

# God's Gracious Hand in My Life

By Jing KONG (Chemistry, class of 1992)

## **I Could Not Deny the Existence of God**

I was an atheist from a young age. When the Tiananmen incident of 1989 happened, I was in middle school, and it left a deep impression. My conclusion was: a student ought to study hard, instead of spending time on such useless things; the only tangible and visible success was good grades and good studies.

Guided by such thoughts, I spent my four years in university “deaf to the events of the world,”<sup>1</sup> and limited myself to my own narrow perspective. When I graduated from college and was preparing to study in America, a church near my future school sent me a letter, welcoming new students, and mentioning that they could help with shopping and settling in. I threw the letter resolutely in the trash, thinking to myself, I really need to keep my distance from such people. At the time, I thought that anyone who believed in God was surely out of his or her mind.

In this way, I continually rejected church invitations to join various activities throughout the first two years of my doctoral study.

In my third year, several classmates from Peking University transferred to the school where I was studying to do their doctoral studies. I was very happy with this reunion of classmates. Three of them had already become Christians—Zhang Zhongqiao, Jiang Chunhui, and Shen Hong. Though Shen Hong had come here the year before, I only just learned that the school had a “fellowship,” with activities each week. Initially I thought that they were absolutely brainwashed. Who would still believe, after so

many years of school, that there is a God in this world? But because we spent a lot of time together as classmates, I would often hear them talk about it, and came to feel that the belief of Christians was not as ridiculous as I had initially thought. Occasionally I joined their fellowship activities.

At the time, the fellowship would invite a different speaker for each gathering, to share on various topics relating to faith. One time, it was Professor Qian Kun from the University of San Francisco, sharing on evolution and God's creation. Professor Qian Kun mentioned that evolution was merely a theory. If we analyze the evidence supporting evolution from a perspective of conducting scientific research, we find that the evidence is not sufficient to prove the question. For example, studying structures through comparative anatomy can neither prove evolution nor disprove creation. Furthermore, some "evidence" comes from people's imagination. For example, the imagery of the Peking Man at Zhoukoudian is drawn from the imagination based on a few fragments that are supposed to be skull pieces. Professor Qian Kun specializes in marine biology, and he mentioned the discovery of the Chengjiang fossils and the "Cambrian Explosion." In geology, the Cambrian Explosion is considered the beginning of the Cambrian period, when the vast majority of invertebrates appeared within a brief window of a couple of million years. The academic community generally acknowledges that this cannot be explained by evolution. On the other hand, this matches exactly the theory of creation in the Bible.

Though I had always taken the theory of evolution as truth, now that I had heard Professor Qian Kun's speak, I suddenly felt as if I had been taught lies. My resistance to the existence of God and God's creation began to break down. After this, for a time, I searched for more information and

listened to more discussions, and I increasingly felt that evolution—with its theory of something coming from nothing, of simplicity evolving to complexity—was too improbable. Darwin’s book is titled *On the Origin of Species*, not the origin of life. Life is so complex and wonderful; how could it begin on its own? How can a person’s soul and conscience evolve?

Through a period of increased study and consideration, and through joining fellowships and studying the Bible, I came to conclude that “this world was created” was the most reasonable answer to be found. I could no longer deny God’s existence.

And so, I was baptized in 2001 and became a Christian.

### **A Change of Life Direction**

I graduated with my doctorate in 2002. Before graduation, my advisor encouraged me to apply for a teaching position at the school. But I have always been very introverted and felt that teaching at the school would be too difficult. Since I had partnered with some colleagues from the NASA Ames Research Center during my doctoral studies, I accepted their invitation to work with them. At the time, my husband Dong He was already working in the Bay area. He was baptized during Christmas, 2001. Since the Research Center was also in the Bay area, we didn’t even have to move.

But when I started working, I found that I felt completely lost. There really was no work-related stress at the time; it was a nine to five job, and no overtime on the weekends. All we needed to do was find an appropriate research direction. We did not even have the stress of

applying for funding. However, on the one hand, I did not know what direction to take in my own research, and on the other, I had a lot of negative emotions when it came to research. I had studied chemistry, and my doctoral research was in nanomaterials. I found that research wasted a lot of resources for the sake of writing a couple of papers. Furthermore, at the time I misunderstood the purpose of papers, and felt that writing a paper was like reporting the news; even I would not go back and read my own papers from a couple years ago. What would be the purpose of doing this kind of research? It seemed like it offered no contribution to society. So, what was my purpose in life? It felt like I could look into the future, seeing myself at retirement, yet unable to find value in anything I had done. I felt very pained and very lost.

I thank God for his mercy. A sister who was leading fellowship at the time lent me a copy of Hudson Taylor's biography. Hudson Taylor arrived in China in 1853 to share the gospel and spent the rest of his life in China. When he went to China back then, he faced truly unimaginable difficulties. But his life had influenced and blessed countless people. I read the book in one sitting on the plane. From reading his biography, I felt that his life was so worthwhile. It had eternal value. This was something I desired.

At the time I thought that I ought to be a missionary as well. I considered this for a time but felt that since my husband and I were new believers, and our parents were not yet believers, being a missionary seemed unlikely. But I also felt that if I were to switch to teaching at school, then maybe I could encounter more students and colleagues, and tell them about the Jesus Christ that I knew. Then my work would have eternal value. So, I decided to transfer and apply to teach at the school.

I started my work at NASA in July of 2002. By November, I felt like I could not continue at all because of the pain I mentioned above. However, the deadlines for applications for teaching positions in chemistry were before the end of the year, so I would not make it. But I did not want to wait another year, so I grit my teeth and applied in the area of chemical engineering and materials engineering (the deadline for the engineering department was later). I told my doctoral advisor the change in my thinking. Coincidentally, the electronic engineering and computer science departments were looking for someone to do material synthesis and asked my advisor if he could recommend any students. So, my advisor recommended me. I was hired after the interview. I never thought that I would work in electronic engineering and computer science after having studied chemistry, but this is what happened. I often think that this was all part of God's wonderful plans. We as humans truly have nothing we can boast of.

### **Rescued from My Depression**

When I first became a believer, my understanding of God was partial and contained many misconceptions. Back then I understood that God existed, and believed that the world was created by him, that eternity was real, and so on. But sometimes I wondered, did God create the world then leave it to keep spinning on its own? Even though I was already baptized by then, I did not truly feel that I was a sinner, needing the salvation of Jesus Christ. I felt that I was merely imperfect. The reason I became a Christian was because Jesus is the most perfect model I had ever encountered and is worth our imitation. When reading about God's authority, however, I often had negative emotions, asking questions such as why God

demanded we worship him.

Yet thanks be to God. He continues to guide me through different events (actually, every event) in my life so that I come to understand him.

In 2004 I returned from The Netherlands to work in Boston. During the second semester, I applied for a laboratory to be built, but that brought problems. Because I had never expected to work in a school environment, I now suddenly was faced with many problems I had never considered or dealt with before: deciding on a research direction, applying for funding, recruiting students, directing students, purchasing equipment, handling finances, etc.

Yet even more painful was that I felt like no matter what I did, I did a terrible job at it. I blamed myself daily, and my mood was terrible. At the time I was unwilling to tell people around me that I was a Christian, feeling that it would bring shame to the Christian name. In my eyes at the time, God was a cold, calculating master with strict standards. He was watching my every mistake, ready to punish me.

In this way, I sank into a deep depression within months. I felt like nothing mattered anymore. Ending my own life seemed to be a simple choice. The only problem was that at the time I thought that if I killed myself, I might end up going to hell, and that was a result I definitely did not want.

I thank God for his good will. Only in that painful struggle did I realize that I was such a sinner, that I so needed the salvation of our Lord Jesus. I believed that only the Lord Jesus could save me, so I tried every way I could to get his help.

In the summer of 2005, my husband Dong He and I both attended a retreat held by Ambassadors for Christ. A sister staying in the same cabin prayed with me and recommended Bible study methods used by Bible Study Fellowship (BSF). While there I also read *Victory Over the Darkness* by Neil Anderson. It helped me realize for the first time who I really was. Because of God's grace and the movement of the Holy Spirit, we accepted the Lord Jesus as our savior, and became our Father's children.

I thank our Father. Through my depression, not only did he lead me to understand my sin and his love, but he helped me recognize the idols in my heart and find salvation. All this time, work and my achievements in work were what I valued most. After starting my teaching job, I really wanted to accomplish important work achievements to prove my ability and gain recognition. But through this painful experience, I realized that none of that was important anymore. On the contrary, I saw the Father's love, and once I have his love and his acceptance, the love and acceptance of people were no longer important. Such a great liberation and relief!

### **Changes in Work and Family**

Growing up in mainland China, I had thought since a young age that there was nothing wrong with lying, especially if the lie was well meant. Isn't that so? If a patient in the hospital has a terminal illness, the doctors will not tell the patient himself. And we will righteously explain that this was for the good of the patient. Only after I became a Christian, did I learn from a sermon at church that lies come from the evil one, Satan, who is the enemy of God. No matter what the lie is, even if we think it was "well meant," it comes from the evil one.

Who can define "well meaning"? Once I realized this, I began to seriously

confront the untruthful words in my life. Do not think that this was simple. I faced many failures in the process. But I thank the Father for his mercy, that we can come before him in prayer at any time, seeking his help. I realized that the difficulty came from within my heart, and I increasingly saw how proud I was. For example, I had studied chemistry, but was now teaching electronic engineering, so had to learn as I went. When students asked me questions that I could not answer, what was I to do? Especially if the question seemed basic, I did not want to lose face. But I found that pretending to know what I was talking about did not work. The best approach was to sincerely tell the students right from the start that I came from a chemistry background, and this was the first time I was teaching this course, so we could all learn together.

I had mentioned before that I had many negative emotions about doing research. This was the case the first couple years that I worked at the school. But I could not avoid doing research, since this was part of my job. I also had many questions and negative views of “work,” since I saw people around me sacrificing their families and health all in the name of work. And it was especially true when work was an excuse to avoid spending time with God.

God changed me through this process. When I read the first two chapters of Genesis, I learned that God placed Adam in Eden, and had him name all the animals—this helped Adam use the knowledge and logic God had given him and helped him learn about and manage the amazing world God had created. I realized that work was God’s gift to humanity, and we ought to use it well. We, as researchers, were exploring God’s amazing creation every day. I remember once hearing someone describe doing research in North American schools this way: students are the slaves, and teachers the slave drivers, pushing students daily to produce more data



and results. Although this was an exaggeration, it gave me a very clear reminder: I must not push my students. We are exploring God's amazing creation together; we simply had different responsibilities.

Thinking back over God's guidance in our work in the past dozen or so years, there is one thing that could not be clearer: all our new knowledge and discovery is a blessing from God.

In terms of family, thanks be to God, Dong He and I attended a "Loving Couples' Retreat" organized by our church in 2006, and we both benefitted greatly. The retreat lasted for a weekend, and afterwards we joined a follow-up small group of four to five families, which met every couple of weeks. It was in this small group that I first experienced the beauty of fellowship. To this day, I can still see vividly the love and help those brothers and sisters offered me.

Dong He and I were married in 1998, but it was not until 2006 that we had our first child. all along I had felt that I did not really know how to live (especially before becoming a Christian), and I did not know how to respond to many things. How then could I teach a child? So, I never wanted a child. I thank God for changing me, for guiding my life each day with his words, so that I am no longer lost and confused. God has also enabled me to see the beauty of family, and he has blessed us with three wonderful children.

I remember after having our first child, I struggled for a time about whether to quit my job to spend more time with my child. I saw many sisters at church doing this. I prayed about this for a while, and one time when I was going over the material for BSF, I saw a question asking if we lived "solely" for God. I realized that no matter what we do, the important

thing is that we do it for God. I thought about the goal of my work at school, how we had my parents-in-law helping at home, and I chose to continue working. But thinking through this helped me cherish all the more the time I spend with my children after work and on the weekends.

We then had our second and third children. In their first couple of months, I would bring them to the office with me, and I very much enjoyed that time. It blessed me greatly. I thank God for giving me a job with a greater level of flexibility. While we continue telling the good news of the Lord Jesus to those around us, it's the children in our home who most in need of hearing the gospel in our own experiences.

On this earth, we might have loving parents. But even the love of parents is limited. Yet the love of our Heavenly Father is far greater than any parent's love. His love is so broad and long and high and deep, so gentle and attentive. May our hearts be completely softened by his love, and may we completely surrender to him, learning to trust in his love, and live every day.

A condensed version of this article was first published on *Territory* (WeChat public account: newjingjie). It has been edited and expanded for the purpose of this book.

### **More about the Author**

Jing KONG was born in Tangshan. She was at Peking University from 1992 to 1997 earning a degree in chemistry. She now lives in Massachusetts. Jing Kong became a believer in 2000 in California and was baptized in 2001 at the Home of Christ Church in Menlo Park. She is now serving part-time in the City Outreach Ministry of the Chinese Bible

Church of Greater Boston.

Her favorite Bible passage is: “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.” (Philippians 3:8–10)

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<sup>i</sup> Translator’s note: This phrase is the first half of a Chinese idiom, the remaining half is “buried in the books of the sages.”