

I Was Cornered—What Happened Next?

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I Was Cornered

That night in June 1989 may have been the most important night in modern Chinese history. That night witnessed roaring tanks driving through Chang'An Avenue, howling bullets whistling over Tiananmen Square, young people lying in pools of blood, and others dying in the hospitals.

Under that pitch dark sky, anguished and angry people trembled with fear. Even more terrifying was the disappointment, helplessness, numbness, and hopelessness in everyone's eyes. I was young and passionate, but all I could do during that long night was to call out in the darkness: "Oh God, where are you? Why did you let such tragedy fall upon our nation? Why do you allow our people to be so cruel? Where is tomorrow? Where is hope?"

Although I had always thought of myself as an atheist, I was deeply shaken that summer. All my past education and knowledge were now like "the emperor's new clothes," and I felt that I was a walking corpse—lying to myself and to others. All my past pursuits: an enviable position, satisfying income, good benefits, prizes, and medals were now all mere illusions mocking me.

My mother is a Christian. She has always preached the gospel to me, but not only did I refuse to listen, I also cited seemingly scientific arguments to refute it. My mother gave me a Bible, and I added it to the pile with my other books without opening a single page.

When I felt completely cornered, however, the gospel message that my mother shared with me echoed in my ears. The question of "is there really a God" began to puzzle me. Countless times I prayed in my heart that, if God did create this world, he would show himself to me and make me, an ignorant unbeliever, into a believer.

Before I heard any response from God, I was trapped further with more severe harassment. As the only graduate of Peking University in my work unit, I was questioned by all sorts of people in my unit. Evil men set up false charges against me, and I was taken aside to be questioned by a

couple of political staff members. Several of them took turns questioning me, seeking a forced confession.

In order to escape greater danger, I chose to resign and prepared to apply for education in the US. Seeking education in the US was just a pretense for my escape. At that time, I was not able to bear the pressure anymore.

Two years prior to this, when there was great enthusiasm for going abroad, I had casually applied for and received an admission letter from Houston University. Now, this admission letter became my last chance. I had to try my luck at the only path I could think of—going abroad. But soon after, I was refused a visa by the US embassy. It seemed that my only way out was gone.

A Silent Oath

That winter was unusually cold. By the end of November, the pressures I faced made me desperate. I no longer had a job and I had forgotten much of the English I had learned in school. With nowhere else to turn, I decided to try my luck again and apply for a visa a second time. That night my heart was anxious. My future looked dim. Though I knew I should prepare my application, I had no idea where I should start. With great effort, I finally filled out the visa application form. All that was left to do was attach my diploma from Peking University and my admission letter from Houston University.

Looking at the three thin documents of my visa application, I was greatly discouraged. I could not include results for TOEFL or the GRE. Since I had not planned to go abroad in the first place, I had not taken any of those required exams. Also, I could not prove sufficient financial support and had received no scholarships. I sighed in my heart and thought that maybe it was better to just give up. But the thought of future threats and persecution pushed me to brace myself and follow through.

I sighed and reluctantly put the three documents in a big envelope and shoved the envelope into my pile of books. At that moment my hand brushed one of the books, a thick book—the Bible my mother had given me. It felt like an electric shock, and my heart started pounding. Driven by an unknown impulse, I thought: why not ask God? If God really exists, then this omnipotent God should be able to point me in the right direction.

I silently whispered in my heart, “God, if you really exist, and if you really are omnipotent, please tell me what my next step should be. Please guide me. Whether I should apply for the visa, whether I could obtain one, it all seems impossible for man to achieve. Maybe I can only rely on you now. Oh God, guide me with your word.”

I opened the Bible, and there I saw Psalm 23.

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still
waters.
He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his
name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will
fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they
comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you
anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and
I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

After reading this psalm, I felt some of the clouds in my heart lift. I felt my extinguished confidence return. I made a silent vow in my heart: God, if you bring me through the valley of the shadow of death and prepare a table before me, I will follow you all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

“This Is God’s Gift”

The next day was overcast and cold. Early in the morning, I set out for the US embassy in Beijing, carrying the thin envelope with me. From *Zhongguancun* in the northwest corner of Beijing to *Xiushuijie* in the southeast corner is quite a long way. By the time I arrived at the US embassy, it was past 10 am. The gate of the US embassy was already crowded with people and the line for visa interviews was three to four hundred people long. Seeing the long line, I was very discouraged. I thought that by the time I got my turn, the embassy would be closed. I asked around and realized that other people had lined up overnight.

As I chatted with others in line, I saw their thick application documents and felt very ashamed. When I told the others that I had no English test score, no financial guarantee, and no scholarships, their looks pierced my heart like arrows. I knew there would be no chance for me.

But I was not ready to give up. I walked past the crowd to the front gate of the embassy hoping to learn more. The gate of the embassy was locked, and only a small side door was open. A group of men in uniform was searching everyone entering through the side door. It looked like I had absolutely no chance. Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd. Military police were chasing away the many onlookers, and before I could react, the crowd had drawn back, and I was exposed at the very front.

Just as a few fierce-looking military men were about to lay hands on me, two embassy staff walked out and blocked them. The staff members pointed at me and a few people behind me, asking if we were there for visa interviews. Before I could answer, they led us into the courtyard of the embassy. Still disoriented and breathing hard, I didn't pay attention to which way the others went. When I finally gathered my thoughts, I realized I was alone in the courtyard. I had my thin envelope under my arm and stood there as still as a statue, not knowing what to do next.

The embassy had just finished remodeling and looked totally different from the last time I had come for a visa application. I hesitated as to which way I should go to line up for my interview. Just then, a blond-haired blue-eyed staff member came out to the courtyard to smoke. I waited until he was almost done and then walked up to him, planning to ask him where I should go.

When he saw me walking toward him, he gestured for me to follow him. When we entered the building, he pointed me toward the lines at the interview windows. I looked carefully at the windows hoping to avoid the young female officer who had denied my application last time. I carefully chose the window of a kind-looking, older woman and walked up to that line.

As I was waiting in line, I noticed that the people leaving this window looked either frustrated and dejected, or disappointed and angry. Now I was nervous again. In a line of people who failed the interview, surely, I would also fail. But before I could decide to switch lines, my turn came. I nervously opened my envelope and handed my application materials to the officer. I was too nervous to even look up.

The female officer didn't lift her head either. And then she started.

“Hello, I'm Nancy.”

I automatically replied: "Hello, this is my application form."

"Do you have English scores?"

"No."

"Do you have a financial guarantee?"

"No."

"Do you have any scholarships?"

"No."

The officer asked me no more questions, but rather fetched the officer who had denied my application the last time. This was what I dreaded. Last time she rejected my application because of "immigration tendencies." The two officers exchanged a few words. I couldn't hear their conversation clearly, nor would I have understood much. Likely they were discussing the reason my application was refused last time. I was terribly nervous and expected the worst.

The officer looked down at my application again. She asked me while writing something down on my application form, "You graduated from Peking University?"

Finally, I was able to raise my head and answer, "Yes."

Officer Nancy raised her head also. And I saw a smile on her face. She handed me a yellow note and softly said, "This is God's gift. Happy Thanksgiving."

Just like that, I got my visa for study in the US.

I Will Sing!

When I stepped out of the embassy, sunshine had broken through the cloudy sky and shone on me. The crowd in front of the embassy had left, but I didn't feel lonely at all. My heart was filled with warmth and excitement. I had no one to share my joy with. Who would believe that somebody with neither a TOFEL score nor a GRE result,

with no financial guarantee and no scholarships, could get a student visa to the US? This could only be the grace and miracle of God. On my way home, the song *To God Be the Glory* echoed in my heart—one of the few worship songs I knew. The beautiful melody and the wonderful lyrics lingered in my heart.

When I got home, I reviewed every detail of my application process. It was God's hand guiding me through each step. And all that I went through was filled with his goodness and blessing. In that crowded group, he led me to the front of the lines; when the military men sought to harm me, he led me away from harm; when I was scared, he was with me and carried me forward; when I hesitated, he gave me direction; when I was weak, he made me strong.

I said in my heart, "You do things just as you have promised. When my heart was hard as stone and I refused to confess your existence, you guided me; when I had nothing and had no knowledge of you, you protected me; when I had no one to rely on and did not believe in you, you loved me."

I recalled my vow the night before. I must believe in God, study his word, and be a Christian. For the first time in my life, I sincerely prayed to God:

God, I thank you. I truly believe that you exist. I willingly confess you as the creator of the universe and everything in it. I willingly believe in salvation that comes through the blood of Jesus Christ. I want to receive the Holy Spirit from you. Please be with me, Lord God.

I will sing! Giving thanks to God who leads me by his own hand; who forgives my sin so that I will not perish but have eternal life; who chases away the darkness and shines his truth upon my path, so that I can walk without fear; whose grace preserves me, teaching me gratefulness.

From that moment on, I believed in God and became a Christian.

More about the Author

Yongshang You was born in Shanghai. He majored in Chinese at Peking University from 1983 to 1987. He became a believer in 1989

while in China and was baptized at the Houston Chinese Church in 1990.

Favorite Scripture: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalm 23)

This testimony is found on pages 128–135 of 《从未名湖到生命泉（一）：百名北大学子的信仰之旅》 (Peking University Testimonies I) available from [ReFrame Ministries](#).