

# The Rhythm of Grace

by Mary Forsythe

## The Verdict

**"Mary, it's time."**

**I tried to gather my composure as I walked with my attorney to the defense table to hear the verdict to be returned against me—fifteen felony counts ranging from mail fraud to theft of government property.**

**I saw my parents sitting on the back row, and the look on their faces indicated that their hearts would crumble into a million pieces if I were found guilty.**

I was 31 years old, no longer their little girl, and my parents were powerless to help me. I watched the foreman hand my verdict to the judge who silently read its brief contents before handing it to the foreman who finally announced: "We the jury find the defendant, Mary Elizabeth Forsythe, guilty on all counts."

Nothing could have prepared me for what I heard next. My mother wailed from the pit of her soul. I screamed from the defense table, "Mother! Mother! It'll be all right! I promise you!" My attorney took my arm in an attempt to quiet me. I slumped into my chair, with fear, bitterness, and disbelief all raging inside me. Summoning enough strength

to send a visual hate message to those who convicted me, I gazed straight into the eyes of the judge and the jurors with a look of pure venom. In that moment, hatred inhabited me, and I despised the jurors and judge with a diabolic force.

The guilty verdict meant two things: my pharmacy would have to be closed, and I could be sentenced to as many as seven years in federal prison. At this point, I lapsed into my usual habit of denial. All I could think was I'm not a criminal! I didn't mean to do anything wrong! I didn't want to leave the career I loved, and I certainly didn't want to go to prison.

## The Downward Spiral

Although I grew up in a delightful, small town in the heart of western Kentucky, I longed for a life that was larger and busier than anything I had ever seen. After college, armed with my pharmacy degree and a passing score on my board exams, I landed a job in Dallas, Texas. Within a few years I had opened a sideline business as a pharmaceutical consultant and owned a small pharmacy in a medical clinic. During the late 1980s AIDS was the focus of much public attention, and my pharmacy was chosen as one of the official state dispensaries for the

drug AZT which had been released from experimental status and provided through state programs. Seeing AIDS patients every day gave me a vivid close-up glimpse into the impact of AIDS on a person's life, and every time someone thanked me, I seemed to forget the red-tape. Dealing with the paperwork was a bookkeeping nightmare, and my pharmacy often ended up with excess inventory. Problems occurred frequently enough to catch the careful eye of a state auditor. When three agents from the Texas Department of Health and Human Resources walked into my store and stated the purpose of their visit—to audit my inventory records, I knew I was indeed dealing with a serious offense.

### One Day

The period of time between the trial's end in June and the sentencing in October was a flurry of activity. I lost myself in the process of closing the pharmacy and wondering what to do next. The sentencing, a process that would forever alter my life, only lasted about 15 minutes. The judge pronounced a five-year sentence to be followed by three years of probation. The judge set the date and time I was to self-surrender at the federal women's prison in Benton, Texas: January 5, 1993, at 1:00 P.M.

I arrived at the federal women's prison at 12:30 P.M.—early for prison. Absolutely nothing could have made

me ready for what I experienced—the sudden and complete loss of freedom and the emotional tidal wave that hit when my identity was jerked away. I was no longer Mary, but 22490-077. As I completed the check-in process, the playing field was leveled. For so long, my possessions had defined my identity. Then suddenly, I had no more than anyone else. The only thing I had more of than anyone else was my arrogance. With my prison uniforms in hand, I suspected that I would soon have to change out of my civilian clothes. I survived the wretched strip search that terrible day—on the outside standing silently still, feeling the chill of the cool, prison air against my bare skin, but blazing inside with the heat of mortal embarrassment.

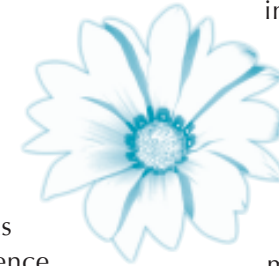
*I'm not a criminal!  
I didn't mean to do  
anything wrong!*

I stayed in a cramped first-floor cell in one of four dormitories that housed more than 800 inmates. In it were two sets of bunk beds, four industrial-grade lockers, a tiny table and a plastic chair. The bathroom was located several cells down the hall from mine and serviced about fifty women. Everything was so sparse, so harsh-looking. I knew it was prison; I knew it was designed for punishment and not for comfort, but still, I never anticipated living in conditions like these.

Within the first few days of my incarceration, I was assigned to work in the prison warehouse doing manual labor, lifting boxes and heavy bags of food from 7:30 A.M. until 3:30 P.M. with a 45-minute lunch break. I knew how to fill prescriptions and counsel patients, but I knew nothing about unloading trucks with a dolly and operating two kinds of forklifts. My job description also included mopping, painting, gathering and hauling trash, scrubbing stairs, cleaning out refrigerators, and cleaning restrooms. The boss, Mr. Isaacs, demanded everything be done his way, but I maintained my haughty attitude, doing precisely as Mr. Isaacs instructed, but silently criticizing him and resenting his authority.

### The Turning Point

My increasingly desperate circumstances in prison began to give birth to thoughts about God and to a longing to believe that He was involved in my everyday existence. By late January I felt a heaviness in my heart that I had never felt before. The arrogant, independent woman who had walked into Benton a few weeks earlier had become confused, desperate, and terribly frightened. One day I rolled out of my prison bunk and onto my knees—and with tears streaming down my face, I cried out with unprecedented brokenness in my heart, "God! I can't do it anymore! Help me!"



To my surprise, I heard a gentle voice whisper, "Mary, I have been waiting to hear you say that." In that moment, something happened deep within me. The heaviness lifted, and the confusion, fear, and pressure rolled off. Nothing in my external circumstances was different at all, but everything inside me changed radically.

The next day I attended a church service in the prison chapel. As we sang the profound and simple old song, "Jesus Loves Me," tears began streaming down my face. How many times I had sung that song as a child, but it had never affected me at all. This time it touched a tender place inside me. God had heard my cry. I was convinced He would indeed help me.

### Word and Spirit

The brand-new "me" began to ravenously desire the Word of God. It was as if God had deposited in me an unshakable conviction that the answers and direction I desperately needed were in the Bible. Even after years of church-going, I was only familiar with a few Bible stories. I knew nothing of individual verses or biblical principles or life-changing truths in the Book. One of the first verses that pricked my heart was John 8:32, which told me that the truth sets people free. I knew it was impossible to physically escape my environment, but the Bible said that I did not have to leave prison in order to experience true freedom, freedom on the inside.

Standing in my cell, I took my Bible in my hands and said, "Lord, this Book is either totally true, or it isn't true at all. If You will teach me how to live out of this Book, I'll do it—even in a place like this."

Shortly after praying that prayer, I stumbled across the verse of scripture that said we should love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us. My bitter hatred toward the judge, the jury, and the prosecuting attorneys who sent me to prison had not waned, and I knew exactly that the Lord wanted me to start the process of forgiving and blessing my enemies. At first, it was difficult to pray that God would bless them, but eventually, the attitude of my heart matched the words of my mouth. As I genuinely felt forgiveness and compassion for them, God released more freedom and peace to me.

### From the Inside Out

In the midst of my internal revolution, I began to see evidence of God all around me. He was actively involved in the daily grind of my life within the walls of a federal prison. He chose a true friend for me—a sweet-spirited Christian woman named Liz with whom I could share my deepest need and she with me. I felt that the Lord had called us to walk a portion of the prison journey together.



The Lord also intervened in my everyday circumstances by providing me with a strategically located cell—next to the mop closet. Even though the mop closet was filthy and smelly, it had a door—a precious barrier no one could see through. By now the Lord had healed me enough that I wanted to help others, and Benton was filled with women who needed someone with whom they could share the secrets of their hearts. The mop closet provided a safe environment in which we could share and pray. Over time, the Lord brought together a remnant—a beautiful mix of women of different cultures, backgrounds, ages, and experiences who became His passionate worshipers. The heart of our group was praying for people in positions of leadership and authority at Benton—the warden, the chaplain, and the guards. We also prayed for our fellow inmates at Benton because we understood better than anyone else the harsh realities of their lives.

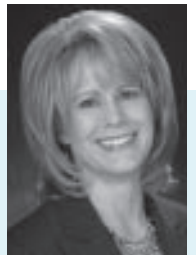
### My Last Days

In November, 1995, I was granted an overnight furlough—an opportunity to leave the prison compound on a Saturday morning and not return until the following evening. This brief venture outside of Benton forced me to declare that

I was far more institutionalized than I thought. Even though Benton was prison, it was where I lived. The same restrictions that made me feel like subhuman government property also formed a safety net that was familiar. I realized that freedom would require more faith and preparation than I ever imagined.

As I counted down the last months of my incarceration, I desperately needed the Lord's encouragement and strength. At 7:00 on my last night, women began to arrive for our final time together. I prayed for each one, and I asked them to continue doing for others what the Lord had done for them—to comfort those around them who were afraid, to pray for those who needed help, and to encourage those who were depressed. Then I took a bowl of water and a dingy prison towel, began removing work boots and socks, and washed feet—hurting feet, feet that were walking the uniquely painful path through prison. Later, emotionally and physically exhausted but profoundly grateful, I took my towel and my bowl and walked toward the dorm with Liz. We walked together to the top of the stairs where I turned one way and Liz the other. We did not give voice to the gut-wrenching goodbyes that lay within our hearts. It was one of those moments words would have ruined.

My time at the halfway house was not easy, but it did provide an opportunity for me to re-awaken to the outside world from which I had been severed for so long. I faced enormous change and challenge, but I knew God would not disappoint me. I left prison an entirely different woman than I had been when I arrived, thoroughly changed from the inside out. What wonders I had seen—and what a miracle I was! I had gone to prison and had been set free! 🦋



*Mary Forsythe is the founder and president of Kingdom Living Ministries, an international ministry that equips and encourages people to align their lives with God's purposes and to advance God's kingdom in every sphere of influence. To learn more about Mary's story, please go to [www.kingdomliving.com](http://www.kingdomliving.com).*

# Beyond DESTINY

by T. Gayle Lyconthuan Lee

## A Buddhist at Heart

My family's early beginnings were in China. Both my paternal and maternal grandfathers were Chinese who came to South Vietnam in 1900 when the ruling French colonial government encouraged Chinese to immigrate to Vietnam. After my parents got married and had three daughters, they began going to pagodas to pray for a son. When I was born, they named me Thuan, which means "the gods have consented." My grandmother and mother often took me across the river to the Buddhist pagoda for instruction by the monks.

During senior high school and university, my mathematical ability secured me a job at the National Institute of Statistics. In 1966, I received military orders and an assignment to teach mathematics at the National Military Academy in Dalat. At the academy, I encountered my first native English speakers—American military advisors who taught at the academy. Previously I had studied English, but I could not understand the Americans when they spoke, and they could not understand me. Then one Saturday morning, I spotted a young American man teaching English to some Vietnamese on the first floor of a row house. I asked to join his class and became his

*In that moment I lost all that I had held proudly — my country, my homeland, my family.*

student each weekend. My teacher, a Christian missionary named Jim, taught not only English conversation but also stories from the Holy Bible. One class discussion was about Jesus being "the way, the truth, and the life," but as a Buddhist, I thought this explanation was too narrow.

Later in 1968, I received a U.S. government scholarship to study statistics at the University of Texas in Austin. That same year my teacher Jim was living in Texas and he introduced me to a church near my school. The people at the church were very friendly and the music was beautiful, but, as a Buddhist, I was not interested in the Christian teaching. During my last year at the university, I became engaged to



Hong, a graduate student in business administration. After completing our degrees, we got married in Vietnam, in January 1972. Our son was born on December 30, 1972. We returned to the city of Dalat where I taught at the Military Academy, and my wife taught at a Catholic university.

## An Unknown Future

Our lives were blissful and happy until March 30, 1975, when everything changed drastically because of the advance of the North Vietnamese army. My wife and son

fled to Tay-ninh, while I went with the military to Saigon. A few days before April 30, I tried to bring my wife and son to Saigon, but I could not get through the Communists' line. On that fateful morning, the South Vietnamese government fell to Communist troops. Desperate and afraid, I jumped on a boat to get out of Saigon and left behind my wife, son, and parents. In that moment I lost all that I had held proudly—my country, my homeland, my family. My emotions were numb. My thoughts were incoherent. My will was shattered. My body ended up among the throngs of Vietnamese refugees, first in the Philippines, next on Wake Island, and finally at Ft. Chaffee Refugee Camp in Fort Smith, Arkansas. At this point in my life, I had nothing to anchor my life to. My past accomplishments meant nothing; I was alone and facing an unknown future.



### A Familiar Face

For almost three months in the camp I did not get a sponsor, even though I was a single man with an M.A. degree from an American university. I kept busy working as a volunteer in the camp office. One afternoon as I was walking back to my barracks, I approached a chapel on my right and saw an American man who looked familiar to me. When he saw me, he stretched out his hands and called my name, “Thuan!” I shouted back, calling his name, “Jim Gayle!” The name of my former teacher came to me, though I had not spoken it for six years!

Sitting in the office of the chapel, his first words to me were, “Thuan, I heard that you got married.” These words stabbed my heart because at that time, I had put my wedding ring in my wallet, resigned to be a single man again. But these words from my former teacher helped me put the ring back on my finger and dare to hope that some day I would be reunited with my wife.

Jim was working as a Vietnamese language interpreter in the refugee camp, and he offered to try to find a church to sponsor me as well as some scholarship money. To my amazement, two weeks later I was staying in the home of Pastor Bob Owens of Calvary Baptist Church and was accepted by Texas A&M University to work on a Ph.D. in statistics. The first Sunday I attended church and I responded to the altar call by the pastor. I wanted to show my gratitude to Jim and to the church that sponsored me out of the refugee camp by identifying myself as a Christian. So I, a Buddhist, was baptized and began living a nominal Christian life.

### Peace at Last

After a month, I moved into a trailer the church rented for me. The first weeks of adjustment to life in the U.S. were very difficult. I went to school during weekdays and attended church on the weekends. The Bible studies, songs, and sermon messages created questions in my mind. In school I felt miserable. I

considered quitting. I missed my family. I cried frequently. Both my pride and my soul were shaken.

One Saturday morning near the end of October, I was alone in the trailer. It was a little cold inside because the heaters were not turned on. I put on a suit coat to keep warm—a coat someone in the church had given me. I put my hand in the pocket and took out a booklet. It was *“Steps to Peace with God”* by Billy Graham. The peace talked about in the tract was what I longed for—a peace that only Jesus could give. As I read, I prayed that God would forgive my sin, and I invited Jesus Christ to be my Savior. From this moment, I truly felt like a new person.

### New Names—Official and True

Instead of despair, I was filled with hope. In school I began to make better grades. I loved to study the Bible, and



I began to understand it. Once I had heard in a sermon that new believers in Africa often change their names, and that was what I wanted to do. So I went to court and changed my Vietnamese name, Ly Cong Thuan, to Thomas Gayle Lyconthuan Lee. I took my teacher’s last name as one of my middle names and used the internationally spelled name Lee of my great-grandfather as my last name. This became my official name.

One summer while working as an intern at the Civil Service Commission in Washington, D.C., I got to worship with other Vietnamese Christians in a Vietnamese church. I began to understand that God was allowing many Vietnamese to come to the U.S. so they might learn about Him. When I returned to my home church in Texas, I asked to be rebaptized—this time as a true believer, and I began boldly sharing the Word of God with other Vietnamese.

### Released and Reunited

Beginning in 1976, through friends in Canada and France, I began sending letters to my family in Vietnam and witnessing to them. Then in 1977, I received a letter from my father saying that my wife had been put in prison. The following year, my father passed away, and my mother sold their house in Saigon in hopes that she and my son could escape out of Vietnam by boat. They tried many times and finally succeeded in 1981. My wife remained

in prison in spite of many efforts to get her released. Then in May, 1982, after almost five years, she was released. I continued to request permission for her to come to the U.S., but the Communist government would not grant it.

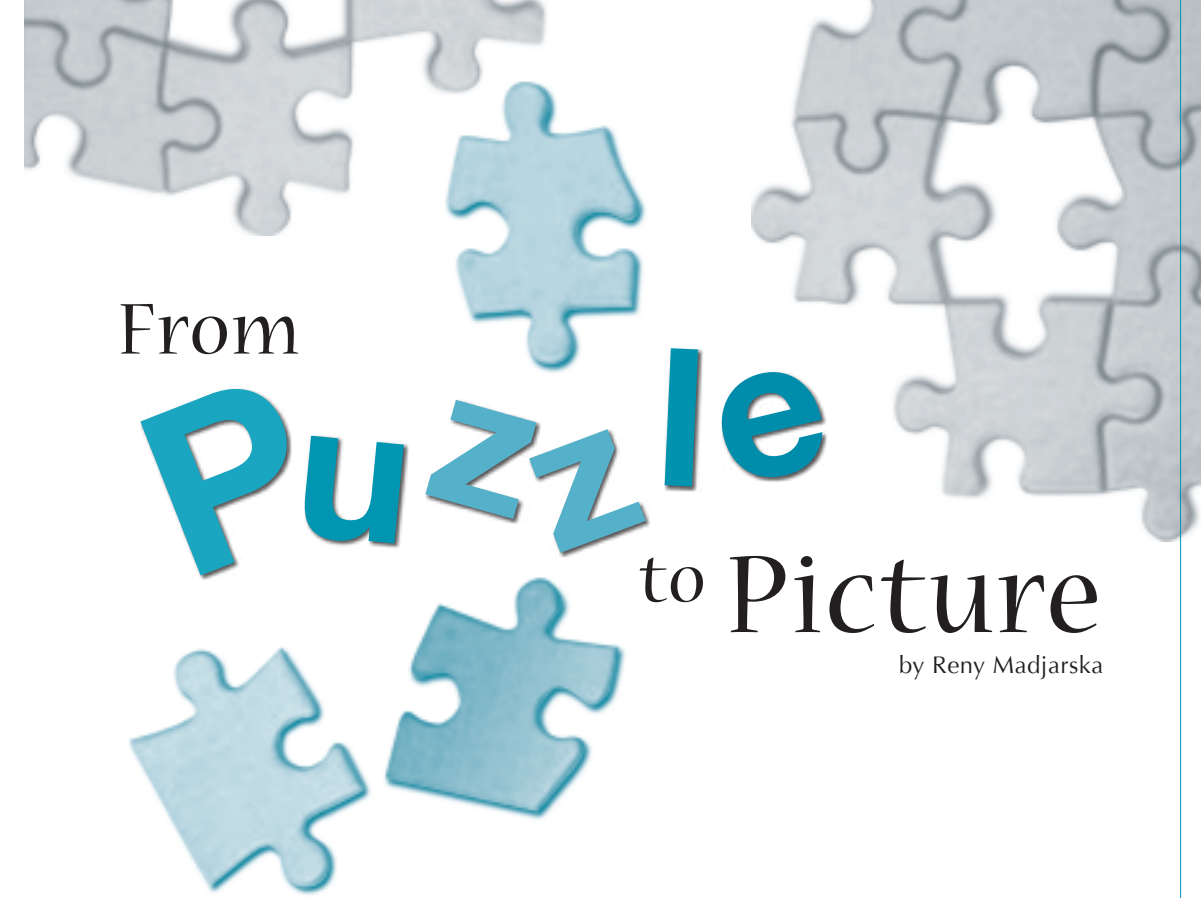
By 1983, I had lived in the U.S. long enough to apply for citizenship and was hired by the Census Bureau in Washington, D.C. My son and I moved to Maryland where I began encouraging Vietnamese churches in that area. In 1985, I was ordained as pastor of the First Vietnamese Baptist Church in Lanhan, Maryland. I also assisted the Honorable Robert Funeth, Assistant Secretary of State, in his negotiations with the Vietnamese government to bring Vietnamese children of American soldiers to the U.S. and to free South Vietnamese soldiers and religious leaders imprisoned in the Communist camps.

Then, wonder of wonders! On March 22, 1991, God answered the prayers of faithful Christians around the world for my wife's release. After 16 years of separation, the Vietnamese government granted permission for my wife to leave Vietnam, and she was reunited with me and our son. By God's grace she was able to adjust quickly to life in the U.S. and to assume her role of wife and mother to our son. She became an instant pastor's wife and joined me in ministry.

God is faithful, and His plan for each life is perfect! He had His hand on my life from my mother's womb. He changed my destiny from being a Buddhist without assurance and hope in this life or the next, to being a child of God with full confidence and peace. Thanks to the love, care, and prayers of many faithful servants in Vietnam and the U.S., God has given my wife, son, mother, sisters and me eternal life in Him. With God's grace and love, I now enjoy life fully and know for sure that I am His forever. ♡



*T. Gayle Lyconthuan Lee, a mathematical statistician, has been employed by the U.S. Census Bureau from 1983 to the present. He has also served as senior pastor of Vietnamese Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland, since its beginning in 1994. Previously he pastored churches in Lanham and Silver Spring, Maryland. They now live in Maryland.*



# From Puzzle to Picture

by Reny Madjarska

*The most important event in my life is coming to know the Lord when I was 22 years old—10 years ago this year. He changed me in a radical kind of way, a night-and-day type of change. Yet it took two years of living in the U.S. before this transformation happened.*

I was born in Bulgaria during the last two decades of communism. Though modern technology was slowly entering our closed society, things such as blue jeans and rock music were still considered "infiltration of Western capitalism." Religious freedom was not an issue in my world since the communist party had long ago instilled in the minds and hearts of

many people that God did not exist. Religion was not something I thought much about as I grew up. Grandma would sometimes take me to an Eastern Orthodox church to light a candle, but this seemed more for "good luck" or "good health" than devotion to God. Later, when communism fell, I became somewhat interested in the spiritual and supernatural. I started reading new age and occult newspapers and books bought from a Krishna book seller. I also tried reading the Bible but got stuck somewhere in the book of Numbers. Eventually, my studies and cares of daily living absorbed my attention, and I left my semi-spiritual pursuits behind.

Coming to the U.S., I know now, was possible only because the Lord made it possible. I got a full scholarship to study at Texas Christian University and another scholarship from the U.S. government that covered all my other expenses, down to the airfare. Being in the States was exhilarating—at least for the first year. I had two dreams in my life—to study at the best possible school and to travel around the world. The first dream came true at TCU, and the second one came true during my first summer in the U.S. I traveled by bus from Fort Worth, Texas, to Seattle, Washington, where I spent three weeks seeing the sights. Then I traveled, again by bus, to Washington, D.C., for another two weeks, and ended up in Amherst, taking classes at UMASS for five weeks. During the summer, my roommate’s family also took me on a trip to the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas. It was quite an amazing summer!

When I returned to school for the fall semester, an inner turmoil began. I realized that my dreams had come

true, but my heart was empty. I was also feeling h o m e s i c k and, to make m a t t e r s worse, I had not formed any close

friendships in the U.S. People here didn’t relate like I was used to, and though everyone was very friendly, I



felt they were not open and genuine. So the combination of homesickness and loneliness pushed me to search for the meaning of my life.

My last semester at TCU, I signed up for 21 credit hours, which was a crazy thing to do. I was studying hard, sleeping little, and eating poorly. One day I was in the library, and a strange thought came to me, one which made me think I needed to get counseling at the end of the semester. The thought was: “Everything in life changes, but God never does.” Where did this thought come from when I didn’t even believe God existed? I began to worry about the state of my mental health.

Some weeks later, I was at a gathering at the International House, a ministry of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Someone was sharing about his best friend and how they do everything together, share everything, and don’t keep secrets from each other. I was on the edge of my seat since I longed for such a friend. When the person said, “His name is Jesus,” I became angry. “Why do people always talk about a dead person?” I questioned. But in my heart of hearts I really wanted this kind of friendship.

The end of the semester came, and I was falling behind in one of my classes. I decided I would turn a paper in late, thinking the professor would only take off a grade or two which wouldn’t hurt me much because my other grades were

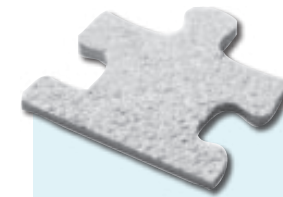
excellent. This calculation was flawed, however, because the professor gave me a flat F instead of a lower grade. This course was required to graduate, so I had to stay one more semester at TCU.

At this point I didn’t have a job or a place to live, so I went to the people at the International House and asked if I could stay with them. They embraced me and showed me love and kindness like I had never experienced before. While there, I picked up one of the many Bibles on the shelves, thinking that as a college graduate, I ought to read this book—like I had read Shakespeare and Tolstoy. So I started reading in the book of Matthew, and by the fifth chapter, I knew this book was talking about me—I had wanted to keep all the rules, but always failed. The message in the Bible rang true in my spirit.

That summer I had plenty of time to reflect on my life. I recognized all the privileges I had been given—a solid home life with a wonderful mother and caring grandparents, an education that few people even dreamed of, and people who truly loved me. One night I began to ponder the question, “Why me? I’m not the smartest, the kindest, most deserving person. Why me?” In some supernatural way, which I can only compare to a vision, I saw the resurrected Christ who said to me, “Because I want to know you.” I will never forget, at that very moment, the scattered, seemingly meaningless pieces of the puzzle of my life came

together and made a coherent, clear picture. I knew beyond a shadow of doubt that I was created to have an everlasting relationship with Jesus. Suddenly my life had meaning and purpose, and it was so wonderful.

So this is my most significant life story. It is really about God more than about me—His kindness, His love, and His miracles. This was the beginning of a new life for me, and it has been a wild ride with the Lord ever since. 🦋



**Afterword**

*Reny Madjarska went on to get a Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Seminary and is currently working on an MBA program at TCU. She is learning that Christ is Lord over academics, business, tests, and projects. Last summer she made two journeys back to Bulgaria—the first to assist Lifetime Guaranty Ministry, an organization that teaches Bulgarian Christian lawyers how to integrate their faith in the practice of their profession. The second journey was with HANDS International and a team of U.S. volunteers who carried out camp ministries for Bulgarian teen orphans on the coast of the Black sea. Reny is seeking God’s direction and vision for future ministries in Bulgaria.*

# Confessions of an Ex-Drug Addict

by Ching Hsuan Yang



From my earliest memories, my father has loved me very much. Having two sons and only one daughter, he used to tell me I was his treasure. However, no matter how hard I tried, I could never win my mother's affection. Scars from her childhood made her dislike girls, and those scars affected me. As I grew up, I was often envious of my brothers and wondered, "Why don't you love me, Mother?"

During my teenage years, my mother and I fought continuously. We screamed and raged at each other and actually hated each other. I did a lot of terrible things, hoping to hurt her deeply, and in the process, I hurt myself just as deeply. I began smoking and doing drugs at age 15 and later moved on to taking sleeping pills and drinking heavily. I disliked being at home and often ran away for long periods of time.

By the time I was 22, my life was truly in torment. I had no control over the drugs—they controlled me. My mind had become unstable, and I often shouted madly and uncontrollably. Sometimes my friends would take me to their homes for rehabilitation, and when I returned home, my father would tie my hands and feet together and lock me in a bedroom. My parents thought that surely I had a demon inside me.

In hopes of ridding myself of my horrible addiction, I decided to get married. I thought perhaps having a husband and children would compel me to quit drugs and get control of my

life. But sadly, this only made matters worse. I was on drugs when I conceived my daughter and brought her into the world. After only one year of marriage, I was divorced, and my daughter went to live with my parents.



My parents begged me to get off drugs, but it was impossible for me to do by myself. My father brought me to a Christian organization that had a reputation of helping people abstain from drugs. At this organization I heard the gospel—the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, but it was hard for me to accept this new teaching. My family was Buddhist. My parents had been Buddhists for 40 years and even led a Buddhist group with 200 members.

The process of withdrawing from drugs is a horrible experience. I would wake up in the middle of the night, screaming. After three days at the Christian organization, I was determined to escape. My plan was to make trouble—to force them to kick me out. Once I took the Bible the pastor's wife had given me, tore it to shreds, and threw it at her. Another time, I knelt on the ground and banged my head on the iron doors, begging them to let me go. I wanted them to think I was totally insane. Finally, after trying to escape three times, I succeeded.

Immediately I began using drugs again, but this time my family completely abandoned me. To my shock and horror, my father actually said, "Why don't you go and die!" My father had always loved me very much, and when he said these words to me, I knew that I had hurt him very deeply. My mother also refused to let me come home or even see my own daughter.

By this time, taking drugs was not a happy thing at all for me. In fact, it was torturous and extremely painful. As I took the drugs, tears streamed down my face, and I would weep bitterly. I hated myself and hated that I had hurt my father and daughter—all for drugs. I wanted to give my daughter all the love that I had been denied growing up with my mother. I wanted to give her a happy life, but what did I end up giving her? She had no father to care for her, and her mother had forsaken her for drugs. I hated the drugs, but I

could not get off them. Living like a normal person was beyond my wildest dreams. I saw no hope and no means of redemption. In utter despair, I began to take more drugs, wanting to overdose and end my life of misery.

In the midst of this darkness, my thoughts turned to God. I remembered the night at the Christian organization when the pastor's wife had prayed over me as I cried out in pain. So I prayed and said, "If you are God like they told me, save me, save me!" To my surprise, God spoke to me in my heart, "Child, come to me, come to me, you will get rest." In that moment, I desired to go to God. I knew God was a safe place where I could get rest.

Later I found another Christian organization that helps recovering drug addicts—Operation Dawn, and I knew God was there. I felt as if I was a wanderer that had returned home—to

the embrace of my heavenly Father. After only two weeks at Operation Dawn, I was able to focus, and I began to read the Bible for long periods of time every day. God began to work in my life, giving me new life, and changing me each day. One day, God showed me that I had hurt my mother very deeply. Before this time, I thought only of how she had hurt me. But I realized that she had endured much pain on account of me. I cried

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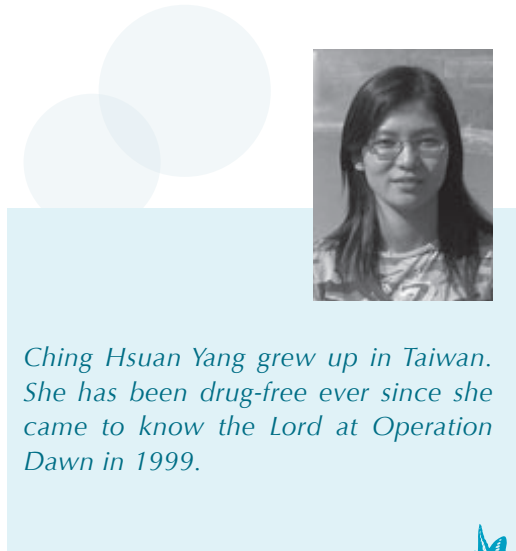
that day and wrote my mother a letter telling her that I was sorry for hurting her and asked for her forgiveness.

When my parents came to visit me at Operation Dawn, they were very surprised at the person they found. They could see that I was changed. After their visit, I began calling my mother several times a week, telling her that I loved her, and telling her about the gospel of Christ. I wanted her to know how wonderful God is. He had helped me get off drugs and had changed my life from hate to love.

After I had lived at Operation Dawn for two months, my father told my mother that he believed it was Christ who had saved their daughter, and he thought my family should give their lives to Him. My mother struggled with this because our family had been Buddhist for 40 years. She was afraid if I turned to drugs once again, everyone would laugh at them and their decision. Then one day she opened the Bible and read the very first verse, Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." After reading

this, she opened her heart to believe in the God of the Bible because since she was young, she had been seeking to know the Creator God. She knew then that she had found Him. My mother was baptized in January, 2002, and my father was baptized in October, 2003.

After I had been at Operation Dawn for 10 months, I read Luke 22:32 where Jesus told Peter, "When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." From this verse, I understood that God wanted me to strengthen my sisters—girls like me who needed to get off drugs and straighten out their lives. So I began studying in Operation Dawn's Bible Study School, and after two and a half years, I went to Singapore to study English. From there, I moved to the U.S., and in August, 2004, I completed a degree at Christian Witness Theological Seminary in California. Today I continue to walk in God's way—a witness to His amazing grace! 🦋



*Ching Hsuan Yang grew up in Taiwan. She has been drug-free ever since she came to know the Lord at Operation Dawn in 1999.*

continued from page 24

### The Scientific Method vs. the Historical Method

The scientific method widely used today is based on observations of repeated experiments. For example, a hypothesis is put forth; the hypothesis is tested through experimentation; and after many tests, the hypothesis is proven true, and a law is established.

Using the scientific method of repeated experimentation to prove the claim of the Bible that God created the universe is not a possibility. We cannot

ask God to recreate the universe for us to observe. Likewise, the naturalistic evolutionists cannot test and observe the whole span of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution from the “Big Bang” to the formation of planets, to the start of life—all the way to humans. That would take billions of years. Neither the Bible’s claim nor secular evolutionists’ proposals for determining where we came from can be repeated by experiment.

The question of origins really lies in the realm of the historical method, not the scientific method. When we want to know what happened in the past, we look for contemporary, first-hand sources—eyewitness accounts from people who lived in that time. A group of revisionists who claim that the Nazi Holocaust during WWII was just a hoax have a hard time convincing people of this because survivors of the Holocaust are still alive today to tell the story. Eyewitness accounts are trustworthy sources. Archaeological evidence also provides answers to the question of origins. The ancient city of Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt many times, each time leaving remnants of the foundations from the previous city. These remnants and ruins that still exist today tell much about the history of the city.

The fact remains that the scientific method is not adequate to explain where we (the universe, people, and the diversity of life on Earth) came from. Only the evidence left in the modern-day world is adequate to test our hypotheses. Each hypothesis should be able to predict evidence we can find in our world today. For example, if Genesis is correct, then we would expect to find such things as the earth gradually wearing out as we move away from the “very good” original design, and to find every animal in a distinct category with their “own kind,” rather than reptilian-bird creatures. If naturalistic evolution is correct, then we would expect to find spontaneous generation of new information in the genetic code, and transitional “missing link” animals. We can evaluate the tenets of each model against the evidence present in the world today to determine which model of history makes best sense. The two factors in the historical model—eyewitness accounts and archaeological evidence—are both laid claim to by the Bible. The Genesis account and numerous other verses throughout scripture make claims about things we should find true in the world today (e.g., the earth being round and “suspended in nothingness”), and we can compare these predictions with what we actually find. Beyond that, the Bible claims that there is an eyewitness account of creation—



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An Eyewitness Account



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we weren't there, but God was! Genesis 1 is His eyewitness account of how it happened.

### Scientific Facts vs. Scientists' Opinions

A common misperception confuses scientific facts with scientists' opinions. A fact of science is hard evidence, something that exists today and can be examined by everyone—like a rock, a leaf, or a fossilized bone. But questions like, "How old is this rock?" or, "How tall was the creature from which this bone came?" belong to the realm of interpretation. Each scientist can form his or her own opinion on the issue, and you can too.

Because the question of origins is not answerable by the scientific method, it really is not an issue of science, but an issue of worldviews. The worldview, or framework of presuppositions that we start with, is the set of tinted glasses through which we see the evidence. If we start with the presupposition that there is no God and, therefore, no intelligent Designer, then viewing the evidence through that worldview can result in a naturalistic evolutionary answer to the question of origins. But if we allow the possibility that there might be a God who made things as outlined in the Bible, then the same physical evidence points to a Creator. In truth, both evolution and creation as models of origins are issues of belief or faith—and in my opinion and evaluation, it takes more faith to believe

in evolution than it does to believe in biblical creation!

### Genesis: the Eyewitness Account

Though the claim of Genesis cannot be tested through the scientific method, it is validated through much historical evidence. Many great scientists, including some of the most famous in history, believe in a literal account of creation as described in Genesis. The creation story is the foundation for all the rest of scripture. The Bible is not a science textbook; it is better than a textbook because it does not change with the shifting opinions of men. In Genesis we have the firsthand, eyewitness account of creation, written by the only One who was there—God Himself! 🦋



*Sean Ho describes himself as a child of God, an ordinary guy saved by Jesus' extraordinary grace. He's also a self-described computer and gadget geek. He grew up in Seattle, Washington, as the youngest of four children, and recently joined the Computing Science faculty at Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C. In his spare time, he enjoys taking naps and jamming on his acoustic guitar.*

## CHALLENGER

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An Eyewitness Account

# Challenger

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## An Eyewitness

### Account by Sean Ho

Where did we come from?"

This is the most fundamental question concerning man's existence.

"In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth."

The Bible declares that God made man out of the dust of the earth.

As such, mankind is accountable to God and finds purpose only in Him. The evolutionists propose a very different answer to the question of man's origin. They claim that we came about through a gradual process of millions of years of evolution. There was no Creator, no Designer.

*continued on page 20*

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