

THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW HAS COME

2018 REVIVE TESTIMONIES VOL. 4

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New life in Christ for the nations of Silicon Valley

REVIVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SILICON VALLEY

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WORD FROM THE EDITOR



2018 was a very unique year for our church. We started out as a young adult ministry founded in 1996. Twenty two years later, we became a church plant in 2018, making a new start as REVIVE Presbyterian Church of Silicon Valley.

Transitions are often fraught with challenges, but challenges can also draw us near to God. Through this transition, REVIVE Church leaned into God as well as into each other. As a result we got to experience the transcendent peace of God in new ways, which helped us to see that God has even more wonderful things in store for 2019 and beyond. We saw the grace of God transform an old season into a new one with exciting new beginnings.

In the book of 2 Corinthians, God gives us this truth:

“¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; see, the new has come.”

-2 Cor. 5:17

This is a truth that reminds us that we can always have hope in the new life in Jesus. In Jesus’ death, we can each leave behind our pasts in death. And in Jesus’ resurrection, we are revived as new creations. And the rest of our life is experiencing this new life of faith in Jesus.

This booklet is a collection of true stories from regular people who, just like anyone else, go through both times of joy and times of challenge. And in the process, they’ve experienced that resurrecting power of Christ described in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Whatever season of life you currently find yourself in, I pray that these true stories from people just like you will encourage, gladden, and strengthen you as you look ahead.

May Christ’s death and glorious resurrection REVIVE you!

he's asking me to now fully entrust my future, whatever it might include, all to Him.

A Loving Father's Surprise by Kathy Xia

Replacing Lies with God's Truth

Michelle Bang



Nobody likes rejection. To be completely honest, I reject others first and let them down so that I do not have to face the unwanted repercussions of them rejecting me – facing this would only confirm everything negative and repulsive I believed about myself, making the pain too great to bear. How could anyone dare to believe or speak anything positive about me when I myself have learned not to? In my warped views, anyone who told me otherwise was just stroking my ego and feeding me lies to feel better about themselves. If I felt anyone grow close to me, I felt justified in cutting them out of my life in order to maintain the walls of lies I built for myself. It was easier to shut people out and believe everything bad that happened was my fault. Who would be foolish enough to want to be my friend? I became an expert at believing that the lies I told myself were truths, and that other peoples' genuine love and truths were all lies.

It is only recently since 2018 that I've started healing from a decade-long period of dark depression. Throughout my depression, I was so deeply convinced that God had made a huge mistake with me, and thus loved me less because He designed me in certain ways I desperately wanted to change. Days were filled with suicidal thoughts and isolation – I was legitimately afraid of physically leaving the house because I thought I was doing a disservice to others by gracing them with my sheer presence. At the time, my greatest wish in life was to have an invisibility cloak like Harry Potter. I was even surprised when others acknowledged me and said hello, because I truly believed I could make myself invisible through carefully crafted avoidance and aloofness. My mind was constantly preoccupied with morbid darkness, from thoughts of who would care to come to my funeral if one took place, to beliefs that people were truly out to kill me. Nights were no better as I cried myself to sleep from endless sleep paralysis attacks.

I could hear and feel the spiritual warfare for my soul, but I chose darkness because I could not fathom why God would want to use a repulsive and grotesque person like me for His Kingdom. Profound sadness with life slowly manifested into deep-rooted anger towards God. If God could just "fix" his mistake and "redo" the way he created me, only then would I be willing and open to pursue

a relationship with him. Until then, I was content with finding every excuse to distance myself from God. But still, I could always hear the Holy Spirit whisper to me, “Hope for a greater tomorrow” which was the one truth that helped me carry on through depression. Nevertheless, I did not allow anyone to get close to me, but God always broke through my stubbornness and either used different people in my life to speak truth, or sent His creation to me (I would specifically see either hummingbirds and white butterflies when calling out to God) all to remind me of His love for me.

Meanwhile, I preoccupied myself by pouring all of my desires for confirmation from another human being into finding the perfect man. I fantasized about being with each single and attractive man I encountered. I thought if I could just find the right man to help me feel beautiful and loved, then this veil of depression would magically lift and I would learn to love myself again.

My obsessions were so great that I could only see my singleness as an indicator of the level of God’s love for me. The longer I was single, the longer I felt abandoned and forgotten by God. So in desperation, I began fixing and adjusting myself to fit with any prospective match, hoping this would make me more suitable for “Prince Charming”. But the fantasies and daydreams in my head only crippled me more, rendering me incapable of simply conversing with men in real life – in my eyes I had reduced them to merely suitors for my affection rather than seeing them as human beings just like myself. Beneath my quiet, introspective, and reserved exterior, I was truly bursting at the seams with intensified anger and hatred that my desires were not answered by God. I could feel at times God wanting to protect and preserve me to teach me that His love for me is first and foremost, but my obsessions clouded my thoughts. I felt that my unwanted singleness was a confirmation that God was indeed punishing me, and I had again found another reason to become angry with God. I felt justified in distancing myself from God and rejecting His Kingdom to prepare myself for the day He would tell me I was no longer wanted by Him.

2018 was a year of beginning to slowly but surely replace the lies I have grounded myself on. This meant facing the rocky and shaky foundation I used all this time as a means to understand God and my relationship with him. My relationships with people were reexamined, tested, and strengthened. After leaving what was at the time San Jose New Hope Church back in 2014 or so, I received a random invitation truly out of nowhere in December 2017 from Pastor SooSang to catch-up over coffee (perhaps, rather, this was all part of God’s divine plan unfolding). Knowing myself, I knew I would feel guilty about declining my own pastor’s invitation to meet so I accepted without high expectation. What I expected to be a casual coffee chat turned

would finish cleaning up my resume and apply by the weekend. At this point it was Monday night.

Fast forward two days to Wednesday night, just as small group was starting, I got a notification about a LinkedIn message. It was from the Chief Technology Officer of that exactly same company! He said he noticed my profile as a Product Manager and that I work with foster kids on the side as a CASA, and wanted to know if I was free to chat at some point. I was floored. “What is going on, God?!” I was amazed and in shock at how even when I was still doubting and questioning whether I should even apply, the CTO would reach out to me personally and asked me to interview. It was as if God knew that I was unsure and nudged the CTO to reach out to me first instead.

The following Tuesday I had my first phone interview with them and within 2 weeks, my onsite interview was scheduled with them. I remember thinking, “Well alright God, I’m going to assume if you’re gonna open all these doors for me that you want me there, right? Why else would you do this? This wasn’t even something I asked for...much less even knew existed.”

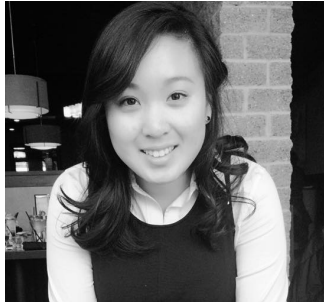
As I waited to hear back from the company on the final decision, I reflected on all that had happened. Over the span of 4 weeks, my dream job that I didn’t even know was my dream job or that even existed had found me and I had gone through the whole interview process. In the snap of a finger God had shown me 1) how deeply he knew me and my passions in the way he created me to be 2) how much higher and better his thoughts and plans can be – far more than I literally could have even fathomed and 3) how powerful He is – if this is what he wanted, he could make things move. Processing all of this, I felt complete peace about whatever the outcome would be because I could relish in the fact that God knew me deeply; so deeply that even without me asking, he knew what I would want and he surprised me with it. This was the cherry on top of my journey over the last few months in rediscovering what it meant to be loved and known by God.

When I eventually heard back, I found that I did not end up getting the job and honestly, it brought me back to that question, “if you’re gonna open all these doors for me then it must be that you want me there, right? Why else would you do this? This wasn’t even something I asked for...much less even knew existed.”

And as disappointed or mad, even, as I wanted to be at God for what have felt like bringing my hopes up for nothing, I couldn’t be. This whole experience had deeply etched into my heart just how deeply God knew me and loved me that he would go through all of this to surprise me and show me his deep understanding and love for me (and maybe how I have to give over my life plans to Him). Though I didn’t gain a job, I gained something much more worthwhile – a deeper understanding of God’s love for me. Now that I understand a little bit more of just how much he loves me, I think

A Loving Father's Surprise

Kathy Xia



Ever since my junior year of college, I've had an interest in foster children and the foster care system. When I moved out here to California, I got involved with being a Court Appointed Special Advocate for foster kids, and eventually I came to see that this is something I really care a lot about. Around December, I started thinking more deeply about my career aspirations and how

I could combine my skills as a product manager in tech with my passion for foster care, and govtech came up as an industry I might be interested in.

I remember laying in bed one night, looking up the top 100 govtech companies out there just to understand where this fairly new industry was. "Is it even be possible, in the foreseeable future, to impact the foster care system through technology?" I thought as my eyes scanned over these companies. As I got a quarter of the way down the list, my eye caught the words foster care software. Lo and behold, there was a tech startup in Oakland that was creating government software specifically for foster care agencies.

"Wow, what are the chances that someone else also has the same heart and passion as I do for foster kids..."

Naturally, I wanted to find out more about this company. As I perused their website and found out more about what they did, I got curious about their team. They had a pretty sizable development team with no product manager yet. And that's when my eyes landed on their Careers page, and I found that they were looking to hire their first Product Manager!

"Huh...they're hiring their very first PM! What a coincidence – but I'm sure they're looking for someone pretty experienced." As I read through the description, "hard requirement of two years experience working at a technology company as a PM". My heart skipped a beat. I had two years of experience working at a tech company as a PM!! And as I held that job opening in the palm of my hands, I was simply in awe at how there even existed what I considered to be the perfect job for me. It was exactly what I wanted to do, combined with what I had to offer. Was this from God? What was this?

After debating a little more about whether or not I was really qualified and if I should even apply to this job, I decided that I

out to be a five-hour (!) conversation where Pastor Soosang reminding me of "dots" God has placed throughout my life to remember Him in times of darkness. I realized again that God was sending people back into my life to remind me of His love for me.

Upon returning to Revive Presbyterian Church in January 2018, I was not ready to face people and open myself up. I treaded carefully and prepared myself mentally for the worst. After a few years of ceased sleep paralysis attacks (coincidentally while I was not attending church), they came back in full force as soon as I started connecting to God's church again. I could also hear lies whispering to me again such as, "Just end it all, no one cares anyway." But God still rescued a broken person like me for His family. In my own strength, never in my dreams would I have gotten plugged back into the church, connect spiritually and relationally with others, or let alone join GLF (GospelLife Family) meetings and accept discipleship training. With the power of the Spirit of God, I was able to respond to God calling me to be a witness to others about my experiences.

In other news, my singleness is still painful, but I am learning that God will provide all things in His time when I am ready. It is a lie to think that God "loves me less" because He does not provide the things I think are good for me. I am learning to see how trusting God's views of me as absolute truth has fostered genuine love, peace, and joy, rather than the lies I think about myself. When I trust that He wants to provide for His children, I can extend this love and grace to others as well. I also realize that my depression will never magically disappear altogether, but I am no longer entrapped by the devil's lies. I recognize their falsehood and now choose to fight back with God's truths given to me in His Word. Furthermore, I am certain He will use each and every experience, positive and negative, for His Kingdom. I see God especially using my relationships with others (the very thing I struggled with and tried to take into my own hands) to whisper to me what He has always told me, and what I now hear and believe: "I love you, Michelle. You are my child, and I have been and always will be by your side". If you resonate at all with the struggles I've shared with you, please know that Jesus who saved me and is always faithful offers this also to you too. All you need to do is trust His words and receive.

Replacing Lies with God's Truth by Michelle Bang

One Necessary Thing

Sally Yang



God has always been so good to me. He saved me when I was 12 years old, He allowed me to spend my teenage years growing at church, and He has been faithful to grow me every year. In my youth I wanted God to use me for His glory, whether it was in the mission field, through a career, at home

or at church. I didn't know the details, but I knew I did not want to waste my life but live for Him.

Fast forward many years and I found myself married to a wonderful and godly man and devoted to caring for my three young, beautiful children. As He was faithful to grow me in my youth, He had been growing and challenging me through marriage and parenting young children. I knew I was doing God's will in serving my family and raising my children for Him, but this year I realized something was missing.

Outwardly I seemed like a "good" Christian wife and mother. We went to church every Sunday, and strove to live according to His Word. I tried my best to serve my family and those around me each day. I was faithfully teaching my children the gospel. I didn't live this way to earn favor with God, I sincerely did want to obey Him for what He's done for me.

However I found myself struggling to be thankful and joyful. Stress was taking a toll on my body and my relationships. I felt too busy but at the same time felt like I was not accomplishing anything. I was starting to feel burnt out from the trials in my life. So, what was missing?

It was the "one necessary thing" that Jesus revealed to Martha in Luke 10 - sitting and listening at the feet of Jesus. For me, it was devoting undistracted time each day to Jesus in Word and in prayer. I had known and experienced the joy of sitting at His feet in my years of walking with Him, but I had let the quality and priority of that time with Him slowly deteriorate as the responsibilities and burdens of life increased.

I'm thankful for the Holy Spirit for tugging my at my heart. I'm thankful for my Life-on-Life discipleship group sisters for keeping me accountable in spending quality time with God each day. And most of all I'm thankful for my humble Heavenly Father who loves to spend time with me, a sinner bought with the precious blood of His Son.

Outwardly, my life looks the same. I am still striving to be a

shines God's name, whatever that looks like now and in the future. I'm grateful that God has used, is using, and will continue to use even a sinner like me as His instrument.

Comfort as a Stranger by James Cho

room as them? Even a 5-minute conversation in passing could turn into a mention of Jesus and an invitation to church. And that's exactly what happened time and time again. Although I had never shared the gospel so actively, the Holy Spirit strengthened me through it all.

On Easter Sunday, two of my African roommates (one Christian, one atheist) agreed to join me at church for Easter service. Afterwards, we enjoyed lunch in the fellowship hall and good conversations with fellow church members. This reminded me of the beauty of the church - that it's not only a place for worship, but also a place where our church family can contribute to God's work by showing love to all who walk through the door. On another occasion, my Mexican roommate and I had a deep conversation about life and at one point, I asked him if he knew Jesus. He said he'd grown up in the church but recently felt a drop in his faith, so I invited him to church the following Sunday. The sermon was about pain, which is exactly what he had been going through and exactly what he needed to hear. I mention their ethnicities because at the time, our church's mission was to be a Jesus-centered family crossing generations and cultures. Having grown up in a Korean church, I never thought I would be comfortable inviting non-Koreans to church, but that mission was and is golden. I continued to invite everyone I met at the house to church, no matter their age or ethnicity. Some politely declined while others were clearly annoyed at the topic. But at the end of it all, the moral of the story became clear to me - God turned what appeared to be a terrible situation into a crucial strengthening of my missional mindset. He reminded me that there is beauty in the broken.

"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."
-Proverbs 16:9

Living in that house reminded me that God orchestrates every trial in my life together for my good. Sleeping on the bottom bunk and creating a tent around the perimeter of my bed so strangers couldn't watch me sleep reminded me that God is more concerned with my character than my comfort. Waking up at 5:00am every morning to ensure time in the bathroom reminded me that God seeks my sanctity more than my sanity. Asking every single person I met there about Jesus and inviting them to church reminded me that none of this was possible through my own strength but only through Jesus, the strength that upholds me like no other.

I confess that since that time, I have not kept in touch with as many of my old housemates as I would like. However, the Gospel tells me that I do have it in me to continue being missional because Jesus was missional, and I've surrendered my life to him. And thanks to the fullness of the Gospel, I will obey my calling to be a light that

godly wife, mother, friend, daughter, church member, and etc. all by the grace of God. But also by His grace He is allowing me the thrill of leaving all my responsibilities and burdens aside and the sweetness of sitting at His feet in His word and in prayer. Though I still struggle each day with my sins, I am experiencing more peace and joy as I cast my burdens on Him, confess and repent of my sins, and experience His love, power, and promises. I am thankful that He does not call me to perfection, He calls me to Himself.

I am in my thirties now, and increasingly more I don't want to waste my life. I'm thankful I can live for Him by serving my family, friends, church body, and others He puts in my life. But one thing is certain, one thing is necessary. He wants me to put Him first, sit at His feet, and rest in Him.

One Necessary Thing by Sally Yang

Famished and Struggling

Kevin Hwa

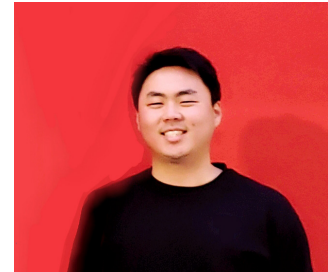
For those of you who don't know me, my name is Kevin Hwa. I'm grateful for this opportunity today to share my testimony with you all. I'm still in disbelief that God would want a broken 28 year old like me and I feel truly blessed to now know Jesus.

I grew up with a loving family who always put me first. My parents always did the most they could to give me and my sister the experiences they never had as children. They enrolled me at The Harker School, a private school in San Jose, starting in 7th grade and poured tons of time and money into my studies and extracurriculars. The results spoke for themselves - I got great grades, was nationally ranked in chess, and had great prospects for getting into colleges. This is exactly how Harker graded kids and I knew my achievements lived up to my school and parents' expectations. But all this started affecting my mental health. Since I was so focused on sharpening my chess skills and getting good grades, I wasn't able to hang out with my friends as much as other kids did. I got in huge fights with my parents because of that. I didn't have time for team sports either. I had no way of decompressing. I kept all this wrath and anger bottled up inside until I discovered I could channel it into the music I listened to. Music had always been a huge part of my life but my taste in music shifted dramatically. By 8th grade, I was listening to heavy metal everyday. It was my escape and my cathartic release. My music understood my wrath and the screaming, believe it or not, made me feel at peace. Music became my best friend. I always had headphones on 24/7 in the car, at home, studying, you name it. Now I didn't realize this at the time but a spiritual war was being waged on me. I listened to both Satanic bands that glorified destruction as well as Christian Metal bands that glorified God. To me, I didn't care much about the lyrics but God fought for me even then. I just cared about how 'brutal' the music sounded. Things took a turn for the worse when I got into my first relationship in 10th grade. I didn't know this until after we started dating but my girlfriend frequently cut herself. I started to understand and relate more to the depressing music. I tried to do everything I could to save and comfort her but it didn't work. I yearned to get any words of affirmation from her but it was pointless. We ended up breaking up but this took a toll on my self esteem and confidence. Nevertheless, I still got into good colleges due to my hard work and ended up attending UC Berkeley.

As soon as I got to college, I felt free at last and let loose. I got a girlfriend within the second week of my freshman year and immediately started living a hedonistic lifestyle. My life was defined by alcohol and mindless indulgences. Hanging out with my girlfriend and friends became the top priority. I felt like I was making

Comfort as a Stranger

James Cho



Life is about hellos and good-byes. But no matter where we go, we're close to our Father.

After finishing my college career one semester early, I said goodbye to both my college home in Minneapolis and my family's home in Chicago and said hello to my new home in San Jose for a 3-month internship. Despite the fact that I've

never used Airbnb before, I chose to live at a shared house for all 3 months. It was a revolving door of people from all walks of life and housed 19 people when full, which made it the most uncomfortable living situation I've ever experienced. But despite having to share a minuscule bathroom with 3 strangers and having no privacy whatsoever, it became the location where I experienced one of the most galvanizing times of my life. Little did I know how much more of Jesus I would see through this housing nightmare.

One night during my first week, I was organizing my things in my dresser when one of my roommates noticed my Bible. He smirked and asked, "Is that a Bible? Are you a Christian?" From there, we got into an hour-long conversation about why I'm a Christian, why he isn't, and why he believes that Christianity is a joke. I remained confident on the outside, but felt attacked on the inside. At that moment, I was reminded just how countercultural my life is as a Christian. Just how much opposition there is out there due to the fact that I worship a being named Jesus. Just how weird some people think I am for striving to live based on "a book". But I was also reminded that Jesus was no stranger to opposition, and even tells us directly that we will be hated for loving Him. "...and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." (Matthew 10:22 ESV). I found great encouragement in remembering these truths in the heat of that moment.

That night, as I meditated on Joshua 1 on my bed while 3 strangers snored within 5 feet of me, my great discomfort turned into an even greater realization. That conversation was just the beginning of what would become the first time in my life I actively and intentionally shared the gospel with complete strangers around me. Doing this is not always convenient when you live in the comfort of your own home, and from that day, I was convinced that God had placed me in that house for a very good reason. God sought to use me as a light that shines Jesus' name to every soul I crossed paths with. When else would I have the chance to meet so many new people at such a fast rate and even sleep in the same

While I was struggling and enduring, I wondered why I didn't find myself crying out to God for help. I saw that my unresponsive spirit was perhaps even more famished than my body. Thankfully, God has helped my spirit come more alive since then. Gradually, God has used my discipleship group, my family, various experiences, and His word to help my relationship with Him to become more intimate and a bit less mechanical. I have struggled with feeling too busy to spend time in His presence but have been reminded of how many of the things I am so busy with are expendable and amount to nothing.

God also showed me His love through His children. As I was struggling in my recovery, people prayed for me and they cared for me, and it truly left a mark on my heart – I personally felt loved by God. As people tried to serve me, bring me food, pray with me, or just show concern, I saw that I was significant in God's eyes.

I thank God for 2018. To be honest, I do not think I learned as much from this experience as God wanted me to. I do feel a sense of regret because of that. But the few things I gained were surely more than I deserved. It was a year of lacking on my part. But a year of God working on my heart.

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

– 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

up for all the time I lost in middle/high school. Very soon, all the wrath that consumed me from my childhood and music started bubbling up when I was drunk. It affected my friends and impacted my relationships. My girlfriend and I broke up eventually and it only got worse from there. One year later, I started a long distance relationship with a girl from USC except this time the relationship seemed to solely revolve around lust. I saw it as passion at the time but the lust consumed me. Whenever she wasn't visiting due to long distance, I tried to fill that void with porn and became an addict. I spent two years chasing after lust and in the end got dumped. This made me spiral out of control even more and by the time I started my first job out of college, I was consumed by wrath, gluttony, and lust. I soon added two more deadly sins of greed and pride.

Having had so many failed relationships, I vowed to myself that I would not love another woman again. All the rappers with the expensive cars and beautiful women, my false idols, were preaching and living this so I thought why shouldn't I? I spent the next two years outside of work chasing tail, numbing my heart, and climbing the corporate ladder. I focused on gaining money, power, and respect and even started reading books like *The 48 Laws of Power*. I started to really pride myself on these kinds of shallow achievements but without a solid foundation from God, I eventually fell into a deep pit of depression and anxiety. It was the most empty I had ever felt in my entire life. I lost touch with my friends, lied to those who cared about me, and continued down a path of self destruction. This emptiness ate me alive and spit me out. To run away from the black hole of emptiness, I decided to give love another shot and started dating a girl seriously but for the wrong reasons. I jumped into things too quickly and wasn't prepared to commit. She wanted to get married but I clearly wasn't ready due to all the bad habits I had picked up and broke it off. It wasn't until I started dating Rachel, my current fiancée, that things started to get better and God revealed himself to me.

Now, keep in mind, by this time, I continually sustained 5 of the deadly sins: wrath (heavy metal music & undeniable anger), gluttony (alcohol and partying), greed (goal to get \$\$\$, lust, and power), and pride (proud to be a player & be more like my false idols). God had slightly melted my heart to accept love as my savior but I still had a long way to go to become a better person. My relationship with Rachel went through ups and downs but I have to praise God for repairing me and revealing himself to me in a few mystical experiences. I'm still trying to grasp the experiences itself in its entirety but to summarize, the Holy Spirit of Truth entered me and showed me all of the self destruction, hurt I caused, false idols I had been worshiping, and lies that I had been living and breathing. It was the most introspective moment in my entire life and I thank Jesus and God for fighting off the wicked and evil spirits oppressing me to finally clear my eyes and breathe new life into me. I'm a pretty stubborn person and was so stuck in this narrow mode of

thinking that this unexpected jolt and breakdown of my entire world views was what was exactly needed. Mark 10:15 mentions, “Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” I do think this powerful experience with Jesus has opened my mind and brought me back to a child like state where I can work hardest to leave the sins behind. I’m now ready to channel my energy into praying and studying the gospel. And for those who are wondering, I’m no longer listening to Satanic death metal, no longer drinking ridiculous amounts, no longer putting all my energy into getting money and power, and no longer a player. I am happy to be engaged to the love of my life Rachel with a huge supportive backbone of family and friends.

I know I’m a human and bound to sin again but I know God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are on my side and will teach me the ways of the Gospel. I’m excited for the next chapter of my life with Rachel in our move to Amsterdam and really happy to have the gospel and God lay a solid foundation for me. I’m excited to be baptized in front of you all and God and ready to be a responsible Christian who stands up to temptations.

Famished and Struggling by Kevin Hwa

Broken in Body, Whole in Christ

Andy Yang



2018 was somewhat of a trying year. It started off in an unordinary fashion as I was toiling to bring my diminished body back to a more stable condition before the fast-approaching birth of our third child. My body had been ailing for months suffering from a perforated appendix, a condi-

tion that was poisoning me and wreaking havoc on my lower gut and digestive tract for months. I was, thankfully, making progress in my recovery when Daniel was born soon after the start of the new year.

Sally and I were so thankful for a healthy child. Through various experiences over the years we had come to recognize how miraculous yet fragile each life is, and we were very aware of how little control we had over our own lives and the lives of our children. Yet, the wonderful joys that came with our newborn child were also mingled with a number of mounting challenges. I was physically struggling. My body was not functioning well. I was still very weak and constantly experiencing a mix of pain, discomfort, fatigue, and mental and emotional weariness from continually having to figure out the causes of my frequent physical setbacks. At home I was very irritable, easily angered, and unpleasant. For months, I was making my own food and could never share a meal anyone, whether it was for a simple family dinner, a work lunch meeting, or dinner with relatives I hadn’t seen in years. Every meal made me at least a little unhappy. Even simply going to the bathroom every day was dreadful. I knew I should try to open myself up to others, but it was so hard not to be self-consumed. It was easier to be a bit secluded so I could just operate in a mindless auto-pilot state, not deal with people’s questions, not hear suggestions about what I should be doing to recover.

But through my trials, God showed me a few things. First, God showed me that my joy was misplaced. At the time, I knew my sufferings were not nearly as severe as many others’ sufferings. With the exception of a few days, I wasn’t in non-stop extreme pain and anguish. And I wondered why it was so hard to be happy. It became clear to me that my joy was conditional, so influenced by circumstance, not rooted in Christ. I know more trials will come, and when they do, and I sincerely hope that my joy will be deeper than it was in 2018, found to be deeply rooted in Christ. God also showed me that my spirit was dry and unresponsive.

God did what seemed to be impossible in our own eyes. We all witnessed the difference that the gospel of Jesus Christ can make and how he can transform us. Now, Bishop is more than a place we would go for a week during summer. It is a place where we see and hear about how much God loves us.

Seeing God's Love by Damon Moon

Joy Unexpected

John Har



The retreat this year was particularly memorable for me. First, it was awe-inspiring to see so many people join us, particularly those that weren't part of the EM congregation at that time. We had youth, KM members, KM member friends, and missionaries from Europe! It was a powerful reminder and affirmation of how beautiful His Church is and will be by reaching all nations and not being just for the comfort of our people.

Second, I had an experience of joy that I never had at a retreat before. On the last day as we were all packing and getting ready to go home, I hugged Alex Yang to say goodbye like I did with everyone else. But when I hugged Alex, a sense of joy of calling Alex my brother in Christ overwhelmed me. I didn't expect that, and I choked up (but I don't think Alex noticed). I didn't want to let him go. It really surprised me, but I knew what it was - Jesus gave me a taste that weekend of what Heaven will be like.

I believe God has started something new at Revive, and I can't wait to see what else He has in store for us.

Joy Unexpected by John Har

Monopoly & Crashing Walls

Kayla Kim



Hi, my name is Kayla Kim and one year ago, I became a new person. As a little kid, I felt like I had a pretty happy life. But as I got older, I began to feel a lot of anger inside of me. I was born in a Christian home, I'd always heard about Jesus, but I never really made the connection with myself or any problems in my life. And without really knowing it, I had started to lie just so I could do whatever I wanted. But because of all these lies that I was telling my family, a very thick wall began to grow between me and my family.

Whenever my parents or siblings said anything to me, calling me out on my choices or actions, I reacted with a lot of anger. I would lash out at them and snap back. I knew I wasn't perfect, yet I didn't want to face my weaknesses or be corrected because I felt that I KNEW what was right, I didn't NEED anyone telling me! I didn't want to seem weak or unable to do things. My hardened heart had made my relationship with my family very difficult and kept gradually getting worse. My family and I would not have conversations, just explosions. I didn't really pray to God or talk to him unless I needed to get out of trouble. I kind of just used him as a genie, whenever I needed to get out of a tight spot.

Then last year, during the Fourth of July holiday, my family planned a family retreat to get away and relax and have fun. One night we were playing a game of Monopoly. We were having fun, but I started to lose. Every time I rolled the dice I would land on a bad property and then I would have to pay someone, something was bubbling inside of me, slowly and gradually my anger grew, and I began to lash out at my family. And this was during a friendly game of monopoly! My family stopped playing the game, looked at each other and then they looked at me. They asked me, "why are you so angry? It's just a game?"

As I was breaking down, all the lies, and secrets I had created to have 'control' in my life were actually thick walls which created a great distance in my relationships with my family. Instead of getting mad, I started to cry because I realized how much of a mess I had made of my life. I finally understood what sin does, and that I was a sinner (and still am).

Then, my dad told me that in Monopoly, the pieces go around and around the board. But at some point all of the pieces will stop. It's kind of like life. He began to move the monopoly pieces onto 2 sides.

ing the kids to the Vacation Bible School.

Also, this year was a special year because it was the first time serving together with a non-Korean church. As a part of the training program, we've been walking together with the Spectrum church, primarily from India. This year, total of 11 people, 1 missionary pastor, 4 adults, and 6 kids joined our mission trip. Most of them were along with us from the beginning of training to the end to the trip. It was a beautiful co-laboring of love crossing generations and culture.

Also, we were no longer serving by ourselves. Everywhere we went, we went together with the Paiutes. Whether it was passing out flyers, doing VBS, or grilling burgers, Paiutes were always with us, and excited to be with us. This helped open more doors and have a chance to share the gospel with them.

Maybe from the outside, nothing much has changed. Still, there is brokenness in family, injustice, poverty... everything is still there. We still don't have a pastor for Valley Church, and the dozen or so members there aren't really effectively reaching the next generation.

But what has changed is seen from the people we dearly loved. They are seeking Jesus on their own. Michael found a good youth group, at a local church called Calvary Baptist Church, although they are primarily non-native american families. Faith, Luis, and Shayla called me when we are coming for the winter youth retreat. Many of them regularly ask me when we will come again for the summer.

Compared to the love we received from other believers, or the works of missionaries, all we did was just hang out together in the name of Jesus, couple days of the year. This experience helped me realize that reaching out is not that hard, and it doesn't always have to be at the other side of the world at a place where I can't even communicate even the simplest things.

Hardest part is probably becoming comfortable with not being comfortable. Being flexible about our plans, being okay with not having the trip turn out "as planned", or staying committed even when we are discouraged by what we see only through our fleshly eyes.

I had a chance to visit Bishop with my family during ski week of 2019, on my way to Mammoth. It was very clear how much God loves the reservation. Pastor Aaron of Calvary Baptist Church, has been reaching out to Michael and his family for the last year or so. Michael's friend, AJ visited the youth group for the first time and will join youth group along with his sister, Maria. Lead pastor of Calvary church, Rick, has known Sean Brown since 6th grade, and witnessed how much he has changed and is desiring God, and how much impact he has not only on the reservation, but also to his peers. Pastor Rick recently became the foster parent for Nelson, whom we've known since 2015 at Benton. We weren't able to find him for the last several years so it was good to see him.

Seeing God's Love

Damon Moon



Our missional outreach to the Bishop Native American Reservation has been a big part of my spiritual journey over the last several years.

Actually, the 2018 Bishop mission trip was physically one of the most comfortable Bishop

mission trips we ever had. We rented a small cabin across the reservation where we were able to have discipleship training, and have other mission team members rest during the day and sleep. We also had access to the clergy house behind the church with full air conditioning. The amount of space we had helped us bond with the Paiutes in the reservation.

But emotionally, it was one of the toughest ones. We witnessed brokenness in one of the families we dearly loved. Most of all, our church was going through one of the most difficult times during this trip. Especially, when I was watching the Bishop kids jumping in joy during VBS, I couldn't help but shed tears in the back of the room. If we don't come next year, who will come and love on these kids? Will they be disappointed at us and eventually at God's love? Will they be able to follow Jesus among the darkness and addiction? Many unanswered questions came through my mind as I was watching the Paiute kids dance joyfully to the praise songs.

But in the midst of our own weakness, God was showing His grace and power to all of us throughout the trip.

There were many examples of His grace in 2018. We had 11 kids from Bishop attend the Eastern Sierra Bible Camp. This year, they went even when we weren't attending the bible camp. During the week, we had a mini-discipleship program, where the Paiute kids came and learned about God, and hear the gospel. We started with 5 kids, and by the 4th day, 14 kids were sitting and standing around the dinner table, listening and asking questions. 3 kids (Robert McDowell, Michael Baros, Blanca LePlat) from Bishop and Big Pine were baptized at the small creek on Izaak Walton park in front of many people on the reservation.

I thought we already knew pretty much all the kids on the reservation. But as pastor Soosang and I were driving around the reservation, we met new kids that we never interacted with before, and ended up having a chance to speak with the parents and bring-

He placed mom's piece, my sister's, my brother Jeremiah's, and his piece to one side. Then he moved my piece and Joshua's piece onto the other side. He calmly asked me what I thought about the 2 sides. The room became very quiet. I just kept crying. I had built a wall separating me from my family.

My dad went on to explain. "Because of Jesus' gift, when everything finally stops, Mommy, Daddy, Karis and Jeremiah are going to be with Jesus in heaven, because we know we're imperfect sinners but we know Jesus died for us and forgave us. We have asked Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. We're not perfect, but we try our best to live for Jesus. Because of Jesus, we'll be with Him in heaven". He pointed to my piece and Joshua's, "You two are over on that side. I am not sure if you know you are a sinner and have asked Jesus for life," then my dad began to tear up: "Kayla, there is nothing I want more than for our entire family to spend eternity together with Jesus in Heaven. And Jesus told us He's the way. Do you know Jesus?"

As this point, Joshua and I both began to cry. I knew about Jesus, but I didn't really personally know Jesus. Right then, I thought more seriously about God and Jesus and realized I didn't have a relationship with him at all, and I really needed Him. I asked my parents if I could accept Jesus as my Lord and saviour. Jesus needed to break down that wall. We then read passages about what Jesus had taught and done, and then I prayed and knew that Jesus was there for me, that He died for my wrongs, that He forgives, that He loves me, and He saved me on that cross.

This time I spent with Jesus made me acknowledge that I was a sinner, and I accepted Jesus into my life and repented. Knowing that he is always for me and loves me no matter what lifts a huge weight off my shoulders. God opened my eyes to my faults and I realized that I couldn't help fix myself, so I began to trust in Jesus to transform me. Instead of being angry a lot of the times, I am now a more energetic and happier person.

I am currently praying to God more and spending as much time as possible with him and I have a desire to pursue him. Because I have this relationship with Jesus, when I pray to him I tell him good things that happen and also my struggles. Now when I think of Jesus, I get very happy and my "heart starts smiling" because he is perfect and amazing and I can approach him, even with my faults. My relationship between my parents and the trust issues are much better now, I feel that I can better take helpful advice because my security is in Christ, and not in my abilities or myself. I'm so thankful to you Jesus for loving me, even when I was so angry and ran away from you and my family. You kept chasing after me and sacrificed your life so I could live and spend eternity in heaven with you. Even though I'm still a great sinner, your perspective of me doesn't change and you continue to love me no matter what. Thank you for everything.

Trusting God's Eyes

Ellen Kwon



Growing up in a Christian household, I had always known about God. I knew that he was that big guy up in heaven controlling everything, and the guy that had everything already planned for me. Because God knew everything that was going to happen in my life, in my understanding, everything that happens, happens for a reason. If I do something bad, God will use that to teach me something. But besides that, I also

thought that if I prayed to God for a better test grade or a better situation for our family in tough times, then God would listen and do something. Of course, I knew things like that wouldn't happen immediately, like if I were to pray for a good test grade right before, I knew I wouldn't magically do well, but if I prayed the night before or the week before, I thought I'd have a better chance at getting my prayers answered. This superstitious belief although they didn't work, were the things that held me "closer" to God. I thought by praying to him, I was doing my part in the relationship and God's part was to answer my prayers.

But when these prayers about test grades and school didn't come true, I became frustrated. I got more and more frustrated that God wasn't fulfilling his part of the relationship. But I shrugged off the small things. When tough financial and relationship problems surfaced, I prayed for God to help me and my family. I prayed that he would give my dad the job he needed or prayed that I wouldn't screw up my relationships at school. I began to lose hope in God slowly as days got tougher and less hopeful. I blamed God for forgetting about us, and not giving our family the opportunities that I thought we needed.

When my dad got a job, and things finally settled, I wondered what purpose those tough and scary weeks served. I reflected back on the days where I had worried so much that I couldn't focus, or when I was so anxious about everything that I would talk less and be really down about everything. But I remember the small moments where I got to bond with my parents, especially my dad during the car rides home that wouldn't have happened if he had a job at that time. I remember when we had fun and lighthearted conversations that had started with similar interests that I never knew we had in common.

That's when I really began to wonder. Was the purpose for all the hard months was so I can have these small conversations with my dad? During the retreat, the guest pastor touched upon a

idea that really struck me. The pastor told us how God gives us not only what we ask for, but more than that. I realized then, that God really knew everything, and he knew what was best for me. Those months where I thought God left me, I was really being given something better than what I asked for and something that I needed.

After realizing that I needed God to steer me towards the right things and how God was the only one who knew what I needed, I started to think about the gap from myself to God. From all those years in CM and youth group, I knew the basics. Jesus came down from his lofty place up in heaven, to this earth to help us, who could never measure up to God's expectations. As I kept trying to understand this, I kept remembering two lessons I had learned in Children's Ministry. The first one was how Jesus filled up the gap between me and God with the cross, and the second one was how Jesus had a A+ in God's expectations while I had a F-, making me never fit enough in God's eyes, but Jesus gave us that A+ so that we could go to God.

When I learned that Jesus was the only way I could get to God, Jesus seemed closer to me and more relatable because of all the things he experienced that I could relate to. I could ask him more about problems I have in my life because he went through those problems as well. I really wanted the guidance of God because of everything he knows, and Jesus was the only way I could get that guidance from God because without him, I would still be nothing in God's eyes. This is when I realized how much I needed Jesus.

I am still working on breaking out of the cycle of only praying to God when times get hard, but to trust him and look to him for everything, without a genie mindset. After changing my understanding of God and Jesus as a genie to a God who carries me through the highs and lows, I am still learning more and more about this relationship I am graced with, and I hope everyone can help me on this journey.

Trusting God's Eyes by Ellen Kwon