

Missionary James Hong's Life Testimony

Title: You will be the Father of Many Nations

Key verse- Genesis 17:4” "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.”

I was born as the youngest of two boys and two girls in a small rural town in Pocheon in 1979. As the youngest, my family members loved me, and people praised me a lot because I was obedient and quiet. My mother was a catholic, and she began to go to church. Thanks to my mother, my brothers, sisters, and I went to church since we were young.

In elementary school, I studied well. Teachers recognized me, and classmates envied me. I was elected as a class president several times. I tried to take my responsibility successfully to show them I was competent and not inferior. But bearing responsibility for something always gave me pressure. When I was in 6th grade, I was elected as the student president of the whole school without my intention. I was strained and obsessed with the idea that I was always being watched and evaluated by teachers and students. I was getting timid and depressed in low spirits. I also became afraid of speaking in front of people. Moreover, I was the worst at sports among the 4 children in my home. In 4th grade, my home-room teacher, who liked sports, had students play only the vaulting horse throughout the term. The fear that I would fail to jump over the vaulting horse made me give up even before I begun. Finally, I sat on the bench and just watched others work out. Since then, I kept suffering from an inferiority complex in sports.

I was confident at least in studying. With the grace of God, I entered the department of chemical engineering in Seoul National University in 1998. I hoped to be recognized by people not only in my studies, but also with sports and talent for speaking. However, there were too many people who were more competent than I. My specialty was only in studying, but other students had good looks, abilities in exercise and speaking, and rich background as well as good school records. Compared to them, I was not excellent in my studies at all. With the record below the average I'd ever had, I felt like a fool. I lay on the dark dormitory room in despair, and wished to make a new start of my life if possible.

At that time, I met a UBF shepherd in front of the dormitory store. I began studying the Bible with shepherdess Pauline Kang, who is presently in New York as a missionary. Her love and care touched me and led me to the summer Bible conference. It was full of grace and God's words worked powerfully, but I felt a burden that I would have to live a hard life like the missionaries. But I didn't have the slightest idea of being a missionary. I just wanted to be a Sunday Christian, who is satisfied with his own salvation and enjoys the world.

Finishing my second year in university, I joined the army with worries about the future. This was my own decision, but life in the army didn't go smoothly from the beginning. I went into hospital with frostbite, and suffered from trouble with senior members. A day seemed like a month to me. I tried to get rid of stress by watching indecent videos. I felt heavy because I appeared to be good and right enough to get recognition and expectation from people, but my inner being was bad. But I had no strength to free myself of lust. Shepherd Daniel Byeon visited me a lot even more than my family and kept serving me. Whenever I was low in spirit, he comforted me and encouraged me to pray. I went to Sunday worship services whenever I had the chance to be out of the army.

By the grace of God, I finished the service safely and was discharged. But I had plans only for myself. I had no spiritual direction for God. God led me to the summer Bible conference in 2002. The message of Jesus' cross helped me to accept the fact that Jesus suffered on the cross for my sins. This was the first time the love of his cross touched my heart although I was an old Christian. I thanked the love of Jesus' cross, and had courage to confess my sins of inferiority complex and lust.

Afterwards, my life changed from being self-centered to God-centered. I learned Genesis during vacation. Before Genesis 17:4 "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations" I had to decide which way I should go - remaining as a petty bourgeois who lives a comfortable life but has no other fruit more than himself, or becoming a father of a multitude of nations like Abraham who bears abundant fruit. I came to the conclusion that a life used in God's work like Abraham's is far worthier than a life of a petty bourgeois. Then, God led me to common life and helped me to learn the mind of a father of many nations. Through prayer and daily bread, I grew spiritually, and I changed from a timid and lustful man to a bold and holy man of God.

With the vision of a professor shepherd, I entered graduate school. Through research and studies, God trained me to be humble and rely only on God. My experiments failed for 5 months and I could not find any reason. With an earnest mind, I held onto the Job 23:10 "But he knows the way I take; when he has tested me, I'll come forth as gold." When I received God's training in my experiment, I could try again. In the end, God blessed me to publish the paper as the cover feature in an international journal.

I decided to study abroad. However, studying for research, tutoring, and preparing for English exam at the same time was very difficult. Although I had tried the English test many times, my score didn't go up easily. But holding onto Mark 11:22 "Have faith in God," I read this verse everyday and went on trying, and God gave me the score I needed for the doctor's degree. Through this, I experienced God gives victory to those who believe and try their best to the end. By God's grace, I was admitted into Ph.D course of Chemical Engineering in Texas

A&M University.

During the one year in Texas, God blessed my family and campus mission. It was not easy to survive as a foreign student. Sometimes I did not understand lectures, and I made mistakes in the research because of communication problem. So I felt afraid of teaching the Bible with my poor English to college students. However, God sent missionary Daniel Byeon to help us. He is Ph.D student in Theology at Texas Christian University. He came to Texas A&M every week by driving a car for 3 hours. Through his sacrificial cowork, we could serve Sunday worship service and go fishing. God sent us several Texas A&M students, Austin, Savanna, Manuel, and Danny. They studied Bible with us one or two times but they left. However, God gave us victory in our school studies. By God's grace, missionary Daniel Byeon could finish Ph.D coursework with all A's, and I could pass proficiency exam and survive in laboratory under the harsh advisor. I accepted that when we serve our "five loaves and two fishes" sincerely, God blesses us.

I praise God who blessed this sinner of fear and Sunday Christian to be a missionary who serves the campus students in the U.S as well as to be a Ph.D student. I also thank God for sending me Lydia Hong, who is beautiful and spiritual, and my son Noah Chanjin who is a blessing in my family. I give thanks and praise to God who gives me for his abundant grace.

Still I am not all prepared person to live as a missionary. However, I trust God's word. "You will be a father of many nations." I pray that God may help me hold on to this word, and by faith and obedience, live a life of a missionary.

One word: You will be a father of many nations!

Texas A&M prayer topics

1. To have one to one bible study each of us.
2. For powerful Sunday message from M. Daniel Byeon and bible study.
3. To raise one Abraham and one mother of prayer.