

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:18-20



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# Letter from the Editor

Blindfolded, spun around, and dizzy...that's one way to describe the disruption to our lives over the last 12 months. And if you're like me, you've sometimes wondered if this is now the new "normal". Turmoil is certainly no stranger to human history. About 3000 years ago, a man who had been appointed ruler of his people began to face competitors for his position, some of whom, including his own son, resorted to violence, civil war, and deception in order to gain power. It's amazing to observe that the spirit of fallen human nature is still just as destructive and broken today as it was 3000 years ago. In describing his personal and painful experience in the midst of that turmoil, this is what the man wrote:

For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. 2 Samuel 22:5-6

Though those words were written centuries ago, they still resonate with us as we see the brokenness of the world around us today. But later, this same man also got to see and hear God fulfilling the promises that He had made to the man and to his people.

The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation... For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing praises to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever. 2 Samuel 22:47,50-51

This man was a king of Israel, King David, and despite the blindness and darkness of the destructiveness all around him, he got to see and hear his kingdom be established according to God's promise to him, and be able to report about and celebrate it. But the far greater and ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to him was that the Messiah would come from his line. And that future king would bring not a mere political or physical salvation to Israel, but rather a holistic, perfect, and everlasting salvation to all of creation, and this Messiah was Jesus Christ.

And this is what our annual testimony booklet is about... average people like you and me simply reporting what they've seen and heard as they experience that new and eternal life in the Messiah Jesus Christ. So on behalf of all of the people who have graciously shared their true personal stories with you here, I invite you to enjoy and ponder as you see and hear what Christ has done in their lives this past year. And please know that Christ also invites you into the life-giving covenant relationship with Him. All you need to do is believe Him. With the chaos and evil that we've all had to experience this past year, please simply come, sit, and see that He is good.

Pastor Yung Kim
ADULT MINISTRIES

### My Deepest Desire

by Grace Park

In the past when I read The Parable of the Talents from Matthew 25:14, it used to fill me with fear. My deepest desire is to hear my heavenly Father say, "Good job, my daughter, I am so proud of you." But this story seemed to show that there was a way to mess up. Two of the servants, one given five talents and the other given three talents, did well and produced more, but the servant with one

talent just buried the talent he was given and received harsh words: "You wicked and slothful servant!" He was tossed into the outer darkness...to that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. How does God's grace fit into this story? This story seemed to highlight that performance is what matters.

Over the years I noticed that the man given one talent thought of his master "as a hard man, reaping where he did not

sow and gathering where he scattered no seed, so I was afraid..." Maybe the real issue wasn't necessarily the poor performance in investment but that he had the wrong view of his master. This caused him to be afraid and choose to hide his talent in the ground.

Recently at church I listened to a sermon entitled "Failure and Forgiveness". It was about Peter and his enormous failure as he denied Jesus, the worst day of his life. I have gone through failures of my own, but what the sermon made me ponder was not my

failures but all the ways that I may miss opportunities by trying to avoid failure. My mind went to this parable again.

This year the Gospel Waltz (steps of repentance, believing in the gospel, and responding in obedience) is reminding me of the true heart and character of God. I am in constant need of repentance for viewing God with this distorted image and not believing in His promises. As I look to Jesus, I see and remember what is the true heart of God. His Crucifixion reveals the price that Jesus was willing to pay to save me. He is not trying to reap where He did not sow; instead He has sown His Spirit in me. I can and should take

steps of obedience. I need not fear that my steps of obedience are strewn with failure. What would it have been like if Peter after his spectacular failure tried to play it safe? Instead, he received Jesus' complete forgiveness, and he took steps to follow Him. I would like to shake off this fear of failing and be like Peter, living by following Christ.

I wonder if the servant who was given one talent did not bury the talent and

tried something else but failed. I wonder if God could still say good job if it wasn't a job well done? As a baby tries to walk and falls down, the baby doesn't get far, but the parents are so excited and proud of these first steps. In the same way, I see myself falling and not getting far. In my own eyes all I can see is failure, and I can't say good job, and I get fearful that this is what God will say too. But then I need to gospel waltz again! For the reality is that God, my heavenly Father, is so proud of these steps.  $\blacksquare$ 

I HAVE GONE THROUGH FAILURES OF MY OWN, BUT WHAT ... MADE ME PONDER WAS NOT MY FAILURES BUT ALL THE WAYS THAT I MAY MISS OPPORTUNITIES BY TRYING TO AVOID FAILURE.

## Identity in Chaos

by James Cho

This past year has been very tiring for various reasons: demanding hours at work, multiple weekly time commitments, serving and loving the people around me as much as I can. As I limped through this busy season, I believe that Jesus placed something in my heart for me to struggle through and meditate on - the idea of my priorities, especially as they relate to my identity as a follower of Jesus Christ.



There were times this year when my mental exhaustion reduced my enthusiasm for things like my willingness to intentionally reach out to people who I had been meaning to reach out to, my willingness to serve others in certain ways, my willingness to intentionally pray for certain things, etc. I also do not want to do these things just to do them, so I have been seeking wisdom in finding a balance within the priorities in my life that would be pleasing to God.

Part of the struggle is continuously identifying how my heart needs to change, and I am grateful that Jesus has been revealing some of those areas to me. As I pray

through them and call on the Lord for strength, I am encouraged by the simple truth that God still loves me and trains and disciplines me for my good, my joy, and ultimately, for His glory. ⓐ

#### A Missional Heart

by Jenny Lee

The can't believe this was my 3rd year of one of our church's discipleship groups, Life on Life Missional Discipleship (LOLMD). It really doesn't feel like it has been 3 years. If you ask me what is the biggest change that happened to me in those 3 years, I would say having a missional heart. Before I joined LOLMD, I didn't have much urgency or compassion towards those who didn't trust in Jesus Christ.

As some of you already know, I work for a secular nonprofit community organization as a marriage and family therapist, and I keep my work and my faith separate. To be really honest, it didn't bother me the fact that most of my clients and coworkers didn't trust Jesus because I thought it was not my responsibility. However, God gradually opened my heart and gave me a conviction that He deeply cares about them and wants to let them know through me that there is someone who loves them, and they matter to him more than anything.

The year 2020 was extremely challenging year for me and for many people and it was a great reminder for me how little I'm really able to do for people around me who are struggling and suffering apart from the Gospel and how much people need Jesus who loves them unconditionally and can give unfailing hope in the midst of so much fear and chaos. I can't freely share the good news of Jesus with my non-Christian clients unless they bring it up which doesn't happen basically, but I often let them know that I am praying for them. I may never find out whether any of them would believe in Jesus and receive eternal life, but I do not want to miss any opportunities to tell them that there is someone who loves them so much that he died for them and his name is Jesus Christ. ②

### God's Plan

by Jennifer Kim

Hello, my name is Jennifer, and I want to share how God really blessed me last year through my small group at our church.

Let me start with last year, the end of January. I was laid off. This was unexpected because I just got promoted a few months before in Nov 2019. I was in shock and my emotions were all over the place. I didn't know how I felt. Anyhow, I texted my small group (called GLF) with the news and just asked for prayers and support which helped me stay calm. As I look back, being laid off was a blessing in disguise from God.

A month later I received a call from a company that my old co-worker referred me to. She reached out to me before, but I turned it down because the company was too far and it didn't meet my "criteria". However, I had second thoughts and reached out to her, letting her know I'd be open when they have another hiring session. That's when they called me and the funny thing was my interview was a week before the Covid shelter in place in March.

Once I went through all the interviews and the testing process I shared with my GLF and asked for their prayers again. About a month later I heard from them and they hired me on as a contractor.

I was so nervous though because I wasn't sure how I was going to perform. I'm not in my 20's and 30's anymore and my memory isn't the greatest. I wasn't sure how fast I was going to catch on. Again, I shared my concerns with my GLF and asked for their prayers and I truly believe that this journey showed how powerful prayer can be

when praying as a family. I found that I was able to catch on quickly and I became one of their top performers.

What I want to share, not so much about the job opportunity, but more that through this journey God opened my eyes and reminded me how even when I can't see it, He has a plan for me and I just need to trust Him. One of my habitual struggles is that I like to know exactly what's going to happen next and plan everything out. However, it doesn't always work like that, and I need to remember that God is in control. I need to let go and have God take the wheel. I need to trust in Him! That's where my GLF helped me stay focused on God and kept me grounded from other distractions. There's a verse that I came across that was very fitting to this:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. – Proverbs 3:5-7

This spoke to me because GLF helped me stay focused and to trust in Him. With that support, God had made a straight path for me.

As of now, I work from home remotely and since November 2020 I've become a full-time permanent employee. My journey isn't over, and God still has more plans for me, yet I get to share with my GLF and have them be part of my spiritual walk. To my GLF, I don't think I express it enough, but thank you for listening, for your love, and for sharing your journey with me as well. **@** 

# Leading Through Example by Nancy Kim

At the same time of going through my LOLMD group (Life on Life Missional Discipleship), I was becoming a mother during that time. It was great to not only learn the Biblical foundations of parenting through my LOLMD group, but to also see real life examples of this in my group of sisters in that group. My understanding of my need for God grew even deeper.

To explain, I realize now that, among other things, God has already been preparing me to be a mother. But before He gave Toby to me and my husband Frank, I had to learn first and foremost that this is God's child before he's our child. This was important to understand because it affects the way we view and raise Toby. I will have to give an account to God afterwards, which is sobering. Secondly, after waiting for 3 years, I knew this gift is not to be taken for granted and should be cherished. I know this is a gift that was not promised for me forever. This gift was my charge to disciple and take care for a short period of time, however long that might be. Knowing this helps me cherish time with Toby even in the most tiring time of the newborn phase. I am always reminded he will only be this small for a short period of time and will only get bigger. So, I try to hold these moments close to my heart.

On the flip side, I also have a lot of fears about this new role as Mom. How do I teach him to love the Lord? Will he follow Jesus? I am pretty bad at missions and reading the Bible. I am impatient and stubborn. Will I pass on these bad traits? Learning about parenting through my LOLMD group has made me think a lot about what type of home we want, how to discipline, what to teach, etc...but most importantly how my relationship needs to be real with God. Because I realize

you cannot hide or pretend to be a "good Christian" with your kids. They will know if you really love God or if you love security, career, or money (or insert any other false god) more.

"KNOW THEREFORE THAT THE LORD YOUR **GOD IS GOD, THE FAITHFUL GOD WHO KEEPS COVENANT** AND STEADFAST **LOVE WITH THOSE WHO LOVE HIM AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS**, **TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS.**"

So how does a sinful person like me become a good mother? In a recent conversation with Pastor Yung, I shared with him about how God has showed me early on that God deeply loves me, and I always wish people could just see how much God also loves them. Pastor Yung said maybe that is the way God is teaching me to share this good news with others, and he challenged me to think about how I can tangibly do this. And I realize this also applies to the message God wants me to share inside my own family. I have the privilege to practically teach Toby daily how God loves him. Through the food he eats, through God's creation around us, through the people God put in his life, and through Jesus' love and sacrifice for him. I am learning God isn't asking for a perfect mother. He just wants me to lead through example of how I am a simple sinner who is saved by Jesus Christ. To let Toby see me

apologizing when I am wrong, me repenting to God, me talking to God, me enjoying life with God, how I run to God in all the little things of life. So hopefully when those big life events up, he will already be walking with God, that running to Yahweh will be second nature. ②

# God's Faithfulness in My Weakness by Sunny Duan

This past year has been quite a roller coaster for me as I had been navigating career changes while contemplating attending graduate school. I spent a lot of time reflecting on my time in the Bay Area and I've been both disappointed in myself, but encouraged by the faithfulness of God. When I first moved to the Bay Area, I had great aspirations to make an impact in the city and to share the good news of Jesus with all the people around me. As I navigated young adulthood, I found that I had to really struggle to hold fast to my vision. I felt that as I became busier and more distracted,

my convictions started to erode and this past year I was surprised to see how far I had strayed. My former discipline and enthusiasm for prayer and sharing the Gospel of Jesus had dwindled and I felt as if I had become ineffective as a witness for the gospel. In many ways, I saw those around me grow and flourish in outreach and in their love and I felt discouraged because as much as I fought for my faith, I felt as if God had been pulling away from me.

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I always prided myself in being able to be disciplined and persistent and yet I found my resolve to be lacking in my reluctance to pray and spend time in the word. In my personal failings, I began to feel far from God, as if He could not love me because I had been so weak. In spite of my hardened heart, God began to speak to me through His word, the Bible, reminding me of His sufficiency for me. He reminded me of His faithfulness towards me throughout my life and how in spite of my shortcomings, He still loves me. Throughout this year I have learned to cling to His promises for me and to pursue sonship instead of servanthood. I realize the many ways that I am broken and flawed but I am encouraged by His love towards me. I am again reminded to have a big faith and to look forward to how God can use me. I am humbled to see my weakness but I am excited to see the ways that God uses my feeble offering to impact the world.  $\blacksquare$ 

### Joyful Obedience

by Damon Moon

It has been a tough year for us since the beginning of 2020. I wish I would be able to say, I read the bible and prayed really hard, and then crazy miracles started to happen. But it can feel like we're at the bottom right now. I want to share what God has been trying to teach me in the midst of my messiness.

I won't go into the details, but around the end of 2019, but both Joy and I felt a tug in our hearts. God was asking us, "Do you trust me? Can you trust me and nothing else?"

Fast forward several months, I was out from my previous job, COVID happened, and the world was upside down. Initially, it felt like we were

crossing the Red Sea, or walking on water. Actually, it still feels like we're crossing the Red Sea, and it is exciting and scary all at the same time.

Since then, God gave me the heart and desire to create a company that builds courage, trust and relationship among people. So during the pandemic, I started a company called be Authentic. God gave Joy the opportunity to rekindle her career in real estate after a long break. For me, I received a part time teaching position at San Jose State University.

Starting a company is often very messy. They say it is a part of the process, but it is painful to swallow the mistakes I've made, and continue to have hope in the series of rejections.

During COVID, staying together as a family gave us the opportunity to express anger and expose our sins. I saw the depth of my sins were way deeper than I ever imagined. And we have much less money in the bank account, but we have more peace in our hearts. Here are the top 3 things I learned.

First, being honest with myself. Probably the hardest thing wasn't money or starting the company, but discovering that I am not the person who I thought I was. But it was an illusion. I thought I was good. I am NOT good. But I learned that Jesus is Good.

Whenever I heard the verse, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" I think "Jesus, you're the only one I can trust. Fill my heart, fill my soul with the Holy Spirit."

Second, God is training me to trust in Him and His timeline. I feel called to be where I am, with the purpose and vision that He has given me. And regardless of the results I may have, I am going to stick with it faithfully.

I am probably still delusional to believe I can "change the world". But as I am trying to change the world, God wants me to change first. He wants to change my heart, change my soul, all so that I can be closer to Him and really understand what trusting in Him means.

Third, Godloves us through people. We received so much love from our church, Revive. From making numerous meals, deliveries, buying groceries, taking the kids out for snacks and drinks, teaching them, just listening to my random thoughts, going to random places and just spending time with me, asking how I was really doing, praying for me, and praying with me...

I don't know how I would have sustained last year without my Revive Church family. When we received your love, we really felt the love from Jesus, speaking right into our hearts saying, "Don't be afraid, I love you, and I will be with you."

Romans 5 says, we know that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and because of that we can rejoice in that suffering. This is my prayer for myself and I hope for others too:

King Jesus, I lived for my flesh for the last 40 years. But you still loved me even in my selfishness and you gave up your life to save me from my sin and to make me your brother. So I dedicate the remainder of my life from now on to live and die for you. Take me, use me and send me to wherever you need me. I will obey and follow you. In Jesus' name Amen. @



### Acceptance in Failure

by Jane Kim

This year was quite challenging and stressful due to many reasons. I started in a discipleship group with an idea that somehow it will completely, well at least 50%, change my life and I will become a brand-new person. But, it didn't seem to work and I started to feel that this wasn't going to help me in any way.

So I started to think of any legitimate reason to get myself out of our weekly meetings and often, I had some urgent things come up. When I felt like my sisters in my group would just give up on me, they continued to chase after me and encouraged me to persevere through the mess.

Being a disciple of Jesus felt like I would have to be someone like the Apostle Paul – get tortured, lose everything in this life, always holding onto faith but nothing else, and die in a tragic way. My biggest lesson ... BEING A
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from this year was that being a disciple of Jesus did not mean I would need to be perfect – because it was not going to happen. I was still Jane who was full of greed, lust, and as sinner as I can often be, but I was still accepted as His child and His disciple, even if flawed. I made countless mistakes throughout the year and still wrestling with many sins but fully grasping the idea of the Gospel and meditating on its truth made me feel extremely secure. This year's discipleship has taught me the most important aspect of following Jesus – never giving up and continuing to try, because God has your back! I would

have never made it this far without my fellow sisters, and I was wondering if this was the reason why Jesus called 12 disciples so they can encourage each other when He goes back to heaven. I digress. I lack so many qualities as His disciple, but with the gospel in my heart, I will continue to walk in Christ as His disciple and not give up and not be afraid.  $\blacksquare$ 

### God in Daily Life

by Mindi Faucette

Tf you have heard the idea of "Sunday Christians" (one who goes to Lehurch on Sunday and then doesn't give a second thought to their  $relationship with God for the \, rest of the \, entire \, week), I am \, embarrassed$ to admit but I realized that is who I was prior to being a sincere disciple following Jesus. I would pick and choose at my wish when I allowed God to be in my daily walk. But I learned through discipleship that following Jesus actually meant being "all in", because He first went all in for me. But the thought of being "all in" intimidated me greatly. The truth was, I didn't want to follow someone else, not even Jesus. My rebellious flesh nature desired to be free to be boss of my own life, my own god. But the reality was that God gently reminded me that I truly needed him at all times. He reminded me in the smallest of struggles that He isn't my God in only the most difficult times but His existence and significance is also realized in the smallest events in my daily life with Him. So I can trust Him, and so I knew I could surrender to Jesus. I became "all in". I feel free in Jesus like I have never felt before, not even when I was being my own boss, due to His unending love and the outpouring of his mercy and grace.

#### Fatherhood

by Andy Yang

Over the past year or two, God has placed a couple issues on my heart. One is regarding parenting. As a father of my four precious children whom I love so much, I am constantly reminded that I am far from what God has called fathers to be, and far from what my children need me to be. I've been an ongoing project of God's for years on this subject, and I thank God that He is persistent with me and continues to reveal more to me. Particularly over the past few months, there were repeated, constant reminders through my own conscience, conversations with my wife, discussions in my discipleship group, and even random messages from people. I guess I'm slow to change and not as cooperative and teachable with God as I'd like to be, but I truly thank God for continuing to pursue me in this issue.

God has shown me more clearly that, because on a macro level I feel like I've willingly and diligently adjusted my entire life and lifestyle around my kids' spiritual health and development, I easily excuse myself from adjusting myself to meet what I perceived as their more "childish" needs. I have a hypocritical tendency to feel that my duty is to care only about the "big" stuff with the kids, giving myself license to be ungracious, irritable, or unsympathetic about the "little" things. I started seeing that my relationship with my kids was based on my terms – I would allow myself to be inconvenienced by them only in my timing, in the ways that I would allow, about the things that I felt were important enough. It is arrogance in my heart that makes me this way. So different from Jesus, who gave of himself for those truly undeserving of him... he came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). If I reflect on Jesus, I

know that my heart's disposition will change and be more willing to be inconvenienced, and not only on my terms.

Another aspect of my relationship with my kids that God is having me work on is to see the log in my own eye before trying to get the speck out of my kids' eyes (Matthew 7:3-5). While I'm not at all fooled into thinking they're purely innocent, and while I am still committed to providing correction and guidance when they err, being aware of the log in my own eye keeps keep me from reacting in a critical and arrogant way.

A very different issue that God has allowed to weigh heavily on my heart is regarding the societal and cultural issues of the current day. Society's accelerated departure from (and war against) God's truth, wisdom, and love has often left me frustrated, unhappy, and concerned. But at the same time, I've noticed that God's truth and light has been all the more clear. The darkening darkness is making God's truth more brilliant than ever before, and interestingly this has brought me a sense of assurance. Another positive effect that I've experienced is that different parts of the Bible are becoming more relatable to me (e.g. the Psalms and the Prophets about the enemies of God and their attempts to get rid of God and his people). Reading these passages is not as much of an intellectual, hypothetical exercise, but very personal now. Similarly, God's promises regarding his kingdom, his salvation, and victory feel more directed toward me.

I don't think I would characterize this past year as victorious or having overcome great obstacles. But I would characterize it as a year in which God has shown that He is faithful to me, He is growing me, and He is with me.

### Community

by Soonho Kwon

If y name is Soonho, and I'd like to briefly share with you a few highlights from my small group at church (our small groups are called GospeLife Families or GLF for short).

The first highlight is the story of our transition into remote bible study. I'm sure all of you have experienced how jarring it was to be suddenly cut off from so many people through Covid lockdown, and we were no different. However, one interesting byproduct of lockdown is that, at least for me, the few people I stayed in touch with began to take up a far greater portion of my life—and that was GLF. The social energy that used to be distributed between coworkers, friends, gym buddies, and more had basically been concentrated into GLF. I found myself sharing more, engaging more, and generally cherishing that time more than before. The facilitators (Sunny, Kathy, James, Matt) put in a lot of effort to get us to show up at the beginning, but soon it was a time that I think everyone started to look forward to. We even had a spontaneous GLF after our quarter ended!! gasp! During the year, some of us went through job changes, moves, and other big life events. We reckoned with a lot of difficult topics, especially those highlighted by the effects of the pandemic. Life went on, perhaps with greater intensity, and I'm really thankful that there was a place to share and process these changes in a Christ-centered way. There's a big difference between a pause and an adaptation, and sometimes it takes a new environment to really shine light on what is authentic and what is a ritual without substance.

I'd also like to share our experience serving together at the Trinity food pantry. Our GLF was able to help serve hundreds of families through the last 2 sessions at the food pantry this year. Originally prompted by the "serve together" suggestion in our GLF, what was a one-time thing turned into what I'm sure will be an extremely recurring event. I'm the type of person where desire to serve, help, and have fellowship is not always met with the drive to make it happen. Plus, the pandemic also gave me a good excuse to stay home in all circumstances and dodge anything that I didn't feel like doing. However, through this simple act of service, I was reminded of the joy that comes from

serving with others. I was reminded of how inspiring it was to see my brothers and sisters show up for those who need them. I was given a glimpse into the love that God has for all His children. To me, it was the perfect example of the justice that was being preached about at



our church. Plus, I got to be a cool traffic control person with Matt, be awed by James' spanish skills, and handle the coldest chickens this world has to offer!

Personally, the pandemic so far has had this dangerous pattern of self-isolation being intertwined with an increasing self-interest. Small problems became bigger, and my concerns kept taking greater precedence because that's all I was exposed to. The thing that constantly broke that, however, was this GLF. Being in an environment where I heard other voices and stories than my own increased my humility and gratitude for the incredible blessings that I had neglected to recognize. And so I'm incredibly grateful to be part of this church through the pandemic, and I am grateful to you all for being so present with me.

Volume



What will the Lord show you and teach you in 2022?

