

Testimony

Fong Finds Meaning in Life

My name is Fong. I am a graduate student in the Department of Biochemistry at University of Saskatchewan. I was born in a small quiet city close to the southeast coast of China.

I grew up in an atheist family, which means both of my parents do not believe in the existence of God or any forms of spiritual beings. And like most other students from China, since elementary school I had been told that a long time ago people started religions due to the lack of the correct knowledge of nature, therefore one day all the religions will disappear by themselves as a result of fully developed science and civilization.

Consequently, in high school where Darwin's evolutionary theory was preached as a "scientific truth", I started to believe that we humans and any other life forms occurred as a result of random selection by nature. At that time I was in a prestigious high school where the most brilliant students from my city would go (although I never saw myself that smart). During this three year period, the parents and teachers decided our ultimate purpose of studying was for nothing but entrance into a top university. I was distressed by the high expectation and pressure from the whole world around me, and I began to ask myself: where was the meaning in my life? What was the purpose of life? At that very moment the only answer coming to my mind placed me almost in a complete desperation: (if I am just a product from natural evolution, there is no meaning of life at all! And we people are in mere existence after years and years of random natural selection; we are no different than an animal, a tree or even a tiny bacterium.) I was so depressed that I had to find myself a hope to count on.

Then I tricked myself by saying: "Fine. If there is no real meaning in my life, I just want to be happy." Following the previous generation of mine, I thought happiness meant having something to show off, such as a well-paid job, a nice place to live or power with authority. So I found a driving force to have my life move on. I passed the entrance examination and went to a university in the capital city, Beijing.

During my years in college I kept following the same dream of success as many other young men, although our success was defined by some other wealthy and powerful men who we did not even know. However, I felt a big hole in my soul, a blank spot which I could find nothing in this world to fit into it. Sometimes I would still question the meaning of life. I searched around the university campus yet never found a good answer. During my last year at college, since my degree in Biological engineering did not promise me an ideal job, I decided to continue studying in graduate school. Then Canada selected me. I was offered an opportunity to study here at the University of Saskatchewan by the College of Graduate Studies and Research. At that time I had no idea how my entire life was going to be changed through this.

I arrived in Saskatoon on August 14th 2008 as an ordinary student. I experienced the same thing that other international students would encounter: excitement about a new country, loneliness because of the absence of family connection etc. When I was seeking friendships and curious about the new culture, I came to know my Chinese friend Cheng. He is a Christian and he invited me to the Bible study in his church. I thought it might be interesting. So I joined the Bible study lectured by Peter and Arlene Block from Forest Grove Community Church. I was interested by their teaching because that was quite different from what I had heard about the Bible.

After my first experience of the Bible I kept attending Bible studies in Forest Grove Church on Sundays. Later on I was invited by my Chinese friends, Tate and Yan, to the Friday Bible Study on the university campus. There I met Gerry and Shirley Falk, Cam and Josie Janzen and Eleanor Lou. I enjoyed every moment with them and they became very close friends to me. I saw all that I learned from Bible started to fill in the emptiness in my heart, and I kept asking myself, "is there a possibility that what Bible says is true?" In the book of John (4:14) Jesus said, "*Those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.*" Now I can understand how thirsty I was when I saw the abundance of the living water inside of all these witnesses of God beside me. However, I could not convince myself that Jesus is the truth.

At the beginning of last summer Gerry and Cam started to visit me, in the university, separately. I was full of skeptical questions then, yet they explained to me the truth of the Gospel and were always patient.

Meanwhile during the summer break of Bible study in Forest Grove Church, I decided to visit the church where Tate, Gerry and Shirley went, so I started coming to Faith River Church. Every Sunday Arnold Stobbe greeted me with his strong hands, which was impressive. I felt very comfortable in this church and I decided to stay. Step by step, I was brought closer to God, until one day it became close enough for me to see my desire of having a relationship with Him and His church.

One night near the end of summer, while sitting in the bedroom I noticed a book lying at the corner of my desk and the book title was **The Song of a Wanderer**. I remembered Gerry had given it to me quite a few months ago yet I never looked into it. Somehow I felt curious about this book and I started reading the first page. At the very beginning it said, "As to those educated men who have grown up from an atheism background, they usually share a common concept, which is atheism stemmed from the ignorance during the early stage of human history, while atheism is the ultimate destiny of progressing civilization." I kept reading and searching for a *nevertheless*. I saw a *nevertheless* immediately and then I could not stop reading it.

It seemed the author had been waiting there a long time for me. Eventually he stopped me in my way and gave me something I was seeking for. He originally came from China as a scholar in Biology and is now serving as a pastor in the United States; he used to be a die-hard atheist and full of skeptical questions toward the Bible. In his book he shared the evidence he had found through his entire journey of searching the truth about Christ. I finished the whole book at 3:00 in the morning, and finally was convinced by truth.

Mark 9 recorded a father of a boy possessed by an evil spirit. He cried out to Jesus, saying, "*I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief.*" (Mark 9:21-24) Although I was convinced that the Bible was true, a little voice was always whispering in my mind: "Is God real?" Time and time again I tried to turn off that little voice but I did not succeed. I need Jesus to help me with my unbelief, too.

I learned from the Bible that by repentance and turning to God through Jesus we would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And I was eager to know if the Holy Spirit was really working in me. I asked Gerry and Cam what was the feeling if the Holy Spirit would live in me. I was told the feeling could be different between different people. Although I believed they were right, I was still not satisfied by the answer.

In October I received a birthday card from Arnold Stobbe through e-mail. He asked if I would be interested to talk with him and to know each other better. I did not respond immediately, yet one day in November I suddenly remembered that invitation and decided to meet him. And that time I had a feeling that some special experience was waiting for me. We had a good time talking with each other. During the conversation I mentioned the name of a church which my friend told me about, and said I felt that church was really odd. Apparently he had also heard about that church before and he was quite surprised. "You are right," he said, "And you have the sensibility from the Holy Spirit. Good for you!"

I was astounded by what he told me, because I had never realized that God had already sent His Holy Spirit to work in me. I was so excited and eager to share this fresh experience. Since I was going to have a regular meeting with Cam in the coming week, I decided to tell him all that had just happened to me. On Thursday November 12th I shared my story and I asked him, "If I have the Holy Spirit with me, can I be considered a child of God?"

"Yes, you can, BUT..." He said. Then he started searching in the Bible. He turned to Romans 10:9-10 and read the verses to me: "*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.*" Then he asked me if I would be willing to confess to God with my mouth. I said yes immediately, and I spoke to God by confessing with my mouth and by asking Jesus to be my Lord.

When I finished my prayer I found Cam had tears in his eyes. To me I thought such a moment could only happen in a family. What an amazing family embraced me!

Once I was a lost sheep wandering in the wild blindly, eventually I found the flock that I belong to. Indeed it was Jesus who found me! Now I am living in the brand new life Jesus gives, and I am even more excited because in this new life He will be with me forever. Through Faith River and all my close Christian brothers and sisters God keeps my new life growing more and more mature.

I used to walk in my own way which was a self-centered path without any peace, but now God gives me abundant joy through giving and serving. Gradually He even gives me the privilege of being His witness during Bible study on campus, when serving international students in Christmas Camp, and even in the church. God brought me to Faith River, and let me witness the strong faith of this church for good reasons. I know one of them is to build me into a part of the church body. That is also the reason why I want to join the membership of this church. It is also a great joy to share the excitement of my relationship with Jesus with my new family and publicly proclaim this joy by following Jesus' example in baptism.

I still remember one day in university when I was having lunch with a non-believer, he asked me, "Why do you believe God? Do you have tragedies in your life?"

"No, I don't," I said, "But in God I find peace, joy and hope."