

Meet God at the Mountain Top!

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Everyone meets God at a special time. But I hope you are not like me—I met God at the top of a mountain.

The Return of the Prodigal Son

My name is Tiepeng Lv. People call me “Old Tie.” I was born at a tree farm at the foot of Changbai Mountain. Both of my parents attended private schools and were considered well-educated people. Because of this, they both had great expectations for me. I grew up in a world of ice and snow and I loved nature.

When I was young, I hung out with the local gangs, and I had terrible grades at school. Once my homeroom teacher publicly shamed me by pointing straight at me, and saying, “If you continue this way, it will take a miracle for you to go to college!” Not long after that, a classmate and I stole some alcohol from the shop on campus. After we got drunk, we went to class. The senior administrator of the school found out and beat me. I was frightened and ran away from home for the first time. I went to a county town to hang out with my cousins. We went into the mountains and worked on the country road. We also picked mushrooms and caught crawfish. It was such a fun time. However, within a few days, my mom caught me. The following fall semester I had to retake all my eighth-grade courses.

However, I still didn’t learn my lesson. My first day back in school, I got in trouble. My new homeroom teacher slapped me in the face and that woke me up. I finally settled my heart and started to study. To my surprise, the exercises which I had found difficult to do in the past now became easy. Soon my abilities

started to show, and I participated in all kinds of math, physics, and chemistry competitions held by the schools in that northeast forest region. I won a lot of awards in those competitions. When I started high school, my scores ranked me just below 90 of my classmates. At that time, even the highest score of our school didn't reach the admission score of the key universities in our provincial capital. Despite this, my high school teachers were very committed and did whatever they could to help their students.

So even though educational resources were scarce in our forest region, after three years of perseverance and hard work, I entered Tsinghua University.

The Pressures of Tsinghua

Every student at Tsinghua felt intense peer pressure. They came to Tsinghua as one of the top students in their own high schools. But here at Tsinghua, only one person could achieve first place. Many students felt the same pressure. A few even chose extreme ways to escape the pressure. I felt the same way. It was not fun to drop from the very top to the bottom.

In the fall of 1990, I visited Peking University campus with my classmates and saw a mountaineering association recruiting event. I decided to try this challenging sport. Towards the end of that year, several upperclassmen and I started the Tsinghua Mountaineering Club (THMC) and began winter training.

In 1991, THMC climbed Laji Mountain in Qinghai and Geladandong Peak (the source of Yangtze River) during the winter and summer breaks. Unfortunately, I was not able to go either time because my parents were concerned about my safety.

In the summer of 1992, I went to climb Mount Everest with three Tsinghua

alumni. When we arrived at the camp site, at 6000 meters above sea level, I had acute altitude sickness and had to return to our base camp. Two of the alumni reached the North Col, which is about 6850 meters above sea level.

In the summer of 1994, I teamed up with Tsinghua alumni, and once again I attempted to climb Geladandong Peak. But before the team met up at base camp, I had to leave and returned to Beijing for personal reasons.

During my time at Tsinghua, the few times I tried mountaineering were unsuccessful. Not once did I reach the mountain top. I started to doubt whether I was suited for mountaineering. Beside mountaineering, I also joined the gymnastic club and the choir at school. Being busy with extracurricular activities helped ease some of the pressure, but my academic performance became worse and worse.

When I graduated, I failed three courses, and I had to retake the exams to get passing grades. Had I failed one more course, I would not have been able to graduate.

A Decade with Nothing

When I graduated in 1995, I successfully started my career at a US-funded auto parts company—thanks to my good oral English, which was the result of hanging out with international students who also loved mountaineering. Although I was not a good student, I was quick to adapt and learn new things at work. It didn't take long for me to understand industrial sales. And since I was willing to put effort into thinking and doing research, I quickly learned the procurement process, technical requirements, and key decision makers of the major auto companies at the time.

However, without “connections,” how could I get into the super competitive OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) market? I always hated groveling before others, so I left my work in the automobile industry and entered the marketing industry, which I had wanted to get into for a long time. I became the China marketing manager of European Mead Johnson Vitamin Effervescent Tablets. However, unexpectedly, a few years later, the company changed its strategy and moved from Beijing to Guangzhou. The person in charge was replaced by a Vietnamese boss, whose management style was much different. Therefore, I decided to leave and start my own business.

Like most entrepreneurs, after I spent a lot of time, money, and energy, and dreamt a lot of dreams, my business reached a bottleneck. The enthusiasm and passion I had at the beginning were destroyed by reality. Had I continued, I would have faced fierce competition in the industry and decreasing prices and profits. I was both physically and mentally stressed. My relationships with friends were also under a lot of pressure. The loss was immeasurable, and I decided to leave everything and pulled myself out of that business.

During this time, I was completely lost. I had no idea where to go next. At the same time, some of my classmates had already become successful. A few of them were municipal party secretaries. Many of them were key personnel in different enterprises. They had already made a lot of money and had their own houses and cars. I, however, stood at the crossroads of my life, possessing nothing, and having no direction. Like a sailboat in the vast sea, I could feel the wind, and yet had no idea where it would take me.

For about three years, I frequently visited Buddhist temples, Taoist temples, and Christian churches, hoping to find a reliable faith. I even wanted to go to Tibet to find a temple and live there for two or three months meditating on the

meaning of life. Of course, I never thought about becoming a monk.

The only things worth mentioning during these ten years are the small achievements I made in mountaineering. Because I was one of the first people who started mountaineering in China, I received the China Mountaineering Association's No. 00001 coach and No. 00001 referee certificate.

Around 2000, I participated in several national rock-climbing championships and ranked among the top ten. I was sponsored by an Australian outdoor brand named “Sea to Summit,” which was represented in China by a friend of mine. I also coached some outdoor instructors around the country. That’s all I could boast about.

Gale-Force Winds on Yuzhu Peak

At the end of April 2005, before closing the company and leaving Guangzhou, I watched the movie *The Passion of Christ*. When God’s tears flowed onto the ground, I couldn’t help but tear up as well. At that time, I had been attending church for a few months, had restarted reading the Bible, and I attended family gatherings regularly. But I hadn’t believed in the Lord yet, and I didn’t believe that there really was a God in this world, because I couldn’t see him and couldn’t touch him.

Every year, Qinghai Mountaineering Association holds a mountaineering festival on Mount Yuzhu. During the May holiday of 2005, at the invitation of Weidong Li the vice-chairman of Qinghai Climbing Association, I packed my bags and headed west. In my backpack, I put a Bible and a copy of Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech, “I Have a Dream.” On the train to Qinghai, I read “I Have a Dream” carefully, but I still couldn’t figure out my dream, and I was not sure where to go in my life. At Xining Grand Mosque, I bought a copy of the

Koran. When I found that many verses in the Koran came from the Bible, I decided to put it down and study the Bible seriously.

Just like in 1992, soon after I arrived at the base camp on the southern slope of Mount Yuzhu, I began to have altitude sickness, which lasted for four or five days. I couldn't sleep and threw up everything I ate. Later, I descended to Golmud, rested for a night, and recovered a bit.

On May 3, I returned to the base camp. There I met my old partner, Yun Zhou. We had a good talk and decided to go straight to the top and descend immediately after. That way we wouldn't have to rest at Camp One. That night, I still couldn't sleep well. I tossed and turned in the tent and couldn't fall asleep. I kept remembering what had happened in the past.

On May 4 at five o'clock in the morning, the sky was still dark and there was no moonlight. Yun Zhou woke me up and asked the cook to prepare us a simple breakfast. The two of us left the base camp around six o'clock. Before we took off, the cook—Old Zhong—gave me a headlamp and some food to eat on the way. At the time I didn't expect that the headlamp would come in handy. The two of us walked on the bumpy riverbed as the sky got brighter. On the way up, at about 5400 meters above sea level, I felt tired and started to recite the Lord's Prayer. Suddenly I felt that my backpack was lighter. When I was tired again, I thought about the scene I saw in *The Passion of Christ*, where Jesus was whipped with a scourge and carried a heavy cross. Compared with the cross he carried, the ice axe in my hand and the mountaineering bag on my back was nothing.

Around 8:30, Yun Zhou and I arrived at Camp One. After changing hiking shoes and resting for a while, we took off at 9:30. After a few hours of hard climbing,

we finally reached the top of Yuzhu at around 1:30 pm. The snow was heavy. We quickly took some photos on the summit and began to descend. However, the descent was not smooth. The Tibetan Mountaineering Association had already removed all the ropes. We quickly lost our way. My physical strength was almost gone, but my partner Yun Zhou was still in good condition. However, moments later, we were separated in the blizzard. Yun Zhou went down to find a way and did not return for a long time.

Soon I was covered in snow, and the wind blew snow down my neck and in my clothes. Within minutes, I became a snowman, squatting there on the steep snow mountain. I tried to find the footprints left by Yun Zhou but the heavy snow had covered his footprints. In a world of white snow, I found nothing. With my remaining consciousness I knew that I must descend immediately, or I would freeze to death there.

After about two hours, I came to the other side of the valley. There I found a small frozen lake with no traces of roads around the area. I resolutely decided to go west. Unfortunately, the weather changed suddenly, and a strong, gale-force wind brought heavy snow. It nearly blew me away several times. Before going up the mountain, I had watched the movie *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol* and saw the snowstorms on the Gobi Desert. In the movie, there were also wolves and quicksand. Now all I could see was snow, and I was all alone. I desperately hoped to have something to rely on, but there was nothing.

I couldn't help but complain: "God, why are you so unfair! You might as well let me die on the mountain, and then I would be like a hero dying in the Gobi Desert!" Who would have thought I would have such vain thoughts when I was on the edge of death? However, at this very moment, the wind and the snow quieted down, and the sky became clear. I could see a few hundred meters

ahead. It was as if God was showing his power to me. A car track appeared in front of me. Even after the wind and the snow, the track was clear enough to see. I didn't have time to thank God but hurried to follow the track while it was clear.

When I arrived at a riverside, I couldn't find the track anymore. I was zigzagging back and forth and slowly expanding the search area but I wasn't able to find the track again. In my desperation, I once again complained to God, "God! Are you making a fool of me? You gave me a ray of hope, but then took it away!" I was about to die and then found some hope, and yet again this hope was taken away. However, just when I finished complaining, I found the track right next to my right foot! I quickly continued to follow the track as the snow began to fall again.

In Qinghai, it didn't get dark until nine o'clock in the evening. With my headlamp on, I walked unsteadily in the heavy snowstorm. At that time, I was extremely sleepy and had many hallucinations. I still remember clearly one hallucination that happened repeatedly. In it, I would find the track again and follow it to a village not too far away. Someone would whisper in my ear, "They already know you are safe; you should just rest here. Tomorrow a car will be sent to take you back." However, at the same time, there was another voice in my mind saying, "You haven't seen them yet: if you fall asleep, you will die."

At three o'clock, I was completely awake. No more drowsiness! At that moment, I vaguely saw a hazy, dim light in the distance under the stars, just like lights on a pasture. I focused my mind and walked in the direction of the light, confident that I would find people there.

At that moment, I remembered that Jesus was crucified at the age of 33 and resurrected three days later. He was exactly 33 at the time! I began to pray for my partner Yun Zhou, hoping that God would keep him safe as well. A miracle happened! As I was praying, I felt the guilt that I had carried for a long time, which had been getting heavier and heavier, was completely gone! In fact, I felt I didn't just become white, but transparent!

At five o'clock that morning, a beam of light shone through from the distant mountains. After such a long period of isolation, I felt like I was finally back to civilization. However, it wasn't until 6:30, shortly after dawn, that I reached a road and was fortunate to have a car pull over. Although tired, I still took a little pride in my experience. I told the driver that I had lost my way on the mountain and asked them to take me to the Kunlun Mountain Pass. However, they were not going there. They dropped me off a few kilometers away from the mountain pass and went straight into the mountains.

Normally I could walk a few kilometers within an hour. However, I was exhausted by that time. Every twenty steps or so, I had to lie on the ground and rest for a while. After three hours, when I was about to set foot on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, I suddenly heard a motor behind me. I turned back and looked. It was the minibus from the base camp! I was overjoyed and forgot all my exhaustion and grievances. I proudly raised my right hand in a victory pose. A group of brothers and sisters rushed out of the minibus towards me with tears in their eyes. No one believed it was true! After 14 hours of snowstorm last night and 18 hours with no contact, they had arrived here at the sunny Kunlun Mountain pass, and found me alive!

Answered the Call from God

Going through such danger and coming back alive made me believe that there is a supernatural God in this world who will answer and rescue us when we cry out to him.

At that time, I was so eager to go to church gatherings and listen to God's word, that I would attend every day that I could. I was also happy to share my testimony of experiencing God on Mount Yuzhu. I was eager to tell my friends who had not yet believed in the Lord that they should believe in the true and living God.

Half a month later, I was baptized at the Li River in Guilin. I was zealous and sought to go to church every day. Later, at the campus fellowship of Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, I met Xiaojuan Wang, who was a full-time campus evangelist at that time and who later became my wife. We returned to Beijing and started our new life.

In the next few years, my daughter and son were born one after the other. My wife stayed home to take care of the kids while I worked diligently at a foreign company. It was a good life. However, the trials and tribulations of family life have changed me a lot, and I have come to appreciate God's goodness and trials more. As a native of northeastern China, I liked to hang out with my classmates and friends, and I also liked to work overtime. As a result, I neglected my wife. After several unpleasant conflicts, I came to realize my responsibilities as a husband and thought hard about how to balance work, friendships, and family. Even after my two children were born, it took me a long time to get used to my role as a father. I had to change from caring just for myself to caring about the whole family. During this time, my wife put more effort into the family than I did. Thinking back now, I feel ashamed.

At the beginning of 2010, I felt the call of God. I gave up the high salary management job at Financial Times and joined the Cedar Leadership Organization. I worked with Dr. Xiao Zhao, and we served business fellowships and churches in mainland China together.

In 2012, I joined Leadership Development Institute in the United States and continued to serve Christians in the workplace. I also began to focus my attention on Christian education.

In 2013, together with my coworkers, we set up the first Christian private school in Tianjin, and also supported the establishment of several other schools and the development of teacher training. At that time, I saw the lack of and need for Christian education in China. I was very concerned about it and yet felt powerless.

In 2017, my children were not doing well in a Christian school, so, I decided to move my family to South Carolina, USA to study Christian education at Columbia International University (CIU). I received a master's degree in the summer of 2018. While still studying at CIU, I was part of a team to create a platform that provided Christian education information for Christian schools in mainland China. We collected, organized, and shared advanced Christian education concepts and experiences from North America. We also translated and published some classic books, hoping to help Christians in mainland China avoid detours in their education of their children and do a better job of raising the "second generation of believers" for the Lord.

In the fall of 2019, I began to study for my doctorate in Christian education at Columbia International University, hoping to bring biblical Christian education philosophy and methods back to China. During that time, I also pursued a

master's degree in divinity in order to gain a deeper knowledge of God and better spread the gospel.

I am convinced that our generation of Christians, who bears the burden of Christian education, needs to promote Christian education to China, so that every Christian family can take up the responsibility of Christian education, establish more Christian schools and co-learning groups, and work together with pastors to win the next generation for God!

(This article was first published on the WeChat public account of CCLife; it was slightly modified when included into this book.)

More about the Author

Tiepeng Lv received his bachelor's degree from the automotive department at Tsinghua University (Class of 1990, graduated in 1995). He worked for European and American companies such as United Signal Corporation, Amp Corporation, and the Financial Times. He came to the Lord in 2005.

He has served at the Cedar Leadership Institute and the American Center for International Leadership and studied at Columbia International University, pursuing his master's degree in Christian Education. His calling is to advance Christian education in China.

The original Chinese testimony is found on pages 172–179 of 《无问西东 因为有你》 (The Reason for You II: Tsinghua Testimonies) available from [ReFrame Ministries](#).