



溪邊的樹

2023年2月

谷區國語浸信會

每月通訊

親愛的弟兄姊妹，轉眼已是二月，時間在不知不覺中溜走了。然而，二月仍是新年的開始。願上帝更新的靈繼續在我們心中作工，喚醒我們，警惕我們、催逼我們，好「使你們無可指摘，誠實無偽，在這彎曲悖謬的世代，作神無瑕疵的兒女。你們顯在這世代中，好像明光照耀，將生命的道表明出來。」（腓立比書 2:15-16）

本月的金句是以弗所書 4:16 「全身都靠他聯絡得合式，百節各按各職，照著各體的功用，彼此相助，便叫身體漸漸增長，在愛中建立自己。」我們必須從上文開始讀才能完整的明白使徒保羅要教導我們的是什麼。讓我們用「環球聖經公會」的新翻譯來看這段經文：「11 正是他賜下一些人作使徒，一些人作先知，一些人作傳福音者，一些人作牧者和教師，12 好裝備聖徒去承擔事奉的工作，以建立基督的身體；13 直到我們眾人對神的兒子都有一致的信仰和認識，長大成人，達到基督完滿成熟的身量；14 這樣，我們就不再是小孩子，不會中了人狡猾的詭計和騙人的計謀，被各種教義之風搖撼，飄來飄去，15 而可以在愛中誠實做人，在各方面長進，達到基督的身量。他是教會的頭，16 全身靠著他，藉著每一個關節的支持，照著每一個部分的功用，得以配合聯繫，讓身體漸漸成長，在愛中建立自己。」

上帝揀選不同的人，給他們不同的恩賜和才幹，在不同的崗位事奉，目的是裝備聖徒（每一位接受了主耶穌為救贖主和生命之主的人都是聖徒）去承擔事奉的工作，以建立基督的身體 - 就是教會，使聖徒對信仰有正確的認識，朝著成為主耶

蘇完滿成熟的身量邁進。雖然我們活在末世，有許多異端邪說和世俗文化正誘惑我們、搶奪我們，我們仍能站立得穩，生命長進。需知道耶穌基督是教會的頭，我們是身體各部不同的肢體，要互相緊密聯絡，彼此支持，才能發揮作用。當我們本著愛，也在愛當中這樣做，我們就會成長，每一個人都被建立起來，成為滿有基督身量的門徒。

感謝主帶領我們教會在主日學和門徒訓練方面不斷努力。這一期的主日學出席人數每主日都超過七十人。過去兩年來舉行的門徒訓練種子班的人數已達一百五十人以上。本月開始的第六期「門徒訓練種子班」有 19 位學員和 13 位小組長。我們的目標是每一位會友都參加門徒訓練和主日學，每一位弟兄姊妹都成為主耶穌的門徒，並進一步成為帶領別人成為主耶穌門徒的人。教會還有很多其他的聚會和事工可以讓我們實踐作主門徒和帶領人作主門徒。正因為我們教會存在的

目的是「愛神、愛人、使萬民作主門徒」，我們作為教會的一個肢體，我們所做的一切都是朝這目標前進。我們也要被保羅提醒，要「在愛中建立自己」。「在愛中」意味著「我們愛，因為神先愛我們」（約翰一書 4:19）、「你們要彼此相愛，像我愛你們一樣，這就是我的命令。」（約翰福音 15:12）和「你們若有彼此相愛的心，眾人因此就認出你們是我的門徒了。」（約翰福音 13:35）。願我們彼此勉勵。

2023年度主題

激發愛心，勉勵行善

二月份經文

**全身都靠他聯絡得合式，
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照著各體的功用，
彼此相助，
便叫身體漸漸增長，
在愛中建立自己。**

（以弗所書 4:16）

袁家銳牧師

編者的話

因着情人節而使人們比往日更注重情誼和愛意的二月，本刊推出二篇文稿，從不同的視角，窺視神所設立的神聖婚姻。二位作者均來自本教會的國際團契，是愛主愛教會的姐妹。二位也均是中、英語文字的高手，善於在兩種文字之間搭建通達的管道。有意閱讀英語原創的讀者，可向前臺索取英文版。教會也會將英文電子版送往中文讀者的郵箱，便於對照閱讀。神所設立的婚姻是神聖的，神的愛和恩典臨到祂所設立的家庭，不論是同族婚姻抑或異族婚姻。本期所介紹的二個家庭即是實例。

結婚 47 週年點點滴滴

朱錦雲

2022年10月29日是我和先生瑞丹結婚47週年紀念日。我倆結婚至今幾達半個世紀！我簡直不敢相信時光的流逝竟如此之快，我從故鄉台灣來美國這第二家鄉也有那麼久了。

當年大學畢業後沒多久，我便單槍匹馬、雄心勃勃，一心一意來美國孤軍奮鬥，在洛杉磯一所大學上課，學些能謀生的會計技能。同班同學中，我注意到一位老是穿著咖啡色西裝、長得蠻帥的男生。有次下課後乘巴士回家，看到這位同學也在巴士上。他問我是否可以坐在我旁邊，我熱心地點頭表示可以。我們互聊了一下各自的背景，得知他是在夏威夷出生長大的菲律賓後裔，摻雜了一些中國及西班牙的血統。下車前，他問我週末可不可以約我出來。我心中一陣歡喜，笑著說當然可以。後來他告訴我，經過整整一個學期的觀察，他確定我手上沒有戴結婚戒指，這才敢約我。可稱得上是一位非常有心、且十分謹慎的慢動作人物。

瑞丹和我便這樣開始了我倆閃電式的約會交往。我們兩個月後訂婚，又過了四個月便結為夫婦。有時我想想，是否我腦袋被戀愛沖昏了頭？可是當時一切順利，好像上帝已經安排了一條幸福大道，等著我和瑞丹往前走。

在1970年代，所謂的為綠卡結婚之事是非常讓人忌諱，也頗受我們來美求學的台灣學生們所不齒。我想我一定要澄清這件事。有一晚，我們很羅曼蒂克地在Griffith Park天文臺看星星、觀月亮。我鄭重地向他聲明，我在芝加哥的時候，曾經有兩個學位頗高的

男士對我有意，他們為我申請綠卡（green card）絕對沒問題，但都因為我們之間沒有chemistry（情感上的火花），所以作罷。幾年後，我這位懵咋咋的老公告訴我，他一直不明白綠車（green car）和結婚有何關係？弄得我哭笑不得。

結婚後，有一次在超市，看他在數零錢的時候，左手食指（他是左撇子）在右手掌上撥弄錢幣的模樣，真讓我心動。這讓我想起讀到希萊蕊·克靈頓的第一本書上的描述：她好喜歡比爾手指翻書頁的動作。我完全領會她的感受。又有一次在舊金山金門大橋，我拿著相機對準他要扳動快門時，那海上的微風正輕輕飄拂起他的髮絲，加上他當時的迷糊神態，我覺得我好像嫁了一位美男子。

婚後一年，我懷的第一胎小產了。那一夜是我47年來唯一的一次看到瑞丹流淚。我從未見過一位男士，為不到三個月的胚胎流失而傷心落淚。後來他當上了兩個兒子的爸爸，我也是生平首次領會到，真正的好父親應該就是如此模樣！現在他當了爺爺，更是把兩個小孫女捧若心肝、奉若寶貝兒。

我懷老大嘉明時，全身發疹，痛癢不止，我自己都不敢照鏡子。在這九個月期間，虧得瑞丹不嫌棄看著我爛爛的皮膚，每晚小心翼翼地為我全身抹油。幾年前，我有嚴重的失眠症，他有時會起床幫我按摩，讓我全身鬆弛入睡。兩個兒子出生後，我在家待了八年，想讓兒子們得到最好的照顧。他下班一回家，不是馬上掌廚做羹湯，就是完全接上照顧小孩的雜事。他說我在家整天帶孩子比他上班還累。

教會有數位弟兄姊妹曾調侃說，瑞丹是我們家掌廚的煮夫。這說明我們不是傳統上的所謂男主外、女主內的家庭。瑞丹喜歡烹調，而我恰好對烹飪沒多大興趣。除了每晚我必定自己煮些蔬菜享受外，他負責肉類和魚類的主餐。家有“煮夫”，我這主婦可乘機歇一歇。而瑞丹對花、草、樹木，和院子的維護一概沒興趣。雖然有園丁，但我仍需要照料我們蠻大的前後院子。比如每週修剪玫瑰花，逢夏日在95度陽光直曬下，可不是一件舒服的事。夫妻之間不用斤斤計較，兩人分工合作，各做喜歡或擅長的家務事，不是很好嘛？

自從13年前我們退休後，我倆在教會熱心地服侍主。夫婦同心協力在教堂裡忙忙碌碌，真是不亦樂乎！他從小出生在基督徒家庭，在主日學長大，是地地道道遵行聖經上的教義、奉行基督精神的好信徒。而我是17歲時才認

識主耶穌的重生派。我曾問過他，當時在約會的時候，他曾否想過我可能是亞洲來的佛教信徒？他回答說，在知道我畢業於天主教大學時，他就相信我應該是信奉基督的基督徒。看來他還是蠻細心的。

事隔 40 多年，瑞丹不僅身材變得多，連臉上的輪廓也走了樣。我大學同學見到他目前的照片，偷偷問我這是同一位先生嗎？是呀，剛結婚時，他還有東方人的模樣。現在，大部分人都把他當成美國白人看待。也許是年紀一大，他那西班牙的血統就顯現出來了。以前他老說：「我全身只有一隻手臂是中國人」，現在這口頭語也漸漸消失了。他可說是我生平首次見到的能變成另外一個種族的人！

想想 47 年來，我倆和所有結過婚的人一樣，酸甜苦辣通通有。最常被問到的問題是，異族婚姻如何能維持這麼久。就如大家所熟悉的，「不幸婚姻有百種理由，但幸福婚姻只有一種」。經上也告訴我們說：「凡事包容，凡事相信，凡事盼望，凡事忍耐。」（林前 13:7）除了互愛、互助、互諒、互需之外，你還得有隨時互相妥協的寬宏大量。婚姻出了問題時，不要隨意放棄，要想盡辦法去彌補。那麼，你會發現老來伴是越陳越香。「最要緊的是彼此切實相愛，因為愛能遮掩許多的罪。」（彼前 4:8）有幸蒙主的恩典把我倆不同種族、語言、背景、文化、個性，且來自兩個不同小島的我們捏合在一起，共度這麼長的美好歲月，真是天父賜給我們的最大福分。

遠超“500 英哩”的婚姻旅程

沈春燕

耶穌說，“……我稱你們為朋友……”（約翰福音 15:15）

從飛機的窗口第一次望見中西部大平原的時候，它的空曠讓我有點心驚。這就是內布拉斯加州嗎？只憑一封助教獎學金的通知，單槍匹馬的我就飛越太平洋，和半個美國，來到這個以偉人林肯總統命名的城市。心中對未來的盼望會實現嗎？然而神將如何改變我的人生道路，卻是我完全沒有料到的。

當年的我對耶穌僅有模糊的認識，並沒有真正想過祂愛我有多深。哪知神為我預備的遠遠超出了我的想像。

那首傾吐離家打工者的哀傷歌曲“五百哩路”在我心頭迴響：“你若錯過我搭乘的火車，

你當知道我已離開，你會聽見一百哩外汽笛的鳴響……主啊，我在一百哩外，二百哩外……五百哩外，主啊，我離家已有五百哩……”

即使在國際學生宿舍，餐廳裏陌生的南瓜派也在提醒我，這是遠在異鄉的滋味。

一個雨天的早晨，大門口出現了一張友好的笑臉。他站在那裏，手中握著一把撐開的傘。他說他正要去上課，可以順便送我去化學館。

就在一個路邊，有一天他又碰到我，想請我去市中心聽一場罕有的鋼琴演奏會。我推辭了，“因為我不可能嫁給一個外國人”。“可是我沒要你嫁給我呀。”他這麼回答我，手中拿著兩張買好的入場券。於是我們一起去了。不知怎地，跟 Jim 相處我覺得很自在，他的性情有點像我的父親。後來父親意外生病去世，神藉著 Jim 帶給我即時的安慰。他喜歡讀聖經，常吸引朋友來和他一起討論神的話語。不知何時我發現，只要我問 Jim 一句經文，或是聖經裏的什麼故事，他好像都能告訴我那是出於聖經的哪本書卷，哪一章，甚至哪幾節。

沒有車，我們到哪兒都習慣走路。在寒風刺骨的冬天，兩個勇敢的年輕人仍會在雪地中跨過鐵軌，走到大學城的另一頭。當時談話的內容今天我已想不起來了。從此我們開始了近半個世紀的攜手同行，人生之旅。

當我們在教會站在牧師的面前，聽他宣告：“神所結合的，人不可分離！”的那一刻，心中憧憬的幾乎是一個完美而又單純的婚姻。神的祝福帶來天國的呼召。我們有幸親耳聽到在新幾內亞部落的沙威人中事奉主的宣教士唐·理查森（Don Richardson）的見證。他的傳奇經歷寫成一本書已經出版，名為《和平之子》。我們聽過學園傳道會（Campus Crusade for Christ）創始人白立德宣教士（Bill Bright）的講道。我記得他說，不論你多富有，你一次也只能吃一頓飯，睡一張床。你要為誰而活？

天國的使徒用他們的生命、他們的婚姻傳遞了榮耀的異象，也在我們的心靈中點燃新的火花。然而兩個充滿理想的年輕人即將面臨地上生活的種種考驗，哪裏明白需要有屬天的生命才能走屬天的道路？神在方方面面向我們彰顯祂是我們的朋友，我們卻沒有覺察，沒有真實的信靠。在眼高手低的光景裏，我們還得經過很長的日子，來學習怎樣作主耶穌的朋友。

主的恩手沒有離開，祂按著神國的義繼續引導，按著祂聖潔的旨意繼續修剪。我們搬到奧馬哈城後，緊接著在工作上，家庭關係上，

和信心上，遭遇新的危機。但是主耶穌藉著壓力與試煉讓我與祂面對面單獨相處，我發覺祂真是我親愛且有復活權柄的朋友。那是一段寶貴的日子。很奇妙，一個小小的查經班隨之在我們家形成。多年後我們發現這個查經小組在神的祝福帶領之下興旺福音，增長為靈命活潑的教會。然而那期間神一切的計劃和工作我們完全不知情，因為我們已經搬到外地去忙自己的生活了。

神國的齒輪運轉不息，將我們推送到更遠的星球軌道上——一個在花園州的新職場，一群中國教會的新朋友。我們蒙福認識謙卑的牧者，他和師母同心擺上，甘心作神的器皿。敞開的心，開放的家，連我們的孩子和他們的孩子也成為好朋友。神的憐憫慈愛就像綿綿春雨，從這對夫婦的生命中流露出來，澆灌羊群。他們用心聽，用智慧的真理引導，用禱告扶持，成為多人的祝福。

恩上加恩，Jim有幸和一位謙卑的教會領袖李弟兄同工，每主日到附近社區，挨家挨戶敲門，分享耶穌是救主的好消息。一位忠心的主僕，當斯老牧師（Pastor Bob Downs），帶領Jim定期去附近的監獄向他們傳講救贖的好消息，領他們唱詩歌敬拜神。當斯牧師常說，“活在你們心中的基督，使你們可以盼望分享上帝的榮耀。”（歌羅西書 1:27，簡明聖經版）他還會補充一句：你的榮耀盼望是基督，不是你。

不知怎地，當耶穌在我們生命中越來越大的時候，我們的問題和煩惱就變得越來越小了。神賜的友誼，像那種給不勝給、取之不絕的禮物，不斷更新我們的心思意念，逐漸改變我們的生命。

也許天父要我們鍛煉屬靈爭戰的體格？在一個暴風雪的聖誕節，我們開著一輛二十八英尺長的大卡車，抵達芝加哥。在這個多族裔多文化的現代都市裏，在多語言多傳統的中國式教會，在學生團契，在巨型的美國教會，和非州族裔的教會裏，我們得到不同的機會去經歷神，去體驗什麼是主純全的心意。神再三地預備好成熟又有愛心的使者，把他們放在我們生命中，陪伴我們走過掙扎奮鬥的日子。

我們學習與主同行、彼此同行已經遠遠超過五百哩路了。在這裏讓我分享一點天路客的小秘密：第一，家庭挺重要，但不只限於個人血親的家人，而是包括屬靈的家庭——我們在基督裏的弟兄姊妹。第二，婚姻與人生中的掙扎和壓力有時讓人喘不過氣來，我們夫妻之間的差異有些人也許認為是極大的障礙，難以克服。我們卻發現，當我們願意成長，愈來愈親近主耶穌時，問題會愈來愈小。第三，藉著基督更新我們生命的大愛，和聖靈在我們生命中作工，我們之間的差異反而能彰顯婚姻的卓越與強固！兩人合而為一，比起各自獨一的我們，將更強壯、更有力。

正如《竭誠為主》的作者章伯斯（Oswald Chambers）所說，認識主耶穌，常與耶穌交往，因為祂是我們最親密的朋友。祂的名字是誠信真實。

婚姻關係準則

基於彼得的教導，我們可以思考以下問題：

1. 我們是伴侶還是對手？
2. 我們是否幫助對方變得更加屬靈？
3. 我們是看重短暫的外表還是永恆的內在？是虛假之物還是真實之美？
4. 我們是否努力嘗試去瞭解對方？
5. 我們是敏感于關心對方的感受和想法，還是漠然視之？
6. 我們是否見證過神對我們禱告的回應？
7. 我們的婚姻是讓我們的生命更豐盛，還是令彼此失去了神所賜的福分？

參閱威爾斯比：《滿懷盼望：彼得前書》（Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Hopeful: 1 Peter, 2015）

【編者註】摘錄自陳道德牧師 2022-01-30 講章：《有盼望的家庭生活》

活出盼望

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溪邊的樹

2023年2月

谷區國語浸信會

每月通訊

親愛的弟兄姊妹，轉眼已是二月，時間在不知不覺中溜走了。然而，二月仍是新年的開始。願上帝更新的靈繼續在我們心中作工，喚醒我們，警惕我們、催逼我們，好「使你們無可指摘，誠實無偽，在這彎曲悖謬的世代，作神無瑕疵的兒女。你們顯在這世代中，好像明光照耀，將生命的道表明出來。」(腓立比書 2:15-16)

本月的金句是以弗所書 4:16 「全身都靠他聯絡得合式，百節各按各職，照著各體的功用，彼此相助，便叫身體漸漸增長，在愛中建立自己。」我們必須從上文開始讀才能完整的明白使徒保羅要教導我們的是什麼。讓我們用「環球聖經公會」的新翻譯來看這段經文：「11 正是他賜下一些人作使徒，一些人作先知，一些人作傳福音者，一些人作牧者和教師，12 好裝備聖徒去承擔事奉的工作，以建立基督的身體；13 直到我們眾人對神的兒子都有一致的信仰和認識，長大成人，達到基督完滿成熟的身量；14 這樣，我們就不再是小孩子，不會中了人狡猾的詭計和騙人的計謀，被各種教義之風搖撼，飄來飄去，15 而可以在愛中誠實做人，在各方面長進，達到基督的身量。他是教會的頭，16 全身靠著他，藉著每一個關節的支持，照著每一個部分的功用，得以配合聯繫，讓身體漸漸成長，在愛中建立自己。」

上帝揀選不同的人，給他們不同的恩賜和才幹，在不同的崗位事奉，目的是裝備聖徒（每一位接受了主耶穌為救贖主和生命之主的人都是聖徒）去承擔事奉的工作，以建立基督的身體 - 就是教會，使聖徒對信仰有正確的認識，朝著成為主耶

蘇完滿成熟的身量邁進。雖然我們活在末世，有許多異端邪說和世俗文化正誘惑我們、搶奪我們，我們仍能站立得穩，生命長進。需知道耶穌基督是教會的頭，我們是身體各部不同的肢體，要互相緊密聯絡，彼此支持，才能發揮作用。當我們本著愛，也在愛當中這樣做，我們就會成長，每一個人都被建立起來，成為滿有基督身量的門徒。

感謝主帶領我們教會在主日學和門徒訓練方面不斷努力。這一期的主日學出席人數每主日都超過七十人。過去兩年來舉行的門徒訓練種子班的人數已達一百五十人以上。本月開始的第六期「門徒訓練種子班」有 19 位學員和 13 位小組長。我們的目標是每一位會友都參加門徒訓練和主日學，每一位弟兄姊妹都成為主耶穌的門徒，並進一步成為帶領別人成為主耶穌門徒的人。教會還有很多其他的聚會和事工可以讓我們實踐作主門徒和帶領人作主門徒。正因為我們教會存在的

目的是「愛神、愛人、使萬民作主門徒」，我們作為教會的一個肢體，我們所做的一切都是朝這目標前進。我們也要被保羅提醒，要「在愛中建立自己」。「在愛中」意味著「我們愛，因為神先愛我們」（約翰一書 4:19）、「你們要彼此相愛，像我愛你們一樣，這就是我的命令。」（約翰福音 15:12）和「你們若有彼此相愛的心，眾人因此就認出你們是我的門徒了。」（約翰福音 13:35）。願我們彼此勉勵。

2023年度主題

激發愛心，勉勵行善

二月份經文

**全身都靠他聯絡得合式，
百節各按各職，
照著各體的功用，
彼此相助，
便叫身體漸漸增長，
在愛中建立自己。**

(以弗所書 4:16)

袁家銳牧師

A Note from the Editor

Because of Valentine's Day, people pay more attention to friendship and love than usual in February. The current issue of the Newsletter publishes two testimonies, looking from different perspectives into the sacred marriage established by the Lord. Both authors are from the Inter-Culture Fellowship (ICF) of the church, and they are sisters who love the Lord and the church. Both of them are masters of the Chinese and English languages, and they are good at building communication channels between the two languages. Marriage established by God is sacred, and God's love and grace come to the family He established, whether it is a marriage of the same race or a marriage of different races. The two families introduced in this issue are examples.

Some Wonderful Thoughts on My 47th Anniversary

Silda Chu Arkangel

On October 29, 2022, Ridam and I celebrated our 47th anniversary. I cannot believe our marriage is almost half of a century! Time is flying like the speed of sound. It is also as long as when I left my hometown Taiwan to explore the new world of America.

Not long after I graduated from Providence University in Taiwan, I adamantly decided to seek a future alone in the United States. While attending a university in Los Angeles to take some accounting courses, I noticed a good-looking guy always dressed in a brown suit. One time after school I took a bus home, and he was also on board. He asked my permission to sit next to me. I happily said yes. Through the little conversation, I knew he was born and raised in Hawaii with mainly Filipino background, yet some Chinese and Spanish blood. Before he got off the bus, he asked me for a date on the weekend. I enthused over the idea and nodded my head. Later on, he mentioned that it took him a semester to observe my ring finger to make sure I was not married before he asked me out. He was certainly a very prudent and cautious slow-motion young man.

Thus, the beginning of our whirlwind dating romance. We were engaged two months later and another four months we got married! Sometimes I wondered whether I had lost my mind in love. Yet, it seemed our dear Lord had paved a smooth way and just waited for both of us to pass through.

During 1970s, it was a taboo among we Taiwanese students to marry for the sake of green card. I decided I had to make it clear that was not my case. One evening, Ridam and I were

romantically watching the stars and moon in Griffith Park. I seriously announced to him that there were two highly educated Chinese students who showed interest in me and intended to apply a green card for me while I was in Chicago. Neither worked because there was no chemistry between us. Several years later, my innocent hubby said he never understood what a green "car" had anything to do with marriage. I didn't know whether I should laugh or cry.

After we tied the knot, one day in a supermarket I was fascinated by his index finger movement when he was counting the coins in his palm. This reminds me of Hillary Clinton's book stating she loves the way Bill turning the pages of a book. I completely understand her passionate feelings. Another time by the Golden Gate Bridge, I was holding a camera aiming at Ridam. As the ocean breeze was softly blowing his hair plus his absent-minded expression, I thought I had married a very handsome man.

Around our first anniversary, I lost my baby due to miscarriage. That was the first and only time I have ever seen Ridam shedding tears. I never realized a man could show a broken heart for the loss of a 3-month-old fetus. After he became the daddy of our two boys, it came to mind that he could be a role model of an ideal father. And now he is a doting grandpa to our two little granddaughters.

While I was pregnant with our older son, Jaming, I had horrible rashes all over my body. Achy and itchy, I avoided any mirror in the house. Yet every evening Ridam patiently applied the ointment on my unpleasant looking skin. Several years ago, I suffered from insomnia. Sometimes in the middle of night, he would get up and massage my back until I was relaxed and fell to sleep. I stayed at home for 8 years until my younger son, Jaway, went to kindergarten in order to take better care of them when they were very young. During that time, whenever Ridam came home from work, he either started cooking dinner or took over the chores of babysitting. He said my handling the babies whole day was much more tiresome than he worked in the office.

Some brothers and sisters in the church make fun of me that Ridam is in charge of cooking at home. This illustrates that we are not the traditional couple, where men take care of the external affairs, while the women handle the domestic ones. Ridam enjoys cooking while I am not that interested in it. Besides I cook some of my favorite Chinese vegetables for supper, I leave the meat and fish dishes for him to cook. In the meantime, he is absolutely not fond of flower, tree, grass, and all the maintenance of the yard. Although we have a gardener who doesn't do too much, I still have to do hands-on work in our fairly good size of front and back yards. During summer with 95 degree heat, it is not a pleasant task for me to cut the roses each weekend under blasting sun. Yet, I love roses. Among couples, there is no need to set strict rules regarding house chores or duties. Each can take whatever he or she likes and is good at sharing the

responsibilities. Isn't it wonderful?

Since we were both retired 13 years ago, we have been ardently devoted to serving our Lord. It is an honorable and joyful thing to do. Ridam was born in a Christian family and grew up in the Sunday school. He is a Bible-abiding and strong Christianity believer. Yet, I did not know about Jesus until I was a teenager and was a born-again Christian. I asked him, while we were dating, if he ever came to mind that I might be a Buddhist coming from Asia? He replied since I graduated from a Catholic university, I was most likely a Christian. He is indeed a mindful person.

After more than 40 years, Ridam not only has gained much weight, but also changed his facial features. My college classmate who saw his recent picture asked me secretly whether this was the same man I married. When we got married, he still looked like an Asian guy. Now even the doctors and nurses misjudge him as a Caucasian. Maybe now as he gets older, his Hispanic genes are finally showing up. He used to say: "I have one arm which is Chinese". I don't hear that anymore. He is the only person in my entire life I have ever encountered who could switch into a different race. Pretty funny!

For our whole 47 years together, just like every couple out there, we have experienced feelings of ups, downs, happiness, and sadness. People often ask me how we could maintain such a long marriage. Well, we hear the experts saying: "unhappy marriage has hundreds of reasons while the happy couple has only one." The Bible says it well: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) Besides mutual love, support, forgiveness, and need, you must readily be able to compromise each other with a big open heart. When a red light starts blinking on your marriage, do not give it up. Try your best to solve and resolve the issues. Then you will find the longer you stay together, the sweeter your partner is. "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) With God's Grace, both of us coming from different race, language, background, culture, personality, as well as two remote small islands, have spent such long and beautiful life together. If it is not our dear Heavenly Father's blessings, I don't know what it is.

More than 500 Miles

- God's Friendship in Our Journey of Marriage

Chun-yen Stillman

Jesus said, "... I have called you friends, ..." (John 15:15)

My first glance of the Midwest plains through

the airplane window gave me a slight sense of trepidation. The university here offered me an excellent teaching assistantship that enabled me to come to a city named after the great leader Abraham Lincoln – in Lincoln, Nebraska. Whatever plans I had for my future, I had no inkling of how God was going to redirect my life.

How little did I know of Jesus' love for me before I really knew Him! What God was preparing for me was far beyond what my mind could ever imagine.

The folk song "500 Miles" echoed in my soul, but more fitting was its original title "Railroaders' Lament": "If you missed the train I'm on, you will know that I am gone, you can hear the whistle blow a hundred miles ... Lord, I'm one, Lord, I'm two, ... Lord, I'm five hundred miles away from home."

Even in that International House, those strange-tasting pumpkin pies in the cafeteria only reminded me that I was far from home.

One morning it rained. Just a friendly face. Standing at the front of the building with an open umbrella, he offered to walk me to Hamilton Hall, the Chemistry building, a short distance from where his classes would be.

Just an invitation to a rare concert featuring the winner of the international piano competition that year. I declined the date "because I could not marry a non-Chinese". "But I am not asking you to marry me", he said, two tickets in hand. So we went to the concert. Somehow I felt at home with Jim whose personality reminded me of my father. When my father died unexpectedly later from illness, Jim was God's comfort to me. Jim loved to study the Bible. That brought him friends who enjoyed discussing the word of God with him. I don't know when I discovered it, but it seemed that if I asked him about a verse or a story, most likely he could tell me which book in the Bible, which chapter, and even which neighborhood to find it.

Without a car, we walked all over the city. In those cold winter days, we braved the harsh wind while walking past the railroad tracks. Today I don't even remember what we talked about. That was the beginning of our half-century-long shared walk of life.

We imagined a simple and almost perfect marriage when we stood before the church and listened to the words pronounced by the pastor: What God has joined together, let no man put asunder! We were blessed to hear missionaries like Don Richardson speak in person. He and his wife with a baby went to serve among the Sawi tribe of the Dutch New Guinea. Their story was published in a book titled "Peace Child". We also heard Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Those missionaries' lives brought such a heavenly perspective into our hearts. But how do two young and idealistic people bridge the gap between a heavenly vision and their earthly struggles?

We did not recognize the many ways God

revealed his divine friendship to us; neither did we realize how far we had to travel before we could become His friends.

By God's abundant grace, He continued to lead us and befriend us, all in line to fulfill His kingdom purpose. After our move to Omaha, at the heel of a new crisis in faith, and new tension in our married life, God caused a small Bible study group to happen in our home. During that precious time I learned to spend time with Jesus one to one. That group has grown into a vital gospel church since then. Were we in the loop on God plan? No, we had no clue of what God was doing since in some way we were still looking for our own peace and happiness.

God's wheels projected our small planet unto larger orbits - a new job and new friends in a Chinese church in the Garden State. The pastor and his wife became our special friends and God's instruments in our lives. Once when we really needed a little time out, they took care of our children while we took some time just to be alone! God's mercy came like drops of spring rain through that couple, and so many more. They listened, prayed, and counseled so many families through their open heart, open house style of ministry.

God's grace continued to flow into our lives. Lee, a humble leader at his church, went door to door with Jim to share the good news. Pastor Downs, an old and faithful servant of Christ, took Jim under his wings in prison outreach. As Pastor Downs often said, "Christ in you, not you, the hope of glory!" Somehow our troubles became smaller as Jesus became bigger in our lives. How precious are these gifts of friendship that keep on giving!

Maybe our heavenly Father wanted us to grow more muscles for spiritual warfare? During a freezing cold Christmas, we drove a very long truck and arrived in Chicago. It is a very urban yet modern city where we were going to experience God in the context of an old Chinese church, a mega church, and a black church. Again God filled our lives with more friends that He had prepared for us, including those who showed Christ's love in the midst of all things.

But what have we learned as we traveled those many miles together? First, there is nothing more important than family; however, not just earthly family, but spiritual family – our brothers and sisters in Christ. Second, struggles in marriage and life sometimes may seem overwhelming, and the differences between us some could have looked

upon as a serious obstacle, but we have found that the closer we grow to Jesus, the problems become less and less. Third, the differences between us, through Christ's transforming love, and the working of God's Holy Spirit in our lives, have actually revealed the strengths of our marriage! Two become one, but that one is stronger and more powerful than what we ever could have been separately!

But the most precious friendship of all has been our friendship with the LORD Himself. As Oswald Chambers said, learn to know Jesus, and interact with him constantly, for He is our closest friend, and His name is faithful and true.

Marital Relationship Guidelines

Based on Peter's teaching, we can ponder the following questions:

1. Are we partners or rivals?
2. Are we helping each other to become more spiritual?
3. Do we value the ephemeral exterior or the eternal interior? Is it a false thing or a real beauty?
4. Do we make an effort to understand each other?
5. Are we sensitive to the other person's feelings and thoughts, or are we indifferent?
6. Have we witnessed God's answers to our prayers?
7. Is our marriage enriching our lives, or depriving each other of God's blessings?

Reference: Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Hopeful: 1 Peter, 2015

Note: an quote from Rev. Daode Chen's sermon of January 30, 2022 at the Chinese congregation titled Hopeful Family Life

活出盼望



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