

Chapter 2 Pastures and Watersides

(Ages 27–37; 1966–1976; A Period of Spiritual Growth)

"He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters." (Psalm 23:2)

I. Learning to Live by Relying on the Lord

Handing Over Pre-Marital Savings to My Mother-in-Law

Before we married, my wife had worked as a junior high teacher for nearly five years; by the time of our wedding, she was teaching at the high school level. She had deposited her entire salary into a savings account without spending a single penny, as her parents covered all her expenses for food, housing, and incidentals. Her father was a wealthy landowner—the only son in a line spanning ten generations—while her mother was a business investor who frequently attended corporate shareholder meetings. Before moving to Taiwan, my wife handed her bank passbook to her mother, saying, "I won't be around to look after you anymore, so please use my savings." Her mother casually tossed the passbook into a two-story storehouse next to their home. It was only retrieved about a decade later and given to the daughter of my wife's eldest sister. This niece inherited her grandfather's estate after her own mother passed away, and my mother-in-law told her, "Your aunt has absolutely no need for this money; you go ahead and use it."

As mentioned earlier, our marriage had faced strong opposition from my in-laws. After we married, I would visit Japan with my wife every year or two to see her family; occasionally, my company would also send me there for business trips. Whenever we visited her family home, I did my utmost to care for the elderly couple—replacing their furniture and carpets, or accompanying my father-in-law to the village's only public bathhouse to scrub his back. The Lord also granted me the ability to understand the local dialect, which greatly astonished everyone in her family.

Living a Life of Reliance on the Lord After Marriage

After marrying, we settled in Kaohsiung City. We lived in a succession of small rented rooms—each less than ten *ping* (approx. 350 sq. ft.) in size—on Qingnian Road and Wenwu Street. We shared the kitchen and bathroom with tenants in neighboring rooms and led a very simple life, yet my wife embraced it with joy. I recall that my monthly salary at the time was 1,600 New Taiwan Dollars, equivalent to just 40 US dollars. One day, she took five dollars to buy groceries and placed the money in her basket, only to have it stolen by a pickpocket. Upon returning empty-handed, we offered thanks for the loss, as the amount was small. I also recall a time when several Japanese sisters visited us from Japan; they were amazed by the simplicity

and modesty of our home furnishings and daily necessities.

A national government office opened—and closed—for our sake

A few months later, newspapers reported that the Japanese government was establishing a Consulate-General in Kaohsiung. I instructed my wife on how to draft a job application. Upon receiving her letter, the Consulate-General immediately interviewed and hired her; her salary at the time was roughly double mine. Our standard of living improved significantly, and within six years, our three children were born; all were taken to the countryside in Changhua by my mother to be raised.

In the summer of 1972, I accepted a position as a production manager at a newly established company in Singapore. The compensation was generous enough that my wife no longer needed to work to help support the family. That same year, Japan established diplomatic relations with China and severed ties with Taiwan, resulting in the closure of the Consulate-General in Kaohsiung and a substantial severance package for my wife. She handed the entire sum over to my mother, who used the money to send my two younger brothers to the United States for graduate studies; both eventually earned master's degrees. Thus, a full-fledged government office opened for us when we needed it, and closed when we no longer did.

Attending Taiwanese-language meetings in Kaohsiung

From 1966 to 1972, we both attended Taiwanese (Hokkien) meetings at a local Kaohsiung church congregation. An older sister who spoke Japanese would sit beside my wife to translate the proceedings into Japanese for her, while I also served during these meetings. Brother Guo Wende would often ask me to drive him on my motorcycle to visit fellow believers—sometimes even heading out for a visit just half an hour before a meeting was scheduled to begin. At gatherings, he would often have me sit beside him, prompting me to pray, select hymns, share testimonies, or offer spiritual fellowship. Through this process, he trained and equipped me; to respond appropriately, I made sure to prepare well at home—reading the Bible, singing hymns, and meditating—so that I could always participate fittingly. The hymns I chose and the prayers I offered, especially during the Breaking of Bread meetings, frequently drew praise from the older brothers and sisters. Occasionally, when I attended special meetings at the Kaohsiung Church's "First Meeting Hall" (a Mandarin-speaking congregation) less than 500 meters away, I was selected to serve as an interpreter, translating from Mandarin into Taiwanese for the co-workers. Before I knew it, I had become one of the young brothers responsible for leadership within the Kaohsiung Church in Taiwan.

****Our Whole Family Living the Church Life****

As mentioned earlier, in the summer of 1972, I accepted a position as a production manager at a newly established company in Singapore. In November of that year, my wife brought our three children—aged five, three, and one—to Singapore to join me. We initially lived in a high-rise apartment located at the "16th milestone" (a local way of measuring distance from the city center), diagonally opposite Nanyang University; our two older children attended kindergarten and preschool near the coast at the "18th milestone." One afternoon, my wife locked the three children in the bedroom for their nap while she busied herself in the kitchen. Suddenly, she

noticed an adult in the building opposite ours leaning out a window with a look of alarm. She rushed to the bedroom to check and discovered that our five-year-old daughter had led her three-year-old brother out the window. They were attempting to cross a narrow concrete ledge—only about a foot wide and without any safety railing—to reach the kitchen and find their mother. Thankfully, the Lord watched over them, and my wife was able to pull them back into the room safely.

During that period, I balanced my job with attending meetings at the Singapore Church's "Fifth Meeting Hall." Brother Wu Jingdong, who worked at Nanyang University, and I served as the brothers responsible for the meeting hall, overseeing an area that included Nanyang University and the Jurong Industrial Estate. The congregation consisted primarily of Nanyang University students and employees from the Jurong Industrial Estate. During that time, we actively shared the gospel on many occasions and bore spiritual fruit. Every Sunday, I would take my whole family out early to attend gatherings; the entire morning was filled with children's meetings and message sessions, while in the afternoon, we would arrange chairs together so the children could lie down for a nap. After their nap, we would take the children to places like the zoo, the bird park, the botanical gardens, or Clifford Pier. In the evening, we would return to the meeting hall for the breaking of bread service, often not getting back home until past eleven o'clock.

****Remitting Most of My Salary to Japan to Support My Eldest Brother****

I enjoyed a generous salary in Singapore—about ten times that of a local worker. The company provided us with free housing in a detached house and a chauffeured car for our daily commute. Since the cost of living in Singapore was very low in the 1970s, I was able to save a substantial amount each month. At the time, my eldest brother had been sent to Japan to preach the gospel and establish churches; the people he served were mostly university students (who later became the backbone of the churches in Japan), so there was no income to support his ministry. Furthermore, there was little financial assistance coming from Taiwan (specifically from Witness Lee's ministry team). With my wife's full support, I decided to remit my entire monthly surplus salary to Japan to help my brother in his service to the Lord.

****Playing Matchmaker for Two Couples—One in Taiwan and One in Singapore****

After I married, I led several colleagues in Taiwan to the faith. Two of them were my subordinates at the plywood factory: the man, Wu Chun-feng, was quiet and honest, while the woman, Huang Mei-ying, was lively and intelligent. I acted as their matchmaker; upon hearing that the introduction came from "Section Chief Huang," the woman's mother readily consented to the marriage without hesitation. Later, I brought them to Singapore to work as my colleagues. I named their eldest son "Ming-zhao"; he now works as an aeronautical engineer in Switzerland. While I was serving as the "home overseer" for the Fifth Assembly of the Singapore church, I encountered two university students from Nanyang University within our district. The young man, Huang Shi-rong, was the son of an elder from a church in Penang, Malaysia, and the young woman, Zhang Chun-mi, was the daughter of an elder from the Singapore church. They had known each other during their university days and were interested in pursuing a relationship after graduation. I stepped in to formally introduce them, leading to a very happy marriage.

****Decisively Leaving a Well-Paid Job to Start a New Life****

My father passed away due to illness in the United States in 1975. At that time, among our brothers' families, apart from my eldest brother's family—who were still serving the Lord in Japan—mine was the only one remaining in Singapore. My brother-in-law had been the first to come to the U.S. for studies and subsequently became a citizen; the rest of the family later immigrated to the U.S. through my sister's sponsorship. After my father passed away, and for the sake of my children's future, I made the painful decision to relinquish my permanent residency in Singapore and move my entire family to the United States. In March 1976, immediately upon landing at San Francisco Airport, we received our U.S. Green Cards (permanent residency). Starting a new life at nearly forty years of age in a country where I was unfamiliar with both the people and the land—and with my English skills being rather limited—involved a grueling struggle. Had it not been for the Lord's care and comfort, it would have been truly unbearable; but that is a story for later.

At that time, I purchased a large house in Berkeley—featuring five bedrooms and a basement—for \$48,000. I asked my brother-in-law to advance the \$10,000 down payment and apply for the bank loan, while I made the monthly installment payments to the bank. The agreement was that when the house was eventually sold, any capital gain (appreciation in value) would be split equally between us.

After settling my wife and children in, I returned to Singapore alone. I needed a steady income to cover the mortgage installments, and my company in Singapore would not yet allow me to resign; they required me to return and train a local successor. Consequently, I remained in Singapore for a full year, only officially leaving in March 1977.

As for the Berkeley house, it was sold a year later for \$69,000. After deducting commissions, the capital gain was approximately \$20,000. I took half of that gain—\$10,000—and combined it with the original \$10,000 my brother-in-law had advanced, returning the total sum to him. Thus, my brother-in-law received \$20,000 back after advancing \$10,000. I, meanwhile, took the remaining \$10,000 profit and used it to purchase another house in Anaheim.

II. God's Word Provides Spiritual Nourishment

A Deep Interest in the Bible

The Lord's word says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). During that period, alongside my work, I diligently read the Bible every day. Unfortunately, I did not keep a record of exactly how many times I read it each year; I estimate that, to date, I have read it at least several hundred times. My second older brother, Huang Gongming, read the Bible 2,200 times between the time he was saved and the age of ninety-five; after retiring, he read it once a week, meaning he read it over 1,500 times in just thirty years. As for my wife and me, after immigrating to the United States, we read the English Bible together daily—completing it at least once a year—while reading the Chinese and Japanese versions privately; the total number of times we have read through them certainly runs into the hundreds. I enjoy taking notes while reading Scripture. At one point, I bought a Bible about two inches thick and filled every available space—the margins and the gaps between lines—with my insights and spiritual revelations, written in tiny script on thin paper that I pasted

between the pages; eventually, the volume had nearly doubled in thickness. When we left Singapore to immigrate to the U.S., assuming there would be no Chinese-language gatherings there (and indeed, prior to 1983, only English gatherings existed), I gave that Bible to a fellow worker in Singapore.

****Speed-Reading and Slow Ruminating****

When I was in elementary school, I raised a goat. Every day, I would lead it to a pasture to graze. I observed how the goat ate quickly; once full, it would lie down, and a mass of food would rise from its stomach to its mouth to be chewed slowly—a phenomenon I later learned in school is called rumination. After I was saved, I learned to emulate this ruminating process when reading the Bible: first reading quickly and extensively without necessarily seeking a deep understanding of every detail. Through this practice over time, I gradually gained a comprehensive, foundational grasp of the Scriptures. Alongside this rapid reading, I also devoted time to "chewing slowly"—delving into the deeper meanings hidden behind the words—and gained fresh insights from various perspectives found in the books and sermons of others. Consequently, I not only received spiritual nourishment myself but also experienced what is described in the Book of Hebrews: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

****Gradually Discovering Issues with Church Leadership****

During the first twelve years after my salvation, and the subsequent ten years of married life, I gradually noticed phenomena within the church life that deviated from the original teachings. For instance, they promoted repeated baptisms, treating the act as a renewal of spiritual life and a washing away of the "old self." They also encouraged the chanting of "Oh Lord! Amen! Hallelujah!" and inverted the biblical teaching—"no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3)—to mean that *anyone* who says "Jesus is Lord" must be moved by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they transformed the solemn "breaking of bread" service—intended to commemorate the Lord Jesus's suffering for us—into a gathering filled with singing and dancing; older members of the congregation would hold hands, dance around the Lord's Table, and shout, "We are full!" Whenever others responded with caution or concern, the leaders would dismiss them by declaring, "We do not accept any negative criticism." At a conference, Witness Lee also declared that "all previous teachings regarding the Cross are hereby abolished." In front of the entire assembly, he rebuked Brother Chang Yu-lan—an elder of the Taipei church—for his focus on "pursuing spiritual life," stating that this was the era of the 747 jetliner and that such "old ox pulling a broken cart" methods were no longer applicable.

A relative suffered harm from blindly following Lee's leadership

I had a close elder relative who zealously followed Witness Lee's leadership within the church; she accepted everything Lee said without question and put it into practice immediately. For example, when Lee said to shout "Oh Lord! Amen! Hallelujah!", she would do so day and night. When Lee spoke of "exercising the spirit," she would pray ceaselessly through the night, neglecting food and sleep to the point of obsession, eventually suffering a mental breakdown and losing her sanity. For the rest of her life, her condition fluctuated. During good periods, she spoke

and acted like a normal person; during bad periods, she would secretly turn on the gas stove in the middle of the night, attempting to kill her entire family. Fortunately, her husband would wake up suddenly, sense something was wrong, and shut off the gas, narrowly averting disaster. She had originally been a woman of exceptional talent and ability, highly respected by others; yet, due to the influence of "evil spirits," her life was nearly destroyed, and her family was deeply affected as well. She later died of a heart attack at the age of only sixty-five.

Learning from Isaac's Meditation in the Field

The two experiences mentioned above occurred during the six years following my marriage, prior to my leaving Taiwan for Singapore in 1972 to take up a new position. During those six years, I learned to emulate Isaac by "meditating in the field" (Genesis 24:63). Beyond constantly reviewing and meditating on the biblical insights gained through "speed reading and slow chewing," I also read numerous spiritual books—particularly the writings and short messages of Brother Watchman Nee, such as **Twelve Baskets Full** and **Lessons for New Believers**. I took concise, structured notes on these, filling thousands of loose-leaf pages; I still retain a small portion of them today, frequently revisiting and meditating on my notes, which laid the foundation for my later writing ministry. At the same time, I began to harbor doubts about the state of the church; yet, because I held a firm conviction regarding the "local ground of the church," I never considered leaving it. In fact, when I later immigrated to the United States, I deliberately settled in Anaheim—the location of Witness Lee's U.S. headquarters—and purchased a home just fifty meters away to facilitate my participation in church life. When Isaac was meditating in the field, he looked up and saw Rebekah, who symbolizes the church. At the time, I was single-mindedly pursuing the building up of the church and completely ignored circumstances that stood in opposition to the normal church life; looking back now, it seems utterly absurd.

III. Prayer and Communion with the Lord

Discovering My Wife's Long Hours of Daily Prayer

On my first day back at work after our honeymoon, since our rental was not far from the factory, I decided not to bring a packed lunch; instead, I wanted to go home and enjoy a hot meal prepared by my wife. To my surprise, when I arrived, the dining table was completely bare, and she was nowhere to be found. After searching around, I finally discovered her sitting alone in a corner of the bathroom—without the lights on—praying in the darkness. It turned out she had a habit of spending at least several hours each day in prayer and communion with the Lord. Once she began to pray, she would shut out all distracting thoughts and enter a state of near self-oblivion, causing her to forget to prepare my lunch. She has maintained this habit of prayer unwaveringly from the time we were married to the present day. An interesting anecdote involves our youngest son. When we first moved to Singapore, he was just over a year old. Since his older sister and brother went off to kindergarten and preschool every morning, he would look for his mother the moment he woke up. He would hear her say, "Be a good boy; go back to sleep while Mommy prays." Surprisingly, he wouldn't fuss; instead, he would drift back into a deep sleep right beside his mother's knee.

Cultivating the Good Habit of a Daily Morning Devotion

After we married, we established a habit: no matter how busy we were, we would observe a morning devotion together every day before heading to work. Since retiring, the hour from 6:00 to 7:00 AM has been our dedicated time for this practice. We spend the first half-hour reading the Bible and the second half-hour in prayer, turning God's Word into prayer. We also pray for churches in various places and for many individuals. We take turns: one prays specifically for ourselves, our children, grandchildren, and relatives, while the other intercedes before the Lord for churches and fellow believers based on their actual needs; the next day, we switch roles. In this way, we intercede for over two hundred people daily. The Lord often hears our prayers; as time goes by, we realize He is truly the One who answers prayer, and the instances of answered prayers are simply too numerous to count. Although some prayers—such as those for the salvation of certain relatives and friends—have remained unanswered for decades, we have never lost heart or given up halfway.

Complementing Each Other as Husband and Wife

We complement one another: one of us focuses on studying the Scriptures, while the other focuses on prayer. When we are together, reading the Bible and praying, we naturally display our respective strengths while helping and complementing each other, so that both benefit. We share the same views regarding the church and spiritual pursuits, and often feel the same way about things; whenever we converse, we immediately feel that no one understands us better than our spouse, which saves us from many misunderstandings and conflicts. Looking back on our sixty years of marriage, we have hardly ever quarreled (there was only one instance where she complained that the house I rented was old and dirty; I had just immigrated to the US and our financial situation was poor, so I could not meet her expectations). We have shared both blessings and hardships, and we are deeply grateful for this. We have made a pact: although we were not born on the same day, we hope to die on the same day—or better yet, to welcome the Lord's return together in person.

A Shared Love for Singing Hymns

We also share another common interest: a love for singing hymns. My wife has a beautiful singing voice; once, a pastor visiting from another congregation sat behind her and asked after the service if she had received formal vocal training—a testament to how truly melodious her singing was. As for me, I had enjoyed belting out songs in our backyard during my younger days, simply for the pleasure of it. I often hummed tunes and became intimately familiar with the entire hymnal. Consequently, during church gatherings—especially the Breaking of Bread service—I would naturally select and lead appropriate hymns, earning the appreciation of the senior brothers and sisters. During my time in Singapore, I even led a group of young brothers and sisters in a four-part choral arrangement; I would sing a different vocal part for each stanza while we performed on the platform. The hymn began with the line, "Oh Lord Jesus, whenever I think of You, my heart feels sweet," and consisted of four stanzas: I sang the soprano part for the first, tenor for the second, alto for the third, and bass for the fourth.

Through prayer and singing, we draw near to the Lord and enjoy sweet fellowship with Him—much like the phrase in Psalm 23:2, "He leads me beside quiet waters"—receiving spiritual

refreshment and filling our hearts with peace and serenity.

Father Passed Away Peacefully After Mother's Prayer

When my father suffered a relapse of his old illness in the United States, all my siblings (including my only sister) had already immigrated there; I was the only one working in Singapore with my own family. Initially, my mother and siblings did not want to worry me, only notifying me when it became clear that the end was near. I rushed to the U.S. and saw my father, but he was taken by the Lord the very next day. I had witnessed my grandfather, grandmother, and father all breathe their last before my eyes; my mother, however, passed away in the hospital—by the time I arrived after receiving the nurse's call that she was in critical condition, she had already breathed her last a few minutes earlier.

Upon arriving in the U.S., I immediately went to the hospital to visit my father. He was still lucid and happily raised his hand to greet me. It was heartbreaking to see his abdomen severely distended from fluid retention, requiring morphine injections every hour or two to manage the pain. Early the next morning, my brothers invited Andrew An—an elderly fellow believer gifted with a healing ministry—to lay hands on my father and pray for him. While my brothers were escorting the elderly brother back, only my mother and I remained in the hospital room; we sat on chairs on either side of the bed, each holding one of my father's hands. I whispered to my mother, "Mom, look—the Lord answered your prayers twenty years ago. To keep asking for healing now might not be His will; it would only prolong Father's suffering. Why don't you pray like this: 'If it is God's will to take him home now, I will no longer struggle against it but will surrender him completely to the Lord?'" My mother followed my suggestion and prayed exactly those words. No sooner had she finished than we heard a rattling sound in my father's throat; I rushed to get a doctor, only to discover that he had already breathed his last. Through this experience, I once again witnessed the power of prayer: the moment my mother submitted to the Lord's will and offered a simple prayer, she received an immediate response from Him.

Throughout my father's illness, my mother stayed by his side in the hospital. She told me that one day, he asked her to bring an extra quilt because he saw two figures dressed in white lying on either side of him. My mother, however, saw no one there. Whether angels had truly come to take him, or if he was seeing visions invisible to others due to a reaction to his medication, remains unknown.

After the Lord took my father home, my siblings and I laid him to rest in a cemetery on the hillside behind my sister's house. Once the funeral arrangements were concluded, I returned to Singapore to make preparations for our entire family to immigrate to the United States.