was embedded in a culture foreign to my own, I felt more able to engage with Jesus from my authentic experience as a Chinese-American. While I'm still discovering what that might look like, I have at least begun to see that Christianity can also be centered around actions that promote relationship and community as opposed to one centered on knowledge and individual moralism. By understanding that the particular "American" cultural lens through which I first saw my Christian faith can be one of many cultural lenses to see through, I feel more able to engage with Jesus from my authentic experience as a Chinese American, as opposed to a Chinese American who was ashamed of the otherness my Chinese identity represented.



Eric Hsieh is a guest contributor who writes in honor of his friend Joyce Lin, a missionary pilot who served with Mission Aviation Fellowship. On May 12, 2020, Joyce gave her life flying COVID-19 rapid test kits to a remote clinic in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, when her plane malfunctioned over the waters of Lake Sentani.

Joyce Chaisin Lin would have turned 41 today, as I write this article, if she had survived her missionary flight to deliver COVID-19 supplies in Indonesia (Her May 12th crash was widely reported by Christianity Today, CNN, and the Washington Post). My image of her is frozen in time from our university days: a twenty-something young and vibrant, yet brooding, girl.

As the eldest of three daughters of Taiwanese immigrant parents, Joyce seemed to be the quintessential all-American girl. She loved the Denver Broncos of John Elway, played softball competitively, sang with perfect pitch, and imparted the most devastating of taekwondo flying side-kicks. She loved her family, and especially adored her kid sister Katy.

Joyce grew up in a family of strong Christian faith and served in the Air Force, but she was a feisty and independent-minded sister in Christ to the end. We had more than a few arguments over issues that were clouded by my "pig-headed chauvinism." While she never tolerated the latter, she had enough foresight to consult with wiser friends and come to her own conclusions about the former.

I met Joyce in the Air Force ROTC cadet corps while we were both college students at MIT. She had an abiding love of flight and once showed me one of her favorite childhood toys, a Gobot "Leader-1" which transformed from a robot into a remarkably accurate likeness of an F-15/EAGLE fighter jet. It was therefore not surprising that she would sign up for a vocation that combined her passion for flight and for



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God, once she discovered Mission Aviation Fellowship during her seminary days.

As her acquaintances in different circles discussed Joyce after her passing, joyful surprises surfaced about what she accomplished but never broadcasted. She was a woman of many talents, yet in spite of these talents, Joyce went humbly about her daily business. I think Joyce would've been embarrassed, even annoyed, by all of the media attention surrounding her passing. (I can imagine her frowning face even now!) Yet more people heard the Gospel through this tragedy than they would have otherwise. At a Zoom remembrance for her college fellowship, a friend poignantly shared how her young daughter decided to write about

Joyce for a school assignment when asked to write about someone they admired. Even in her passing, Joyce spread the Gospel in a way that made it tangible to the mind of a child.

"I cannot imagine how ugly I am to God without the cross of Christ," Joyce once told me. I think it's that genuine spiritual self-awareness of the human condition that drew her first to music, then to missions. She told me her favorite Christmas song was "O Holy Night," something I discovered during our college guitar jam sessions together. The words of the hymn testify to the truth of the gospel: "Long lay the world/In sin and error pining/Till He appeared/And the soul felt His worth." I still remember Joyce's haunting alto voice, at once

emotive and unique, that once sang for MIT's Christian acapella group. Now Joyce sings with the choir of angels, waiting to be heard again at the end of time.

God doesn't strong-arm His saints into missionary service. He speaks to willing hearts, which Joyce had. In an interview with MAF, Joyce pleaded with would-be missionaries that she would not recommend the life she had chosen to anyone unless it was a calling. God invites His saints to participate in the Great Commission through their interests, to the places where He wants them to be, even if there are great risks and sacrifices involved.

The Taiwanese-American Christian circle is a small one, especially for two people who attended the same college and were both in the Air Force ROTC program at the same time. Over the years I would sometimes meet someone and get the question, "Oh, do you know Joyce Lin?" Yes, I do. She was someone so immensely gifted and intensely God-centered that in so many ways she exuded every characteristic of the kind of person I hoped to be.

"God doesn't strong-arm His saints into missionary service. He speaks to willing hearts."

I never responded to her last email to me in which she said, "I still am a firm believer that God is sovereign in everything."

Yes, Joyce. Yes He is.

By Rev. Lawrence Fung,
International Director of GOI



Gospel Operation International missionary Helena Lee passed away in Brazil on August 3rd, 2020 from complications related to COVID-19.

Helena and Fanson Lee are our local missionaries in Brazil who helped pioneer evangelistic and church-planting work among Cantonese-speaking Chinese in São Paulo. Later, they set up a Chinese church in the suburban city of São Jose. For years, the Lees faithfully drove between two cities (about an hour apart) to minister to two different congregations and do other outreach work. Helena wrestled with kidney problems for many years and had to undergo dialysis on a daily basis. However, she maintained a joyful attitude and actively supported the church ministry in every way she could. She often made the long drive by herself after dialysis, especially during weekends, or whenever our short-term mission teams were in town. Everyone who met

Helena was touched by her joyful spirit and servant heart. She never complained about her health problems, but constantly made herself available to help others in every way she could.

Helena is greatly missed by all those who knew her and were blessed by her. We praise God for using Helena to touch so many lives. She is now at a much better place, without dialysis or any illness, but enjoying the eternal glory in the presence of our Heavenly Father. But on earth, it is definitely not easy for her husband, our brother Fanson, who lost a cheerful wife and great helper. Pray that God will comfort him and his children with the assurance of His own presence and promise.

Our global GOI family grieves with the Lee family in mourning the death of our beloved sister. May the presence and promise of our risen Christ remind us of our eternal hope in Him. We will see Helena again in heaven!



GIVING GOD *OUR* ZEAL

Photo by Jason Rosewell on Unsplash

Rev. Zenas Fung is a GOI homeland missionary serving cross-culturally on the West Coast of the USA. He is also a co-founder of Friends Ministry Inc., a community-based discipleship movement. Here he offers a darkly humorous, sometimes sad, but ultimately hopeful reflection on what public discourse can be like in the present moment.

By Rev. Zenas Fung

If 2020 has shown us anything, it is that zealotry is not lacking. People around the world are zealously protesting for and against issues everyday. While zealotry is commendable and good as it incites passionate action towards what is believed by each individual as good. Unfortunately, it is a double-edged sword. Conducted well – change occurs; conducted poorly – eyes of gracelessness towards our fellow man are developed.

Recently, I have found myself in the latter – zealotry that has led to a heart enraged by misconceptions of Christianity, often perpetuated by Christians themselves. My heart became fixated on correcting this issue by forcefully, gracelessly and mercilessly demanding the repentance of my ministry peers who seemed to lack desire or urgency to correct misconceptions and make clear the message that God is love. In my heart, I began to condemn them for allowing their congregations to wallow in their sin without proper perspective. My heart drowned in sorrow and sleeplessness, and my thoughts were filled with solo strategy sessions as to how to address the state of Christianity. Each day I girded myself to become a "keyboard commando" on social media, eager to "slay" heresy with every

“When we define relationship, we tend to use the word “love” which ...emphasizes the emotive component of the relationship. Does this understanding adequately describe our relationship with God?”

letter I typed. After weeks of fruitless struggle, I became disheartened and wary from what seemed to be an endless battle. Lost in my own melodrama, I stood on a pedestal boasting of my heap of winning comments. Yet my heart cried out, “God, what kind of ministry have you set me on?” In self-pity I asked, “Am I to be like Jeremiah – speaking the word of the Lord as no one will listen? Then Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land!” Assuming my new identity as a latter-day Jeremiah, I dove into the Scriptures to see how my life would ensue.

What I have found was that my zealousness led me astray. I was not Jeremiah by the ordination of God, but sadly, I was self-appointed and become self-righteous.

In Jeremiah 9:23-26 it says,

Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his

riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”

By God’s grace He convicted me that the battle was not for me to fight. Justice, righteousness, and steadfast love were His, and His alone! I am to do what He has commanded: to love Him first, and the second is like it, to love one another. My zealousness prohibited me from following the commandments that I had committed my life to when I became a follower of Jesus Christ. God revealed the truth that my heart did not



Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

truly sit under the banner of the sovereignty of God. Instead, I sat in the hubris of what I would do if I were God, fighting a self-righteous crusade. God's gentle reminder was a refreshing drink to my soul. Now, I praised Him for His mercy instead of asking for retribution on those whose beliefs I disagreed with.

As Jonathan Edwards said, “The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over [our] heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and

God’s mere will, that holds it back.” I pray that more people come to experience His love, but also that all of would to come under the banner of the sovereignty of God so that His love may be shown to all. I pray that our zealousness builds up and does not destroy, giving us eyes filled with grace and mercy towards our fellow man, instead of rage and gracelessness like I experienced. Let us heed the words of Paul to embark on a path of zealousness for God with the knowledge of His righteousness (Romans 10:2-4).



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