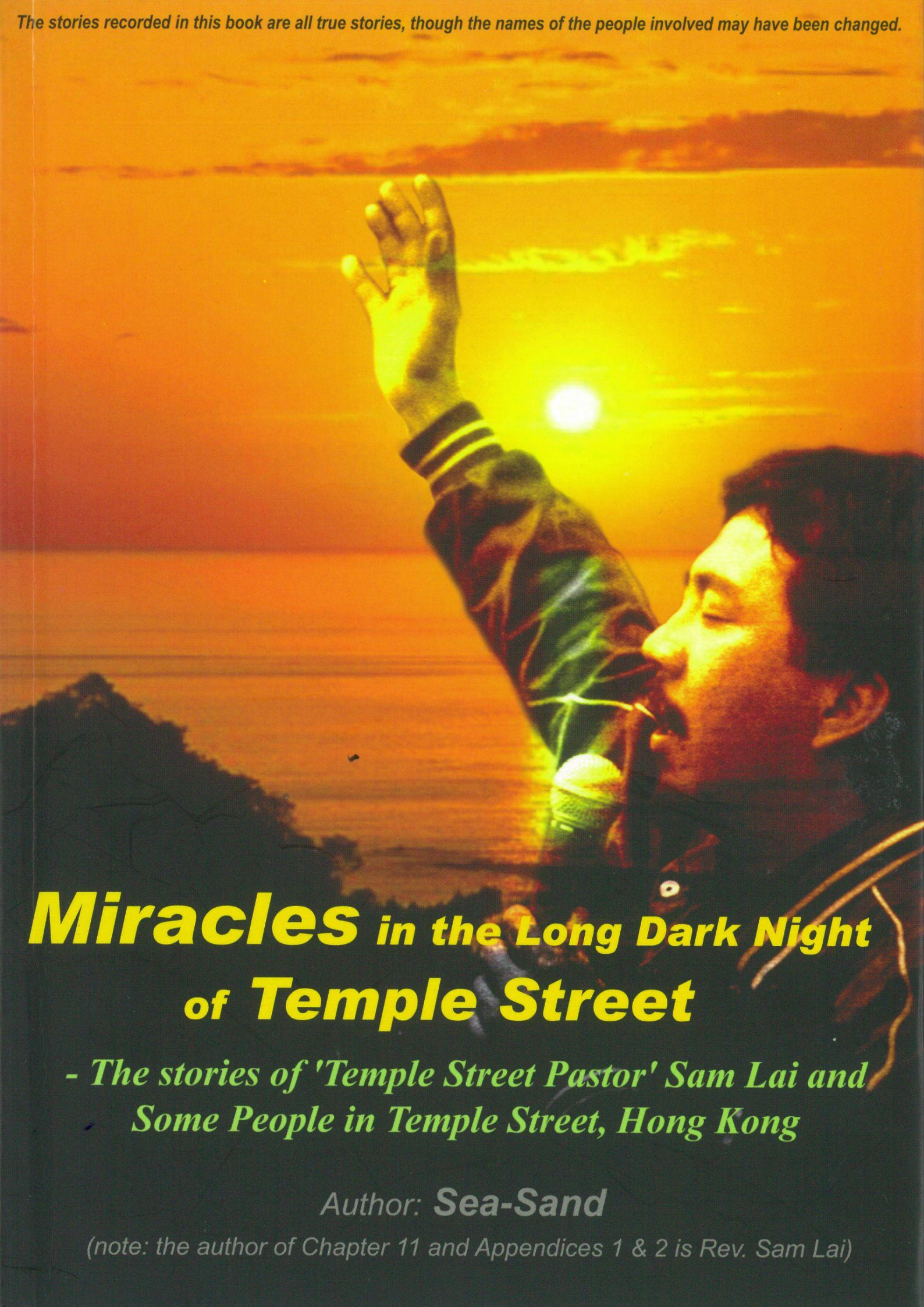


The stories recorded in this book are all true stories, though the names of the people involved may have been changed.

A photograph of a man in profile, singing into a microphone. His right hand is raised in a gesture of praise or prayer. The background is a bright sunset over a body of water, with a dark silhouette of a hill on the left. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by oranges, yellows, and reds.

# ***Miracles*** in the Long Dark Night of ***Temple Street***

*- The stories of 'Temple Street Pastor' Sam Lai and  
Some People in Temple Street, Hong Kong*

Author: **Sea-Sand**

*(note: the author of Chapter 11 and Appendices 1 & 2 is Rev. Sam Lai)*



## **Dawn Finally Comes After the Long Dark Night**

—— The Stories of “Temple Street Pastor” Sam Lai and Some People in Temple Street, Hong Kong

Author: Sea Sand (note: the author of Chapter 11, Postscript 2, Appendices I & II is Rev. Sam Lai)

Translator: Sophia Chan

Source of Information: Rev. Sam Lai, Ah Fong, Rev. SW Hon, Ah Shing

The stories recorded in this book are all true stories, though the names of the people involved may be changed.

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Preface by Dr. Jackie Pullinger To

Preface by Dr. Philemon Y.W. Choi

Preface by Apostle Lawrence Khong

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### **POSTFACE**

Preface by Dr. Jackie Pullinger To

I knew Ah Mun was special from the first time I met him. Somehow I sensed that he would go to places that I couldn't, reach people that I didn't know and be used in wonderful ways.

Later he came to live in my house and it was anything but wonderful. We had ups and downs continuously. When the Holy Spirit was upon him Ah Mun shone. The next day - even in my house, he might take heroin. However, I knew he was chosen by God and we persevered. It's easy to persevere when you can see through Jesus' eyes the wonderful way He has made a person and what he can become. Now I know him as Samuel and am thrilled to read the stories in this book.

When people have asked me to write more of my own story I have said "No, write your own books". I don't want Christians to read all the time of what others are doing instead of finding out the adventure that God has for them. I hope that there will be many more books written by people like Sam who are not only writing books but doing the works of Jesus, with the heart of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit. I am so excited to read and to recommend this wonderful story to you. Jesus is still changing lives in Hong Kong and China.

Dr. Jackie Pullinger To  
Founder, St. Stephen's Society

**Preface by Dr. Philemon Y.W. Choi**

Temple Street is an attractive place for the tourists, yet it is also the melting pot for prostitution, gambling and drug-trafficking. Have you heard the Temple Street stories?

About twenty years ago, I was invited to speak in a street-evangelism group near Temple Street. A middle-aged man I met there told me his story that greatly impressed upon my heart. He had used to be a regular customer at one of the mah-jon shops, and his gambling addiction had caused his family to brake up. Yet one day he accepted Jesus as his Savior in one of the street-outreaches. Not only was his life changed, he was able to be reconciled with his wife and children. I am moved by the stories of the Temple Street people in this book.

One of the most touching stories is that of Samuel Lai; you might have already heard or seen his story broadcast on TV or the radio.

I have heard Samuel personally sharing the amazing story of his earlier life: he had been a member of the triad society, also worked as a police officer. He had been a drug addict, yet turned round to help people to quit. He had struggled with the bondage of sins and crimes, and now he is a minister. He had done all sorts of illegal acts in Yaumatei, yet he established a church there. That is incredible, that is a miracle. I am

moved by the stories of Samuel recorded here.

We might have certain fears, even feeling of hopelessness, towards gang-members or those who are addicted to drugs or gambling. This book has reconfirmed to me that in the love of Christ, there is hope for them. In this book we find light, hope, faith and love. It is sure to bring blessings to many people!

Dr. Philemon Y.W. Choi, General Secretary of Breakthrough Limited

## Preface by Apostle Lawrence Khong

I have come to know Pastor Sam Lai in the early 90's. He has become one of my closest brother in the faith, a partner in the ministry of the gospel as well as a loyal friend. He has been a real blessing to me and my church. Lovingly, we call him, "Uncle Sam".

It is a joy to write the foreword to this book. This book contains the testimony of his life. You will find it astoundingly inspirational. The tremendous transformation of his life as the result of the power of the gospel is nothing less than miraculous. You will inevitably be drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ's love which softens the heart of a hardened sinner such as Sam. It is also Christ's power that could change him from inside out. Pastor Lai's life and ministry indeed serve as a "living letter" that will inspire faith in every reader.

This book will not only inspire faith. It also instills hope in the life of the readers who may think that their lives are broken beyond repair. If God could change Sam Lai, He certainly could touch your life as well. What God has done for Pastor Lai is proof positive that He could do it for anyone who cries out to Him. Not only is Sam's life totally transformed by God, God is using him to transform the lives of others. This gives hope to all of us. God not only restores our broken lives but He could release us into all that God has planned for our lives.

Finally, I believe that this book will become a powerful tool for evangelism. Read it for yourself and buy many copies for your pre-believing friends. There is no doubt in my mind that through this book, the word of the Lord given to us in 1 Cori 1:27- 31 will be evident. "... God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.' "

Apostle Lawrence Khong  
Senior Pastor,  
Faith Community Baptist Church, Singapore

## **I. TEMPLE STREET, BEHIND THE NEON LIGHTS**

This is not an ordinary street.

Its special features cannot be easily detected in the mornings or afternoons.

The nighttime here is much busier than the daytime.

Technicolor neon lights shine upon pale and tired faces. On the streets, up in the flats.

At night, people come from all directions. Men and women, all seemingly prim and proper, but none so... All through the night they browse through stalls, others crouching in dark street corners, or visiting certain tightly closed units in buildings. A conglomeration of the good and the evil, to one degree or other, roaming about...

Some people are seeking out their destiny, some looking for thrills from gambling. There are others who chase after surreal pleasures. For some, they come to pursue intimacy – an intimacy that is passionate yet cold at the same time. An intimacy exchanged for money.

They are seeking out, searching, pursuing. Recurring hunger, repeating visits.



Perhaps, they are also trying to obtain short moments of putting-behind, forgetting. Trying to forget that behind the brightly lit images there is in fact darkness, hardship, vulgarity, shame and pain...

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah Fong, an apparently ordinary woman.

Ordinary, because here so many women are living a life of prostitution.

Yet, each woman who has come to that state has a story of her own, a story that is woven with immeasurable embarrassment and tears.

This night, Ah Fong stared at the cold walls of the detention centre, lips pursed. Yet words and emotions were causing havoc in her head...

...I am not a drug dealer, why am I shut up here? And I cannot believe that it was my mum and little brother who have betrayed me! What has this world come to? Is nobody human anymore? Everyday I am being abused by clients, and what do I get in return? Working in brothels, dancing halls and nightclubs so as to save up hundreds of thousand of dollars just to pay the deposit for the flat – a place for you to live in – and that's how you thank me for it!! What kind of logic is that??... As soon as I came home today, you – my brother – accused me of hitting mother, and

then came your punches that would not stop even when I yelled in pain! I was to go to the drug rehabilitation village tomorrow – that’s why I got the pills and the heroin, to have a last indulgence. You hit me, and called the police. When the cops came, they did not know about the drugs, but you showed them the heroin and asked them to take me away! Not once was I locked up because of some disgusting clients or vicious gangsters. Not once since I started this life of drugs and prostitution in my teens. Yet I am here today, thanks to you – my very own brother! And you, my ‘mother’! You have always taken the side of brother. I can’t believe that today, without saying a word or doing anything, you allowed him to hit me and called the police to get me... Mother, do you still remember that you are my mother? Is there still any family loyalty in the world??...

This night, Ah Fong stared at the cold walls of the detention centre, lips pursed. Ah Fong was not able to sleep the whole night.

For a long, long time Ah Fong had not remembered how to cry.

In the middle of the night, all of a sudden, Ah Fong began to sob. The first time she cried in eight years...

And yet, what else could Ah Fong had done, except crying?

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah Shing, an apparently ordinary ‘client’.

Here, it’s common to find ‘clients’ like him.

Perhaps there was a slight difference: Ah Shing had not yet gotten used to this lifestyle completely.

Every time Ah Shing took the elevator, he could not help pressing repeatedly the button for the floor that he wanted to get to.

If only the doors would close up more quickly, and nobody else would step in.

What he was most afraid of, was that he would meet his acquaintance, and they would know where he was heading.

He knew that he shouldn’t be here. He didn’t want to be here.

Yet, there was something, something inside him that urged him on, hurrying him, tightly gripping him: an unquenchable lust that lured him to this place.

Once, he was suddenly saddened when he realized that his ‘partner’ was awfully young – he felt sorry for her.

Yet, despite the sadness, he was still more concerned for himself. That time, once again, he indulged himself in doing what he wanted to do.

One day, he heard his colleagues all saying what a ‘good guy’ he was,

how he had ‘no bad habits’, and ‘being so nice to everyone’, he did not raise his head or look into their eyes.

“I can fool others but not myself, people call me a good guy, in fact I am wearing a mask all the time... a ‘good guy’? How can I truly become a ‘good guy’? ...”

Apart from letting my heart go numb, forbidding any shameful feeling creeping up, what else can I do?

\* \* \* \* \*

Can I stop the fighting? Can I cease living a life like this?

Shee Wah had bandages all over his body, and he was limping along Temple Street.

Just the night before, Shee Wah and his mates were having a crazy time inside a karaoke. For a small matter they got into an argument with someone again, they got involved in a gang fight again, and also attacking the police; he was promptly ‘dealt with’ at the police station. Tears began to fill his eyes as he looked at the church, which meetings he had joined in the past three months...

...Why am I back to square one? I took drugs and brought shame to my family, everyone just avoided me, but now I have quit drugs, why

have I failed again? The pastor had invited me to church meetings, I just appeased him with “yeah, I will come” and I went back to my old crazy ways with my mates... I might have gone to church, but the next moment I’d be calling prostitutes, gambling and drinking! Will I never become a good person? Forget it, I might as well just go to the pastor, and say goodbye...

“Pastor, I am not coming to church any more.”

“Why?”

“I don’t have the ‘face’ to see you anymore, you have been so good to me, and yet I...”

\* \* \* \* \*

Could there be a change to a man’s destiny?

The night was falling.

Sam was pacing in the district, and stopped when he reached the public square in front of the temple. Yes, what a familiar spot. Yet tonight, a very special sensation was touching him deeply.

He could sense a darkness that was almost tangible, and it was over the whole place.

People came here to seek comfort and satisfaction, they came here to



ask for their destiny and to change it, but what had they found in the end?

Was it happiness, or pain?

Satisfaction, or emptiness?

Have they got hold of something, or were they being grabbed by something?

He mourned and wept for Temple Street. Tears slowly rolled down his cheeks.

He could feel the merciful kindness that the loving God was having for the people.

He knew that far too many people were living in darkness, their destiny needed to be changed.

If there was a place here, to offer them a cup of cold water, where they could take a rest, where their wounds could be cleansed and dressed, shame removed, life reorganized, destinies changed, the down-trodden no longer so and the hopeless received hope, wouldn't that be great?

But, a dream like this, is it far-fetched? Is it too unrealistic?

Could it be done?

Could a man's destiny really be changed?

Could the destinies of Ah Fong, Ah Shing, and Shee Wah be

changed? ...

Sam, who once roamed about in darkness, but who turned round to become a minister in Temple Street, how was his own destiny changed? ...

## **II. Samuel Lai , a rogue Minister**

*The paths of life can be so different.*

*Each has his road to travel.*

*It could be in the dark, or in the light, or even travelling between the two.*

*How does one spend the long night?*

*The light and happiness seem so distant.*

*Is there a destiny – or a choice?*

*Perhaps, both the light and the darkness resides deep within my heart...*

## **1. BLOODIED SEVENTEEN**

Mongkok ◦ Dundas Street ◦ Fourth floor – press ‘3’ at the elevator.

This place, it is not only a place for dancing.

This place, it is also a very good place for finding female comfort.

Or to show off your strength and authority, where you can show yourself a hero.

It is further a good place to launch your revenging attacks.

Seven hulks suddenly stormed through the entrance, without saying a word, they picked up anything at hand – iron rods, folding chairs or piping tubes, and hacked at Sam. One of them took hold of a part of the broken bottle, and stabbed Sam once at his stomach on the left, once at his left hand. Blood gushed out from Sam’s body, yet he continued to fight with energy. Gradually, however, his sight was blurring, and soon after he fell to the floor and could not move further.

Not knowing the length of time that had lapsed, Sam regained consciousness, and slowly struggled from the floor. The enemies had left, and so had his ‘friends’ – the place was cleared. Bleeding, Sam limped his way from 4th floor to the street and attempted to hail a taxi to take

him to the hospital. Two taxis zoomed off, not daring to stop.

Luckily, one finally stopped, and took him to the emergency unit.

Sam could have been unprepared for the attack, but certainly he was not surprised at how things had turned out.

For all these had become part of the routine to Sam: fights, burglaries, car-theft, stealing and gang-fights.

Sam had grown up in the slums of Lei Cheng Uk, one of his elder brothers was the triad leader who had tens of followers. Sam was used to seeing bed-load of bank notes, heroin stacked, waiting to be sold, and other narcotics in the house.

Parts of Sam 's daily life include loitering in pools-halls, involved in car-racing, crazy parties, and promiscuity. He would be driving a stolen car along a busy road, and snatched a passerby's handbag before driving off. He could have no regard for anybody, and if he should dislike the look of a person, Sam could start beating him until the person begged for mercy. Should his girlfriend be insulted on the street, he and his gang-mates would seek revenge. Sometimes the number would be less than the opponents, and they would try to scare them off by shouting words to each other, "hold your knives" when in fact there was none.



Taking revenge and being avenged, beating others and being beaten – these were all common occurrences.

This Sam understood very well, even when he fainted at the emergency unit.

That year, Sam was seventeen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those who fought could be beaten, or even killed.

The following year, Ah Ming – Sam ’s gang leader, was shot and killed by the police in an attempted robbery.

This was not Sam ’s first shock from the death of a ‘brother’.

He remembered the day when he visited Jack.

Jack’s father opened the door but did not allow Sam in, he simply said, “he’s dead!”

Sam stood motionless, he could not say a word.

Jack was big-built, and ‘cool’, and had been an especially close mate of Sam ’s. They had stolen wine from supermarkets together, and he had treated Sam to expensive heroin at home. Only a few days previously had they been talking together happily.

“He is dead!”

Dead?

Just like that – gone?

Dead? What was ‘dead’? Where would one go after death? Would there really be ‘nothingness’ after death? Or would one go to another place? What place? ...

Jack was caught during a robbery, and later he died in jail.

What about me?

When would I follow after ‘Big Brother’, and Jack?

And would that be my whole life?

My own elder brother had been in unethical business for many years, but he often cautioned me not to follow suit. Frequently he would say, if one got involved, it’s like one foot in jail, and the other at the gate of hell.

How should I walk the path ahead?

.....

**Perhaps – I should turn round and change...**

Perhaps – I could even join the Police, and make a complete change, becoming a police officer instead of a thief?



## **2. THE LICENSED-RASCAL MADE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE AT TEMPLE STREET**

There were two ways to ‘turn round and change’.

It could be a real ‘turn around’, starting a new and different life.

Or it could be a pretended ‘turn around’, continuing to do ‘bad’ with a ‘good’ visage. In this case, the ‘bad’ could be ‘worse’, more outstandingly evil.

When Sam guided the recently arrived English inspector on their patrols, he was sneering inside.

He understood it totally the meaning of ‘assumed power’. After checking around the different dancing halls and brothels, his standing in the assigned district would be enhanced further.

His superior, who really had the power, had no time to do rounds on the streets. He, on the other hand, could speak a few words of English and therefore naturally became the ‘agent’. With this status, things could be done with much greater ease and convenience. For example, he needed to ‘clear’ his gambling debts, or when he could get some easy-money when he was tight on cash.

Sam was full of ideas, and he was nicknamed by his colleagues ‘the Schemer’. Any money confiscated at the gambling stalls would naturally

‘disappear’, and the amounts of stolen cash at the scenes of house-burglaries were often ‘readjusted’. Other ‘regular activities’ included arranging transactions on behalf of the loan sharks, forcing women into prostitution, protecting certain drugs- or gambling-stalls, and negotiating with special privilege as ‘servants of the Queen’.

These were not unusual in the police department before the establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

Setting aside other districts, Yaumatei to which Sam was assigned was definitely an abundant source of easy money, and the most favored location amongst cadets’ applications.

In this district, police officers followed the ‘standard rules’ and received bribes from drugs-exchange points. The current price was between twenty and fifty dollars per point, and seven to eight points could be visited each day. By the standard of the time, that was quite a handsome income. The officer who had the most ‘benefits’ was the ‘faucet’, the one who had the power to set rotaries. As for other officers, cash (known as ‘rainfall’) often just ‘appeared’ in their lockers. In those days, walkie-talkies were not common, and therefore patrolling officers



only needed to report at specified times only. At other times, they would be free to do other things, such as eating, playing mah-jon, or doing other things so that they either spent or earned money. It was often the case that they started work with no money and finished with much.

Sam had decided to start a new and different life when he enrolled the police academy.

It was not an easy decision to make, and to live it was even harder.

Numbing one's conscious always required less effort than making a change.

Degeneration had always been an easy option.

That was more so especially when she was in Sam's life – she that was unforgettable, irresistible, but having a heart that was deadly poisonous...

*...He was using the fruit knife to carve the word 'Quit' onto his leg. Sitting in a pool of his own blood, Sam let out a howl of laughter, a crazy laughter...*

### **3. IN LOVE WITH THE “WHITE MISSY”**

The “White Missy”.

Powders, white powders. Powders – only featherweight powders.

Yet many court you. All their lives they are at your beck and call – obeying every command of yours. Without hesitation, they offer up their money, youth, dignity, and conscience.

Willingly, yet at the same time unwillingly. In the end, the distinction is not important. They have all become numb, cold; their souls are without feelings.

When Sam picked up the sharp knife and drew it into his thigh, blood gushed out immediately. Yet he could feel no pain, for another kind of agony had completely overtaken the physical pain.

He was using the fruit knife to carve the word ‘Quit’ onto his leg. Sitting in a pool of his own blood, Sam let out a howl of laughter, a crazy

laughter.

Now, he had nothing.

In order to get 'her', he had to earn lots and lots of money. Although working as a policeman, a monthly salary of one thousand dollars was quite a respectable sum, it was not enough to satisfy the demands of the White Missy.

Many times and through different means he had tried to cut off from the White Missy.

He had tried acupuncture.

He had tried taking methadone.

He had even tried self-segregation in Mainland China.

Once Sam handcuffed himself to the bed, asked his mother to lock up the front door, quite determined to fight it out with the drugs.

And the result? Two hours later, his mother discovered that Sam freed himself and climbed out the fourth floor window. Where did he go?

Of course, he went to the place most familiar to him, to find White Missy whom he knew best.

Since the age of fifteen Sam was addicted to drugs. Not for any special reasons, but tricked by the most ridiculous rumor: If you wanted

to become a hero, the 'Big Brother', then you must first learn to take drugs. Start off with opium – you might cough and throw up in the process, but you will gradually journey further down, and before long you would 'graduate' from smoking opium to 'chasing the dragon' (heating heroin powder and inhale the vapor) and injection.

Sam absolutely adored the White Missy; he even took the confiscated heroin for his personal consumption. He was found out in the end, but he got to keep his job because of the internal corruption. He was advised to quit the addiction immediately.

Yet quitting was easier said than done.

The physical withdrawal symptoms (such as cramps, drooling and runny nose) could dissipate after a couple of weeks, but what about the mental addiction?

Sam had taken a long leave, and spent each night with gambling, dancing, drinking, and prostitution, hoping that one addiction could replace another. His wife had said at the time, "I wish he is still taking drugs – it's better than disappearing every night!"

And now, even – just 'even' – if he could quit, it could be too late.

The storm had arrived.

A storm that shook every part of Hong Kong: the storm against corruption.



*... Walking on the street, fearful of being watched by the ICAC officers.  
The emptiness and loneliness is immense despite of the crowd and the  
noise. A loneliness that came from abandonment by everyone.*

#### **4. THE STORM AGAINST CORRUPTION**

A few days ago, Sam appeared on television.

In December 1977, police officer Lai Chun Moon (Samuel Lai) of the Yaumatei District was charged by the ICAC for bribery and corruption, and the arrest was reported on television. Residents throughout Hong Kong were able to see his face on prime time television!

Amongst the people was his father, the district chairman of the committee against crime.

How could he face his father anymore? How could he face his family?

Now his police badge was taken away from him. His ex-colleagues were avoiding him for fear of getting into any trouble. What's the point of taking the others with you anyway?

Even when walking on the streets, ICAC officers could be following behind. There was such a great sense of incomprehensible emptiness and loneliness in this busy and robust city. The loneliness stemmed from

being rejected by the world.

Actually he was not totally alone. He had his wife, and a five-month old son.

Yet, he did not cherish them.

All he did was to ignore his wife, esteemed her lightly, causing her fear, hurt and disappointment. He had never provided her with even the basic happiness that a wife should have.

He knew that he was not worthy to be a husband, nor a father.

There was only one place that he could rightfully go.

In 1978 police officer Lai Chun Moon (Samuel Lai) was convicted of corruption and possession of narcotics, and was sentenced to one year imprisonment. He was immediately taken to Lai Chi Kok Detention Centre, then Chi Ma Wan Prison to serve the term.

This was the first imprisonment of Sam.

\* \* \* \* \*

The jail – was that the place to change a prodigal son?

Or was it only the first stop in the journey of degeneration?

## 5. THE MORNING LIGHT

“Life, asleep in the darkness; life is like a kite with a broken string, blown by the wind...”

“Me, is there is hope for me?” Sam asked himself.

This is already the third imprisonment.

The external circumstances have changed much, yet the darkness inside remained the same.

After the first release, Sam had tried to work as a salesman of hi-fi products, but soon after he relapsed into drug taking. Caught again in 1987 and sentenced to three months imprisonment for possession of drugs. In 1979, not able to bear with the withdrawal symptoms, the weak Sam attempted to rob a taxi driver with a knife but it was he who got beaten with the passers-by joining in the kicking. With a broken finger, bleeding and lying on the ground, Sam heard the sirens of the police car that would take him to jail once more.

At the time of the third release, Sam was feeling down trodden. He went to worship at different temples, appeasing his gods; he even tried ‘da-siu-yan’<sup>1</sup>. One night he walked past Temple Street and sat down at a

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<sup>1</sup> A Chinese ritual of beating on paper-dolls that represent unknown enemies or curses so as to rid of all bad lucks.

fortune telling stall and paid the master thirty dollars – half of what he had in his pocket. Eager to know his future, Sam waited as the master looked at his face under the dim yellow paraffin light. “Your brow is broken,” said the fortune-teller, “foretelling your demise before the age of thirty.” If that was true, thought Sam, that would happen in three years’ time. Was that all there was to life?

I might as well let go, enjoy myself, and forget everything...

One thing could help him to forget. Forget about the things that he ought to have done but did not do, and forget the things that ought not to have done but which he had already done too many.

Such as the things that he did at “Shek’s House”.

Even at “Shek’s House” (Shek Kwu Chau Volunteered Drug Rehabilitation Centre), Sam still smuggled drugs by various means – hiding the powders inside the shoes, the condoms, in human feces...

Even though as a result of sharing needles, Sam had contracted acute hepatitis and had been unconscious for a whole day and was very skinny, he was still tightly knit to White Missy. And that was already the fifth time that Sam went into a drug rehabilitation centre.

Sam had lost all hopes – regarding the future, regarding everything in

life.

Sam was in such a condition when the invitation went out, “whoever wants to hear about Jesus should go to the library.”

That day, Sam got to meet the person who has the most impact in his life – the Jesus-teller, Ms. Pullinger.

Ms. Pullinger<sup>2</sup> came from England; she was energetic and had a smiling face. Sam had met many people in his life, from both the innocent and the evil world. Yet none was as amiable as she was. When Sam first saw her, she was like a mother to him.

Speaking fluent Cantonese, Ms. Pullinger told the story of the Prodigal Son. The younger son forced his father into dividing his possessions so that after taking his share he could leave home. In a faraway place the son wasted his possessions with prodigal living. A

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<sup>2</sup> Jackie Pullinger, an English native, in 1966, as a result of obeying “God’s leading” and without any support from any organization, traveled alone by boat from England to Hong Kong. Around the age of twenty, at the time of disembarking, had only one hundred dollars in the pocket, not enough for three days’ expenses, and had no idea as to accommodation or work. However, she persisted in the trust God had placed upon her, and started to work in Kowloon City, a place without government (neither controlled by China, England or Hong Kong), where no strangers were welcomed, and a conglomeration of prostitution, gambling and drugs. There she pioneered Gospel drug rehabilitation, youth centre, halfway house etc. Once a No. 2 gang leader in the City requested help from another district, when asked about what had happened to his men, he answered, “O, half of them are drug addicts, the other half are Christians, all useless! No good!” Today, she continues to live in Hong Kong, serving different people: the poor, gamblers, prostitutes, and drug addicts. As recognition to her contributions, Pullinger was made an MBE in 1988, and in 1991 the University of Hong Kong awarded her a Doctoral Degree, *honoris causa*. Details on her have been recorded in the book “*Chasing the Dragon*” (translated into twelve languages).

severe famine arose that he would gladly have eaten the pods that the swine ate but no one gave him anything. Yet, the loving Heavenly Father had each day been waiting for the son to return home, to return to His loving embrace.

Sam began to like the ‘truth’, even looking forward to the fortnightly Jesus-session...

On the fourth visit another English girl came. Aged around twenty, this girl had long blond hair and was casually attired with denim and T-shirt. She stood out amongst guys who wore only swimming trunks and showing tattoos on chests and arms. Sam wondered within, “what could it be that causes a girl like her to come to scum like us?”

This foreign lassie (Penny) seemed fearless in the company of these ‘villains’; instead she gently led the group to sing “The Call of Love”:

*Life, asleep in the darkness;*

*Life is like a kite with a broken string, blown by the wind;*

*Blown by the wind, disappearing like smoke, not seeing the truth,*

*shedding lonely tears...*

Can Love call in the deep darkness? Could that be the call of the Heavenly Father?

*Jesus is willing to forgive all sins, Jesus is willing to sacrifice  
Himself for you;*

*Come and receive Jesus' sacrificial love, to find true hope – do not  
tarry...*

A tough guy that he was, Sam had rarely shed a tear in twenty-nine years. Yet today, as he listened to the song, tears had fallen uncontrollably.

When the meeting finished, Sam remained in the seat. Penny had asked those who needed a prayer to bow their heads. Strangely, Sam followed, and sincerely closed his eyes. Penny came over and laid hands on him and said a prayer.

In the April chill Sam was surprised to find himself sweating, his was shaking inside, as if tossed by tumultuous ocean waves. Then he began to cry, deep pained wails.

Scenes of the past were replayed in the mind. A past that was evil, ridiculous, cruel... suddenly Sam realized that he had sinned gravely, he was the worst amongst sinners!

...Despite the ugliness, Jesus loved me, and even died for me? I have met quite a few policemen, judges, prison guards, and social workers, but

nobody really cared, nobody understood, forgave my sins. Who would ever suffer pains with me and be willing to be punished on my behalf, even die for me to deliver me from all the pains and suffering? ...

Sam bowed down before God and repented, asking Father God to forgive his sins... All the heavy burdens were washed away with his tears and sweat, because Jesus on the cross for me, saved me from the deep mire of sins and evilness!

That night Sam hid himself and talked with Jesus who was invisible and yet so real, telling Him all that was in his heart. Sam talked excitedly all night.

At dawn, a sunbeam shone through the darkness, brightened up the sky, as if a new day had been prepared for Sam.

The truth is, the morning light is always there, waiting for us.

The thing is, you have to decide whether you arise and walk toward that light, or you remain in drunkenness and the deep darkness of the night.

However, after the dawn, there might still be a long, long way to go yet...



*...For how long could a woman keep her youthfulness? Money spent could be regained, but years spent could never return.*

*And you, you have wasted too much time on me already.*

## **6. REGRETS OVER THE MARRIAGE**

In this world, not all mistakes could be rectified, and not all wounds could be healed.

Especially very grave mistakes that cause very deep wounds.

When Sam heard his wife's request, he was greatly shocked. Although he was feeling deep pain, Sam understood that what she did was totally reasonable.

Sam's wife, upon his fifth entry into drug rehabilitation centre and his fifth release, requested that Sam signed the divorce documents.

Sam had said, "But I am different now, I believe in Jesus, I will be a new man!"

But in the past too much had happened, too much had been done.

So much so that it was beyond what a person could normally bear.

Not one of those days that she had spent with him had been good. He had never brought her any happiness, the happiness that a wife should have. On the contrary, he brought her only great shame, sadness, pain and

repeating disappointment...

It was a never-ending story.

Thousands of words were not enough to express the regrets and guilty feelings.

Until today, you have already shed too many tears, borne too much pain.

For how long could a woman keep her youthfulness? Money spent could be regained, but years spent could never return.

And you, you have wasted too much time on me already.

You never had a real home. You had never asked for a luxurious lifestyle, you only wanted a family that was simple, harmonious and peaceful.

A family where the husband would be there to fulfil his duties as a husband. A family that did not live under constant fear, and would not be jeered by relatives, looked down upon by other people.

All these years, you had been worried for me, had concerned over me, but who had cared about you? Even when our son was born, I did not fulfil the duties of a husband or a father, looking after the two of you in the hospital. Yes, I might have been present physically, but my heart was

not there with you by your bedside, rather I was thinking about White Missy. I was so useless! I spoiled everything for myself, and I spoiled everything for you. For me, I should bear the consequence; but against you, I had no right to do it! I was such a loser; I was not worthy to have you...

For all these, it was totally my fault.

I did not look you in the eye, not because I hated you, rather I was feeling so ashamed. I blessed you from my heart, that you might find anew the happiness that should be yours. Flee from this cage, forget everything from the past, have a happy life that you should have long ago!

Now, what more can I say?

Sam signed the papers in silence; then he put down the pen, and sat silently in the small and narrow room – a room that no sunlight could get in.

Farewell.

There was too much to say, too much. He had wanted to say something, but didn't know where to begin.

Yet, regardless, one had to move on.

So, arise, walk on.

\* \* \* \* \*

Having left the drug rehabilitation centre, Sam joined St. Stephen's Society Drug Rehabilitation Halfway House led by Ms. Pullinger.

Yes, Ms. Pullinger was the one who deeply impressed Sam while he first heard about Jesus in the drug rehabilitation centre.

Since Sam committed himself to Jesus in the drug rehabilitation centre, he liked very much listening to preaching and praying to the Lord, and even began to read the bible himself. Still he felt that his foundation was very weak, and many bad habits remained in his life, also there were many places in the bible that he could not understand.

Therefore Sam entered the Drug Rehabilitation Halfway House of St. Stephen's Society to learn a new way of living, to learn from the bible, to learn about following Jesus who brought him light and new hope...

Yet, the path of light was not always straight and smooth.

On the contrary, the path of light was sometimes narrow, and more efforts would be required to take this path.

But as long as there was hope, a bright hope, the path would be easier

to take.

Because of the light, the head can be lifted, to look ahead, to look forward, instead of staying in the yesterdays, yesterdays that could have been filled with regrets.

## **7. THE UNEASY NEW PATH**

Certain lifestyles could be a great blessing for the soul, although on the surface it could be difficult and filled with hardship.

The Halfway House of St. Stephen's Society on Babington Path had only the simplest of facilities, but it housed people with an extraordinary past. The life at the dormitory is simple and regular: getting up early in the mornings, following the set rotary, each would perform chores such as cleaning and cooking. There were also set times for studying, meetings, sermons and bible reading. Not only did she preach on a weekly basis, Ms. Pullinger, with the help of other staff, also took up the role of a mother and the supervisor. The people who had been looked down upon and deemed hopeless received care and respect here. Ms. Pullinger slept on the sofa in the lounge, and whenever a boarder left his bedroom, she would wake up to meet his needs as a mother would for her newborn babe. If a newcomer had special problems or needs, she would stay up all night to pray with him and the following morning she would continue with the normal schedule.

Members of the staff at St. Stephen's were all committed to love and nurture the boarders. Once, a group of them went for a swim with the

coworker whom they lovingly called “Mother-One”, the boys smuggled cigarettes for smoking as soon as they reached the floating station. When Mother-One found out she wept and hid herself in the washroom praying for them.

Although life at St. Stephen’s was helpful to the boarders, Sam could not shake off his past and suffered a relapse six months after, returning to heroin and cigarettes for his false comfort. Once he slipped away through a window of the third-floor dormitory and went off without looking back.

Sam had decided to give up on trying, and never to be seen there again.

Yet Ms. Pullinger never gave up on him.

Ms. Pullinger’s assistant found Sam who hid himself in his own home.

“Ms. Pullinger asks me to take you back.”

“I don’t want to go back.”

“Ms. Pullinger is waiting. Tell her yourself that you are unwilling to go back. She has especially asked me to bring you back, why don’t you have a talk with her first?”

And so Sam ‘surrendered’ and went back to Ms. Pullinger.

“Why did you leave?”

“I feel very ashamed – I dare not see your face anymore, I am too bad, too evil, I can never change...”

Ms. Pullinger did not scold him. Instead quietly she went to the kitchen and cooked an English breakfast of an egg and sausages for Sam. The bible story of the Prodigal Son flashed in Sam’s mind: when the son returned home, his father did not punish him, instead he received his son and gave him presents. In the same way, Ms. Pullinger was waiting for Sam to rejoin the family of God. Sam would never forget that meal – the sausages eaten with tears.

Since then Sam stayed at St. Stephen’s and continued his learning, studying the bible and learned to live a new life, to become a new person.

\* \* \* \* \*

One day, Ms. Pullinger asked Sam, “have you ever thought about being trained for ministry? When the staff were praying, we felt that God had said that you would become a full-time minister.”

Sam was surprised and thought, “have they made a mistake? What, me? “Full-time ministry”? I am not educated, and I am a new repentant sinner... It’s incredible.” And he quickly replied, “I will become a full-time minister? That is impossible!”



“God has clearly told me this. I hope that you will pray about it. There is an opportunity now to send you for training, think about it.”

Sam gave some serious thoughts on it.

At the time Sam did not know much about the concept of “ministry”, yet he did want to understand the bible; also he thought that more learning would do him good, therefore in the end he accepted the invitation and went for training.

So in 1984, after nine months in the Halfway House of St. Stephen’s Society, Sam began his equipping at the Disciple Training School of YWAM (Youth With A Mission). With St. Stephen’s Society paying for the school fees and travelling expenses, Sam and his son moved into the School’s living quarter.

On the first day of school, Sam was filled with hope. Could this be true? I am living a new life! The nightmares of the past seemed to be going away; now everything appeared to be so new, vibrant and beautiful!

Yet, would the past be truly gone without leaving a trace?

Would the problems and strongholds that were deep down and tangling so easily let go of their grip without trying to regain their control?

Some paths are narrow, and to take these paths require great efforts.

Other paths are wider, following the majority; sometimes they seem to be easier to take...

## 8. A DEEPER LEVEL OF PAINS

Often that which is invisible is the most memorable.

That which you don't want to think about could be that which causes most pain.

In the most unexpected moment, that memory would creep up without warning, and cannot be prevented or suppressed.

Deep within the soul are hidden many things, some causing much pain just by remembering them.

That's why it is not an easy job to reorganize one's life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tonight, Sam was again being woken up by a nightmare.

He found himself in fear, sweating.

He was puzzled that the past kept on being replayed these few days, and this was a struggle for him.

Scenes of taking drugs in back alleys.

Gang fights and killings.

Injecting himself with heroin so as to end his life.

The guilt, remorse and self-condemnation because that he had hurt others deeply.

Being looked down upon, the rejection and abandonment that he had

suffered.

So unbearable.

Sometimes, even in daylight and when he was wide awake, such pains would surround him, gripping onto him, tearing him apart.

He really wanted to find a way out. A release, whether it be proper or inappropriate.

He lighted a cigarette, wanting to forget.

To forget, to resist; numbness was slowly overpowering his pains.

Gradually he got used to smoking again.

Gradually the numbing power of the cigarettes became insufficient.

Gradually he got used to taking drugs again.

After taking drugs he would go to his classes.

In fact, he was still very serious about his faith and his God. He did want to know more about the bible.

Otherwise he would not struggle at being a two-faced person, a hypocrite.

Sadly, he had no more strength to overcome his addictions and weaknesses. He could not deal with the pains deep down.

So, he gave up.

“The path of following Jesus is not really for me!” Sam was in

complete despair.

Time and time again he was defeated, Sam was now reluctant to talk about having a 'life' or 'walking in the light'. God seemed to be a long way away. "Let me leave You, from now on I will go my way, I don't want to spoil things here."

Therefore, before the end of the first term, Sam left the Disciple Training School. He packed up his belongings and went home.

The path at the School had not quite ended there.

The Lord had not given up on him. His brothers and sisters in the faith had not given up on him either.

On that day Sam was down trodden.

The brethren came to encourage him and prayed with him, asking God to bind the dark forces in him.

Then Sam took up the bible to read. The verses in Psalm 139 deeply shook him, as if God Himself was talking to him:

*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

*If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.*

*If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.*

*Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;*

*Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day;*

*The darkness and the light are both alike to You.*

At that time, Sam was fleeing from the presence of God.

But where to? Even in hell, Sam knew very well that the Spirit of God would be waiting for him there.

Having heard God's calling, Sam knelt down in tears and repented. If I cannot flee from you, I need to repent. In the past I had tried to rely on my own strength to memorize and understand the scriptures, to serve the Lord, but in fact I am so powerless – unable to heal my own hurts, unable to overcome my evil habits and addictions. I had appeared to know the bible a lot but my life is weak and powerless – "I need to repent and change!"

After the prayer, he threw away his lighter and cigarettes onto the street.

A deeper process of release had thus begun.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sam went to see the School, hoping to resume the study. The School agreed that he could rejoin the course.

Back at school, Sam had stopped smoking and taking drugs, but he was still unable to forgive himself.

Recalling the different relapses, the sense of shame was heavy and could not be shaken off.

Sam saw himself as a worm. Uncontrolled, fallen, corrupt. Worthless... Why am I such a failure? I have not done one thing that is meaningful. Even now, I have spoiled my chance of believing in Jesus and studying for ministry! What hope is there for me in my life?

One passage in the bible talks about me:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice... I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I

delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ...

He felt that – the Spirit of God moved him to know that, if he were to get away from this bondage, he needed to take action.

Yes, an action was required.

A public confession!

Sam was struggling inside.

In the past, even when caught red-handed, Sam would find a way to deny; and yet today he had to make a public confession? Where would all the pride be? As it was, the situation was bad already, what would people think after the public confession? How could he face the people afterwards? The more he thought about it, the more fear Sam felt.

But he also knew that if he did not obey God, by taking this step, opening up and facing himself in a deeper level, all those layers of inferiority, shame and guilt would never be taken away.

His legs felt like they were bound with chains. Only with great difficulty could he move into the classroom filled with students.



“Step forward!” a voice inside hurried him. Another voice, however, was hesitating and conflicting, “just wait a little bit...”

Should I go, or should I not go?

Should I not go, or should I go?

Suddenly Sam stood up. “If I die, I die!” He plucked up his courage and went to the front of the classroom. He looked at over twenty puzzled faces, wanting to say something but the tears were already falling. Sam could no longer resist the turmoil deep down. Not caring whether people were watching, he started wailing and cried uncontrollably.

He sobbed and tried to complete the broken sentence:

“I want to share with you about something in my life...”

## **I have been lying to you in the past...**

Often I smoked cigarettes before coming to classes...

Even taking heroin secretly...

After smoking I would chew gums and drink coffee to cover the smell...

I feel that I am being dishonest with God, also being dishonest with you all...

My sinning does not only cause me pain, but also affecting

everybody...

I ask for your forgiveness, I am willing to repent...

I ask that you would pray for me..."

It took a long time for Sam to finish what he had to say. He didn't care so much about the others' reaction.

Many students were crying with him. Some even went up to embrace him, to encourage and comfort him. In the end, Sam said a prayer that he would not forget:

"O Lord, I am willing to offer up myself to You, surrender myself into Your hands, asking You to lead my way throughout my life..."

Deep pains and tangles need a deep level healing.

Contrary to his bright personality, Sam became quiet.

For six months he did not smile. Fellow students mostly saw him by himself, thinking deeply under the big tree at School.

In prayers he realized that the reason for his struggles with sins was that he had not properly dealt with his past pains. So he often sat alone, speechless, waiting before God and facing all the deep hurts of the past.

He received weekly counseling; he even shaved off his beard as a sign of his repentance.

He asked God to help him overcome his weaknesses. In the past nothing compared with smoking a cigarette after a meal, so the temptation was strong. He implored God to change his feelings so that the cigarette smell would be repulsive to him. Then he noticed that the smell did change to be as disgusting as manure, and so he was able to quit smoking and taking drugs. Also he stopped drinking because now he became allergic to alcohol.

Further, Sam also received special healing spiritually. Once, Sam felt that God had taken him to Heaven, and there he received indescribable acceptance, joy and peace. The grace of God had set him free from guilt, inferiority and sadness.

\* \* \* \* \*

During that period, Sam did not only learn about the healing of God, he also learned about faith.

After returning to the School, Sam had ceased to receive financial support. How could he then get ten thousand five hundred dollars that represented his half-year school fees and living expenses for him and his son?

This was a practical issue, also an urgent matter to be dealt with.

For two mornings Sam had felt that the Lord spoke to him through a passage in the bible:

Therefore do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

*Sam felt that God was leading him to live his life by faith. He should not rely on the church, nor on men, but on the Lord.*

*Sam even had a special thought: he would forsake the five hundred and seventy dollars monthly social benefit!*

*'Living by faith' – is that possible?*

*Would that be too impractical?*

*Would that be too idealistic?*

*Anyway, Sam has made up his mind.*

*He had decided to follow God's guidance, and live his life by faith.*

*That was how it all started.*

*From now till death.*

## 9. SUCH A THING AS “LIVING BY FAITH”

“What do you mean by ‘living by faith’?” Sam’s social worker doubted, “Are you saying that money will fall from the sky?”

Sam knew that it was almost impossible for the social worker to understand what ‘living by faith’ was, and how he felt inside.

Sam really went to the Social Welfare Department’s office in Sheung Wan, telling the officer that he would decline the monthly benefits of five hundred and seventy dollars.

He had a special feeling: Samuel Lai of today was very different from the ex-convict and drug addict of the past. The old identities caused him shame and guilt, so that he could never lift up his head. Now he had a new identity – he’s a child of God. He was learning to serve the Lord, and with this precious and noble identity, he needed to throw away the burden of the past, the old and dirty identity. The social benefits were given because of his old self, and Sam felt that God wanted him to give them up. He would not have peace if he continued to receive the money.

“Do you have a job now? Do you have an income?” the social worker asked Sam.

“No.”

“From where then would you get money to pay for your school fees?

From your family?”

“No.”

“Then you have some savings?”

“No.”

“Then how can you pay the school fees?”

“I am living by faith.”

“What do you mean by ‘living by faith’? Are you saying that money will fall from the sky? No, you cannot decline the money. Upon divorce you have the custody of your son, and therefore you have the duty to provide for your son’s school fees, living expenses etc. This is a court case, and if your son quit school, or starved, or could not travel to school, then the school will complain and we would have problems to deal with. If something happened later on, you cannot say that the social worker refused to give you money, because you have refused to take any; we are not assuming this legal responsibility, it’s your responsibility...”

Sam insisted. The social worker stood firm on his ground. “Your request is denied, unless you have a valid reason.”

In the end, Sam wrote a letter to the Social Welfare Department,

stating that he refused to receive the monthly benefits of five hundred and seventy dollars.

But was he really able to live by?

God knows.

Yes, God does know.

Perhaps, by the guidance that he received, Sam also knew. But was he so sure? He had not told anyone about this.

One day, Sam met a fellow student on the street who said to him, “someone gave me this envelope, asking me to hand it to you.” Sam opened it and saw seven ten-dollar bills inside, plus a one-dollar coin. Gratefully Sam thanked the Lord, but at the same time wondered why someone would give a coin in addition to the bills.

After six days an overseas student Pam visited Sam, and gave him an envelope. “When I was praying, God seemed to say that I should give you these to you for evidence of His faithfulness.” Sam opened the envelope and found five hundred dollars inside. Together with the seventy-one dollars he received earlier, he had five hundred and seventy one dollars, one dollar more than the five hundred and seventy dollars that he surrendered. Having understood, Sam could not help but cried in front of Pam. “When I gave up five hundred and seventy dollars, God gives me one extra dollar to prove His faithfulness. When I walk in obedience, the Lord will, as He promised, provide for all my needs. My trust is not in the government, nor the church, but in You, my Lord.”

Once, Sam wanted to visit his mother and had to travel across the harbor, but he had just enough to pay for the single journey, and after that there would be no money left. While he was waiting for the minibus, a student rushed toward him from the School and gave him an envelope, saying, “I have been waiting for you for a while, God asks me to give you

this.” Sam opened the envelope and found three hundred dollars inside, enough to pay for all travelling expenses, with left over.

However, Sam’s faith met the test on one occasion. Being completely down-and-out, and having to pay for his son’s travelling expenses, Sam decided to call his sixth brother to help out, “I do not have any money with me, can you lend me two hundred dollars for my son’s travelling expenses?” His little brother agreed immediately and gave him the money. Later Sam found in his letterbox five hundred dollars, already awaiting his collection. At once Sam confessed before God and understood then his faith in God’s care and providence was still small.

And so for the five years of study at YWAM Disciple Training School, Sam’s spirit grew stronger in following Jesus, and thirst for the word of God also increased. As the apostle Paul matured in the Arabian Desert, Sam had also learned much.

He had learned to accept himself, how to deal with past hurts.

He had learned to be a father, to be a person.

He had learned from the bible, and the lesson of faith.

In his prayers Sam found his calling from God. Although now he was financially unstable and unpredictable, he strongly believed that God



would provide his needs. Whether or not he had money in the future, Sam had decided to give his life for service for the Lord who saved him and gave him a new life.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1986, YWAM sent Sam off to the Yaumatei District for missionary practice. Once more Sam revisited to Temple Street.

Arriving at the Public Square Garden, Sam had wanted to pray – but he could not. In his spirit he would feel a power of darkness hovering over the place, almost suffocating.

About him were people grouping around stone-tables of chess players, drunken people at different corners, drug-taking people, prostitutes, hawkers selling pornography, street-sleepers, and people discouraged, in despair and lost. The place was like the stronghold of the devil – people had come here for pleasure, instead they had found bondage and cursing. In those days Jesus approached Jerusalem, and He wept for it because He saw the fallen and rebellious state of the people. Today, Sam saw numerous living-dead here, being bound by darkness, poverty and sins, controlled and invaded by the devil; he similarly cried for Temple Street.

Sam knew that God had touched him so that he could see the sorry

state of the place. He could not ignore it and do nothing. He desired to be used by God, to bless the people here, to take away the curses in the people's lives, just as God had taken away the curses in his...

\* \* \* \* \*

“Jesus” and “Temple Street” – are they mutually exclusive?

Will the people in Temple Street accept Sam and his type, the ‘Jesus-talkers’?

With toiling was the possibility of a harvest.

Albeit only a ‘possibility’.

Hard toiling does not guarantee a good harvest.

In that case, would you still be willing to continue with the toiling?

*... How does one walk the path ahead?*

*Sam felt exhausted.*

*It wasn't just physical exhaustion.*

## **10. THE “MONKEY SHOW”**

This night, Sam was feeling very lonely.

A fervent heart encountered the freezing ice, causing such intense loneliness.

Is such loneliness inevitable in life?

\* \* \* \* \*

It's almost been a year, but there was nothing to show for in the Temple Street ministry.

None of the care and efforts given by Sam and his fellow workers was received or appreciated.

In the open-air Public Square Garden, they tried their best to declare the good news of God's grace and salvation, yet not far from the stand, people continued with their gambling or daydreaming, with some indifferent bystanders. Some would coldly ask:

“Do I get food if I believe in Jesus?”

“We are Chinese people – Jesus is not for us.”

“The monkey show is on again.”

Should the ‘monkey show’ continue?

The night was still dark and heavy.

People came and went in the dark; if they remain stubborn in their

loitering, what could I do? What could I change?

There had been different attempts, what else could be done?

How does one walk the path ahead?

Sam felt exhausted.

It wasn't just physical exhaustion.

\* \* \* \* \*

The night was still dark and deep.

The light is too far yet to be seen.

Looking back, many had sown the seeds, watered and nurtured, toiling without asking for a return.

And now, is it impossible for me to give that little bit more, to persist for a little bit longer?

Perhaps, as the bible says, *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...*

Perhaps the 'what' did not matter. What does it matter if the 'monkey show' was performed for the Lord?

Perhaps, what is needed now is not to withdraw but to stand firm, to have a further lesson on trusting God, allowing God to change the heart of man, so that oppressions will be delivered and bondage of sins released...

Perhaps the darkness before dawn is the heaviest. But with persistence the light will follow.

Perhaps the morning light has been waiting for us.

Awaiting your decision: arise and walk toward that light, or remain in

the deep darkness of the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Would the ministry at Temple Street really bear fruit? Or would it be just a beautiful dream?

How many residents will be willing to believe? And how many believers would want to change their old ways of living, determined to walk the narrow way?

Would the power of God be revealed here?

Would it really be possible for all walks of life to get together and build up the church and to minister to God and to others? People such as drug addicts, street-sleepers, triad members, manual workers, hawkers, doctors, lawyers, the professionals and the general public?

Could there really be a place to bless the blessing of Temple Street, a place where the labored could have rest, the wounded receive comfort, the poor have care, the thirsty in spirit could find the Lord?

Could it be possible?

Would that be really possible?

Perhaps we should hear what Sam has to say (he is now known as 'Uncle Sam')...

## 11. TURNING TEMPLE STREET INTO “JESUS STREET” (by Sam Lai)

This is the place where I first committed my life for the service to God. I was transfixed in front of the temple, and sensing the dark power covering the Public Square Garden I could do nothing but pray. There were gamblers, drunkards, prostitutes, street-sleepers, drug addicts, and the jobless. People from all sorts and trades were gathered in the Garden. I was determined to preach in this place, seeing that as my mission from God. The bible says that “*Now as He drew near, He saw the city [Jerusalem] and wept over it.*” (Luke 19:41) If Jesus were to visit Temple Street, He would also weep over the sins of the place.

In the summer of 1986 we had held two evangelistic outreaches. Some co-workers and I set up floodlights and amplifiers and performed mimes, singing and dramas that attracted many bystanders. However, the crowd would often break up as soon as the Gospel message started, and nobody responded to the altar call. Each time I would go home in great disappointment.

Then I remember the bible says, “*...the battle is not yours, but God’s.*” (2 Chronicles 20:15). In 1987 I began to pray earnestly, and recruit one hundred believers for the battle. We were like a regiment, strong in

number and ready for action and aimed at victory. Since then the number of converts began to increase.

I remember that one night we had finished the outreach, one of the local gang-leader was shouting challenges, “show me your Jesus; I will believe Him if He heals me – but if He doesn’t, don’t you dare come here to evangelize again!” A crowd began to accumulate and most of them were ready to make catcalls at the team. It turned out that this leader had suffered rib-pains for over ten years. I was convinced that the Gospel was the power of God, so I invited him to sit down and prayed for him. After about ten minutes of prayer, the man sprang up, and touching his ribcage he said in amazement, “this is impossible! My pain is gone...” He went off with head lowered and the spectators also dispersed.

After this living testimony, Jesus name was ‘established’ there and was spread in the neighborhood. We noticed that people were making less trouble with us, and both the residents and gang members were accepting our presence and evangelistic work.

I had tried to refer new believers to some churches, but they found it very difficult to adapt to the new community. Therefore I had decided to set up a church that would be more suitable for them, and named it Fuk Lam Church. We managed to borrow a street-sleeper help centre for use as out meeting place.

On 9th March 1988, we held our first church meeting. The participants were mostly grassroot workers, such as restaurant cooks, hawkers, car mechanics, drivers and building-site workers. There were other people-groups such as gang members, prostitutes, drug addicts, the

mentally weak and street-sleepers etc. Some came to the meetings in flip-flops, tank-tops and shorts; some liked to swear; some came with their belongings in bags; some were smoking. While some were roughly attired, others were neatly dressed. Basically we had all sorts of people.

In the earlier years we had to gather in different venues, and the instability caused us some frustrations. By that time we had a group of steady participants, so we prayed that we could rent a place as our regular meeting point. In May 1989 we found that place and it became our brothers and sisters' home. We had limited income and in order to save renovation costs, we did all the works: flooring, sewing the curtains, and providing things such as cups and plates and electrical fans. We had great joy in contributing to the making of our home and enjoying its abundance and warmth.

I continued to serve the residents at Temple Street and the ministry had begun to attract outside attentions. Since 1989, local and overseas media had reported on the ministry, and different denominations of the Church also began to take note of our evangelistic work in Temple Street. At one stage, nearly three hundred Christians gathered at the Public Square Garden to preach the Gospel to the local residents. The ministry



began to be established and received recognition; I was ordained as a minister in 1990.

In the decade that followed, I realized that leaders must be trained to carry on the work at Temple Street. Before we married, my wife Ruth and I agreed that we would open our house for leadership training, and that would include receiving into our home ex-drug addicts and ex-convicts. These people would not be learning by book-reading, bible-study or attending sermons, rather they would be following the example of a mentor in daily living. A healthy Christian family is the ground for spiritual nurturing, where their spiritual characters would be built and the proper value system instilled. These people would learn the ways to deal with oneself, live a new life, and how to interact with others. Through this live-in training, the leaders were given an opportunity to start again and to understand the influencing power of a family upon a person; the goal is for a person to be committed to his faith and become a positive contributor to the society in which he is.

To date, all those who had lived with me for at least three months have now become top or second level leaders, all fervent in serving the church and have their own families that are loving and warm; four of these have

also become our ministers or preachers. When they came to stay, we ate together, we did chores together, we played snooker and I listened to their sharing. After we had talked for hours at night, we would pray together and after that we went out for Chinese supper.

These leaders had come from different backgrounds and experiences. Shee Wah and Joshua are two examples. Joshua is smart and quick-minded but sadly he took drugs and was involved in all sorts of misdemeanors. We were at the drug rehabilitation at the same time and shared needles when we had drugs together. At the centre he was used to wear no top, and his chest was covered with tattoos of dragons and tigers. When he first came to live with us Joshua needed to wear a top, and because he felt restricted he considered leaving. In the end he stayed for three months because he felt the acceptance and giving that stemmed from love. Joshua got to understand that faith must be applied to his life in ways such as respecting other people and reorganizing his lifestyle. After becoming a Christian Joshua responded to God's calling and went for training at a ministry training school. He is now a preacher with me, and after he got married he also opens up his home and helps other people to grow.

In 1998, my wife and I went on to further study on family ministry for six months. I believe that every family needs to have its own 'family mission statement': "*...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Joshua 24:15). Apart from leadership training and family ministry, since 1995, the Lord has also moved me into the area of community service, as a visible revelation of God's love. We serve food to the homeless, conduct English- and computer- classes, give tuition to students and organize seminars, support groups and ladies group. Through these services we reach out to different people group such as street-sleepers, prostitutes, single-parents, Chinese immigrants, gangsters and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients etc.

In the year 2000, we saw the need for a bigger place to house the church and our community service centre. At the same time a unit of another church in Temple Street, just opposite the Public Square Garden, was put on sale at seven million Hong Kong dollars. We had little savings. When the seller asked, "Can you really manage? Do you have the money?" Those who went with me did not know how to answer. But with faith in the Lord I said, "of course we have the money – we have lots of it." In fact we only had seventy dollars in our church building acquisition fund, and our liquid asset at the time was only around ten thousand dollars. I answered in the faith of our Lord's abundant providence.

There is a story to the seventy dollars building acquisition fund. The money came from someone who had a past, and she was willing to offer the money even though she did not have enough herself. She told us that once she saw the congregation was asked to leave in the middle of

praying because it was after the period that we had booked the place. She thought how nice it would be if we had a place of our own. After this sister heard about the acquisition plan, she really wanted to give something, although at the time she earned little and was still repaying debts. She decided to give a little at a time, hoping that it would accumulate to something bigger. The offering of this woman was like the widow in the bible giving her two mites; and with these two mites we started our acquisition project.

The first hurdle was to pay the preliminary deposit of two hundred thousand dollars, which would be forfeited if the sale fell through. We still had an almost-empty bank account, but after praying we had decided to inform the church at the worship service that we would go ahead. A brother from Singapore was passing through Hong Kong and after attending that service he asked to see me the following day. At the dim-sum restaurant he said, "I will take care of 5% of the purchase price!" I was moved to tears when I realized that that amount would come to over three hundred thousand dollars!

Next we had to pay the main deposit of four hundred and sixteen thousand dollars. A sister handed me eleven pieces of gold accessories

that were her dowry. I asked her to discuss with her husband first. “After we prayed together, my husband told me to give them to you!” I asked if she would like to retain one or two pieces as a keepsake, “that is not necessary – let them be used for the building up of the church!”

Members thought up different ways to raise fund, such as sponsored walks. A Christian offered an interest-free loan of five hundred thousand dollars. “Thank you, sister, but the church has little income – we would be too ashamed to face you in Heaven if we failed to repay the loan!” She agreed and donated two hundred thousand dollars instead!

The Sunday before completion of sale we were still over two million dollars short and I had to give a series of sermons. The night before I had disrupted sleeps of less than two hours. The congregation prayed earnestly at these last hours. Then God worked mightily: two churches took up special offerings for us that amounted to \$1.29 million! An anonymous lady paid the final sum of eight hundred thousand dollars. She called the church and told us that she would pay the outstanding amount.

We moved into the new premises in July 2000. We had gathered in six locations previously and they were situated around Temple Street. We had held on to this dream for twelve years and finally we have the present property in Temple Street. The whole purchasing process had been surprising and unpredictable but the Lord’s grace is sufficient. People thought I was brave and strong, but in fact I was terrified. I suffered frequent insomnia a month before completion, I had nosebleeds due to

fatigue. From this acquisition project, not only had we experienced Him providing us with the money and the property, but more importantly, our faith and trust in Him had also increased.

In the year 2000 I received the Diamond Award from the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau. After over a decade of efforts, this award is to me a sign of affirmation from the Lord. Looking back, I had been a ‘hopeless case’, only sneered at as a ‘convict’, a ‘drug-addict’. Without God having changed me, motivated me and given me direction in life, I would never have this achievement. The glory from this award should be given to the Lord – the Omnipotent One who makes the weak strong and creating something out of nothing.

In 2001, by the invitation of the Commissioner for Narcotics Division, I became a member of the ACAN<sup>3</sup> Sub-committee on Treatment and Rehabilitation. Those who take drugs or commit crimes often need to have their mind set corrected; that is why I am involved in works that are preventative and educational – by telling my own stories, people will know the seriousness of the harm caused by drugs. I am also involved in therapeutic works and through counseling to heal spiritual and emotional

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<sup>3</sup> The Action Committee Against Narcotics

wounds. I had fallen because of drugs, today by our Lord I can overcome the temptation and damage of these substances, also as a minister I have a voice in ACAN, helping others to live a new life. My joy is indescribable when I see those being helped regain their self-respect, live a meaningful life and having their own happy marriage and family.

The dream of Fuk Lam Church is being realized step-by-step, testifying that when an ordinary and weak life receives the Lord, it will become one that is extraordinary and strong. We trust in God who is the Beginning and the End and creates from nothing. Our dream and our experiences of God's miracles are only the beginning, this dream will continue to burn, and the miracles will continue to generations to come. The spirit of "Turning Temple Street into Jesus Street" will be alive in our lifestyle of sacrificial loving and merciful kindness to the poor and the weak.

It is hoped that more people will care about the "least of the brethren", because Jesus had commanded the believers to tell of His love in practical ways. When we give water to a thirsty one, cook a meal for the hungry, receive the homeless, clothe the naked, look after the sick, visit one in prison, we are doing the same to Jesus. We do not love Jesus with words

only, but also in deeds. When we serve other people, we are serving the Lord Jesus.

Life is short, and it will be without regrets if it is based on values that are eternal. These words of Paul have become my motto: “*...nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*” (Acts 20:24)



Technicolor neon-lights

Passionate faces that are white with fatigue

*Crying is only possible in dark corners*

*Heads bowed in despair*

*There was a time when the end of life seemed near*

*Taking the journey again ~ is that possible?*

### **III. CAN A MAN'S DESTINY BE CHANGED?**

~ CONTINUING THE STORIES OF AH FONG, AH SHING AND

SHEE WAH

#### **AH FONG**

Behind the weary life, Ah Fong has her own special story to tell.

Ah Fong's father left her when she was eight.

What she can remember most about her father is the promise he gave her that she had not doubted one bit: "I have earned a lot from drug trafficking, and with that money I have already bought a house overseas, I will take you there a while later."

Also, she remembers the disappointment over an unrealized promise.

Mother had to work all the time so she could not look after the four children.

Mother had a job that she was reluctant to talk about; Ah Fong knew what it was when she was older.

In her first year at secondary school, Ah Fong got into a fight with her classmate. The classmate asked a gangster 'big-brother' to scare her with threats. The school, naturally, did not like students who fought. Soon Ah Fong stopped going to school.

Ah Fong often roamed about the streets with her little brother, and they befriended some street-kids. This gang of about ten kids played on the street everyday. Of course, they didn't play all the time – they need money for eating and playing.

The Big Brother of Ah Fong's 'boyfriend' used Ah Fong's home as sale-station of drugs. One day the police suddenly turned up; Ah Fong was not home but they took her elder sister back to the police station.

Ah Fong's elder sister was locked up in jail for two months. When she got out she was mentally traumatized, and found to be pregnant.

Ah Fong had cried many times over this. She knew that she had caused her sister's suffering. She did not know what she could do to compensate for it; in fact sometimes it seemed compensation would not be possible. Her sister's condition never improved.

Ah Fong's mother accompanied her to her first job interview.

When she got off work on the first Ah Fong felt terrible. Who would like to be groped by strangers? Ah Fong was disgusted just by the memory of it.

Ah Fong's mother brought her to work at a brothel.

That year Ah Fong was fifteen years old.

\* \* \* \* \*

Shortly after Ah Fong started her work at fifteen, her mother said, "it is difficult to make a living now; I need to look after your sister's baby so I can't take care of you – it's better for you to move out."

Therefore she rented a room with her boyfriend.

There was a shortage of heroin supply at the time and the police were keen to control prostitution so they carried out frequent raids on brothels; in fear Ah Fong had stopped working. Without money, Ah Fong and her boyfriend had neither food nor heroin, and they had to get money by picking bottles or rubbish on the street. When they tried to use another's gas stove, they were roughly warded off.

Mother had visited her but she refused to give Ah Fong her new

address; Ah Fong guessed that Mother was afraid of being troubled by her daughter...

Then Ah Fong's boyfriend was caught, so she had to start working at the brothel again. By the age of eighteen she was 'promoted' to working in a local nightclub and her income got bigger. Now not only did Mother get back to living with her, she also praised Ah Fong as being 'able' and 'smart'. After Ah Fong changed to working at the city-nightclub and had more 'clients', she had earned enough to pay the deposit for a flat and Mother praised her even more.

Yet Ah Fong was not a bit happy.

Each day she had to take many tranquilizers. It started off when the nightclub leader gave her half a pill – sufficient to make her sleep for several hours; now she needed one hundred.

As soon as the effect had dissipated, she took more pills. She took some whenever she was conscious. She took tranquilizers, heroin and other narcotics; she had headaches when she looked at the sunlight, she was unable to cry, she did not feel embarrassed anymore – in fact she did not know any emotions. All she could do was to have bouts of bad moods causing scenes. She rejected any moment of consciousness; she wanted to

block out all thoughts from her head; she didn't want to think about herself...

Each day, apart from pills and heroin, Ah Fong only thought of one thing.

Every day she had thought about dying.

But what about her family... Mother, little brother, elder sister, and her son – they all needed her.

She did not die.

Yet she was betrayed. Betrayed by her very own mother and little brother.

She had never been jailed since the beginning of her delinquency at aged ten. Nobody – including the most disgusting 'client' of hers, and no drug taking got her into jail. This was the first time in her life.

She couldn't understand why her mother and brother called the police and revealed the pills and heroin that she had hidden away safely. Her mother and brother's livelihood depended on her money that was traded with her body!

When Mother and brother came to visit Ah Fong did not say a word. She looked at them through the metal grilles, tears falling.

Ah Fong did not hear a word that they had said. Not one word.

She had totally lost hope in humanity.

She did not believe that there could be any kinship affection or any hope on earth...

\* \* \* \* \*

There is always hope.

Even though hope could appear in unexpected places.

“This is the place!” Ah Fong thought, “this place suits me best.”

Although Ah Fong had spent an hour looking for it, as soon as she entered the ‘slightly old and slightly messy’ place with worn-out chairs, she knew that this was the place for her.

She joined in the worship service, and while she listened to the people singing hymns her tears began to well up. She hated people seeing her cry so she controlled her tears, but her heart was crying and did not stop until the singing ended. This puzzled her.

Ah Fong had decided to believe in Jesus when she was in the drug rehabilitation centre, and she had tried to go to a church but felt that not

every church was suitable for her. She went to a very big church once and joined a fellowship there. When people were supposed to swap telephone numbers with each other, she noticed that other people seemed reluctant to give her theirs. She didn't feel good then.

She realized that honesty was very important in relationships, and that would be difficult for everybody. The facts were that she had had abortions, attempted suicide, took drugs, and carried out disgraceful 'trading'... How could all these be told? Could they be revealed? It would be horrifying to these people! It was difficult to open up and share with frank honesty...

Yet, things seemed to be a bit different this time.

When she talked with Uncle Sam (people call Sam 'Uncle Sam' these days) on the phone for the first time, Ah Fong could tell that he had 'been there' before. "You took heroin, just like me, so you won't look down on me."

She asked for the church's address but it still took her an hour to find it. As soon as she stepped into the place, Ah Fong felt warm and a sense of closeness to it.

It was not for herself that Ah Fong was eager to find Fuk Lam Church

and went to great length to locate it.

She did it for her little brother.

When her brother called the police and they found drugs in her flat she was taken away. The court believed her that the drugs were not for trafficking purpose, so she was sent to the rehabilitation centre. During the stay she had tried to hear about Jesus, but she found that boring and the Christians outdated. Later she did believe in Jesus, but she wasn't sure of His reality, as He was not visible; she found it very difficult to completely change her old way of life for Him. "What if after giving up so much I found out that it's a hoax? It's not worth it!"

So Ah Fong had been keeping a distance from Jesus and the church.

Ah Fong later got married and had a son. Because it was a premature birth, his life was in danger, so she tried to pray and ask for Jesus' help – if my son is well, I will listen to all that you say. Her son did get well, and Ah Fong had been a 'good Christian' for a while. Yet her faith in Jesus was still weak, and she had difficulty in settling in a church.

However, something that happened to her brother made her become 'active' again.

Her little brother got addicted to taking 'Ice' (a soft drug) and tried to



communicate with the spirituals. He often mumbled to himself and complained that he saw strange and ghostly things, threatening suicide. All these frightened his cohabiting girlfriend and eventually she broke up with him. Although Ah Fong had not completely forgiven him, her heart went out to him when she saw his poor condition. When she asked around, someone suggested that Fuk Lam Church might be able to help, and therefore she came.

Each time that her brother went crazy and was bothered by the evil spirits, Ah Fong sought the minister's help. Once her brother kept on banging his head against the wall and he was bleeding; ministers came to pray for him and he did calm down. Another time, after returning from worshipping Wong Tai Sin (a local idol) the little brother had a high temperature and it would not subside. Ah Fong asked the minister to visit again and pray for him, and the temperature was gone without medication. Another time the little brother spoke in two voices, one asking and the other answering, but that stopped and he went to sleep when the minister arrived. There were many other similar incidents...

These real life experiences convinced Ah Fong that the God she believed in was indeed real – not something from her imagination, or

legends; He was a powerful God. Thus Ah Fong began to take her faith seriously: she truly repented from her heart, started to read the bible, joined a cell group of the church and received counseling. Not only did she quit taking pills and heroin, she also helped women of similar background to know Jesus, quit drugs and to live a new life. Although there are still ups and downs in the journey of faith and of life, Ah Fong has now found peace, acceptance and healing in Jesus. She is now able to be less bothered by how other people see her, because she understands that the most important thing is to know how Jesus sees her.

\* \* \* \* \*

### AH SHING

Ah Shing worked in the kitchen and lived in the workers' quarter of the restaurant. Finding life a bore, he often gambled with his work-mates. At one time he had taken his yearlong saving of over ten thousand dollars and lost it all in the Macau casinos.

One can imagine what followed.

One night, after an argument with a work-mate, he went to Mongkok alone and entertained himself in a brothel. He gradually got addicted and had to go there at least once a month. Yet after each visit he would become frustrated:

“That’s awful, I’ve done it again...”

“I might have fooled others – they say that I’m a good guy, but in fact I am a hypocrite living with a mask on...”

“It’s really difficult to control myself, but it’s even more difficult to find help...”

**“What if I’ve contracted diseases – or AIDS...”**

A strong sense of emptiness and guilt was heavy around him.

He was acutely aware of his hypocrisy and fallen state.

Yet, things began to change one night in April 1992.

That night Ah Shing was walking past a very special section in Temple Street.

A group of people was doing something. Amongst that group was a bearded man with a loud voice and exaggerated gestures. Crouching down and standing up, he shouted, “those bound by sins are so oppressed that they are bent low, they have to crawl on the floor and yell for help. But there is still hope for them to get up...”

Jesus gives people chances!

Ah Shing responded that night and indicated his willingness to believe in Jesus. After being prayed for, he felt a faith that he never had before. In God there is a way out...

Many years have passed, and he had not visited those places once.

Instead he joined the brothers and sisters at Fuk Lam Church in preaching the Gospel, serving in the worship team, and cook meals for the street-sleepers...

Things that are much more in the light and much, much more meaningful.

\* \* \* \* \*

### SHEE WAH

Hon Shee Wah was born in Malaysia but came to Hong Kong at the age of seven. At first he did not even know how to read or write Chinese. In year three of secondary school, he was being bullied when playing football, and so he had decided to join a gang. He played his role in the

gang as a drug-trafficker but later he got addicted to the substance so he would appropriate the heroin for self-consumption. Nobody in the gang trusted him anymore.

“My father has died, but I have no money to bury him...” that was the excuse he used to borrow money from others.

He got involved in selling fake gold chains, robbing and stealing – all because he needed the money to pay for his addiction. He had no credibility amongst the gangsters or his friends.

One day Shee Wah’s father found him injecting heroin and asked, “why did I ever have you as my son?”

He had tried the drug rehabilitation centre, but he managed to take drugs for three of the four months he spent within.

Strangely, his Buddhist grandmother suddenly suggested, “have you thought about quitting in one of those Jesus-places?”

So Shee Wah went into a Christian rehabilitation village. People in there had come from all over the places, many were big men with tattoos. Shee Wah was used to seeing tattooed men, but the ones here were obviously different.

Once Shee Wah was suffering withdrawal and he was aching all over.

Surprisingly a man who had 80% of his upper body tattooed came up to him and asked, “are you in pain? Perhaps I can give you a massage.” Shee Wah was puzzled because ‘this kind of person’ would not do anything for free, yet there was nothing to be gained from him. Shee Wah then asked Ah Jing why he did it, and he answered, “I had your experience before – I am only doing what others had done to me.”

Shee Wah believed in Jesus at the village and quit drugs, but still not very involved in a church life. One day he saw Uncle Sam and other people preaching in Temple Street and thought them brave to do such things there. Being invited, he went to their church service. He noticed that the place was casual and relaxed, “not restricted, and we don’t need to wear a tie”, nobody looked down on him; so he joined Fuk Lam Church.

But is it that easy to reorganize one’s life?

Although Shee Wah stopped taking drugs, he kept many of his bad habits. After the church service he would rejoin his friends for prostitution, drinking and gambling!

Ah Jing became his pal. They both knew that it was not the ‘right living’, but they were powerless to change. On the other hand Shee Wah

had tasted the power and reality of Jesus, so he continued this 'relationship' with Jesus, hoping that one day there would be a complete change.

One night in 1991, celebrating the coming marriage of Ah Jing, a group of them went to a karaoke bar. Not remembering the details, an argument arose between someone in the group and some strangers, and a fight followed. Without a further thought Shee Wah joined in the fight. Suddenly a gun was pointing at his head, then he realized that in the confusion he had injured a police officer who came to stop the fight.

Everyone involved got taken to the police station. Shee Wah was already 'treated' and upon bail he was bandaged. Shee Wah looked at himself, and thought it ridiculous that a Christian should behave so. Immediately he called Uncle Sam, "Uncle Sam, I will never come to church again."

"Why?"

"I cannot face God, nor all of you, again. You have all been so good to me, yet I was cheating you all the time. The fact is that after church I go for prostitution, drinking and gambling..."

Uncle Sam did not scold Shee Wah but said to him, "Shee Wah, I

know that you really want to change.”

“But I cannot do it!”

Then Uncle Sam asked Shee Wah a question that he had never thought about before, “in your life, have you done one thing that is meaningful?”

“No, I really haven’t! I am too useless to be alive, so unnecessary, there is nothing meaningful in my life...” thought Shee Wah.

Uncle Sam asked a second question, “if you were willing to give your life for your friends, have you thought about giving your life for Jesus?”

Shee Wah said nothing but he was filled with thoughts inside, “that’s right! My life has been without meaning, but at least giving my life to Jesus is something meaningful. My life was saved by Jesus in the first place – if Jesus did not help me quit, I could die from drug overdose by now.”

Uncle Sam continued, “let me reassure you, I will attend court hearing with you, I will write a letter to the judge asking for a lighter sentence.”

“Don’t, Uncle Sam, I know that you are busy, and the church is buying a place now, so time is precious to you; you don’t need to go to the court with me.”

“Time is precious, but to me your life is even more precious.”



At that moment Shee Wah was tearful.

There is such sincere love in this world.

It's the love of Jesus shown through Uncle Sam.

Shee Wah was deeply touched by the love of God.

He had made a decision: whatever the judgement, he would properly follow Jesus.

It turned out that Shee Wah only had to pay a fine of four thousand and five hundred dollars; he didn't have to go to jail but the judge ordered him to be under Uncle Sam's supervision. Uncle Sam took Shee Wah home to live with his family, and helped him and nurtured him to return to a normal life.

Shee Wah did truly repent and entered the Ministry Training College and worked as a helper at Fuk Lam Church. He has now become a minister of Fuk Lam Church.

Shee Wah, however, has regretted one thing, which also becomes a strong reminder to him...

After deciding to serve the Lord, Shee Wah shared this with Ah Jing.

“Ah Jing, I want to walk the path with God, I don't want to mess about anymore.”

After hearing that, Ah Jing put a hand on his shoulder and said in a serious tone:

“Never mind, I support your decision to follow God’s way. Amongst the brothers you are the only one who has the guts to change; I am proud of you.”

Sadly, three days later Ah Jing took drugs again and died of an overdose.

Shee Wah was very upset.

Many thoughts and feelings were aroused because of the event.

Shee Wah didn’t know what a man would become if he were not in the Lord Jesus. Life is short and one should make use of it by doing something meaningful.

Ah Jing is not the only case. Shee Wah has witnessed many youngsters dying in their twenties. They died because of things that can be avoided.

Although Ah Jing did not turn back, Shee Wah deeply hopes that people living in Temple Street or in other dark places, could find a different life, a more meaningful life.

That they would not follow after Ah Jing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah Fong has restarted a new life. She is now pursuing further studies in theology and always helps others by drawing on her own experience.

Ah Shing is dedicated to church ministry and evangelism by joining the church worship team, through which he has found the meaning in life.

Having served the Temple Street for more ten years, Shee Wah is now Deputy Senior Pastor of Fuk Lam Church. He believes that the end of man is the beginning of God. God would prepare a way where there seems to be no way. “Instead of keeping your heads down, why don’t you look up at God whose arms are wide open for you,” he said.

These people – are they holy men?

Perhaps they are.

More probably they are not.

Perhaps they are just a group of ordinary people.

But these are ordinary people doing extraordinary things and having extraordinary dreams.

What makes it possible?

— “Because of Jesus,” they would say.

These are their true stories.

## IV. POSTSCRIPT

1.

### Dancing With Death

When Ah Moon was diagnosed with liver failure in 1992, he went into the lowest point of his life, **being** trapped in the darkness of death.

Dr Lai Ching Long, a Liver specialist and professor of Hong Kong University Hospital, upon studying Ah Moon's blood test result, said: "This hepatitis D inflammation virus is very rare in Asia. This infection is usually transmitted through the injection needle. Do you know you have 40% chance of dying from liver cancer?" The news was devastating. It was like a knife piecing right through Ah Moon's heart.

Death tortured him, together with fear, chill and worries. Ah Moon felt paralyzed.

Why do I have to confront death at the prime age of thirty-six? Where is God? I have been serving God faithfully, so why is this happening to me? My wife **has** just got pregnant, what will happen to them in the future? Could this be the retribution of my drug addiction in the past?

Life has many questions. Each one is so complex that no one can understand. We have many regrets too but there is nothing we can do about it.

**On** the doctor's recommendation, Ah Moon started injecting six hundred million units of interferon. After each injection, he would suffer from severe headache, ache in the bone, vomiting, loss of appetite, tiredness, etc. He had to take strong pain-killer for relief. Every injection was a torture and, at the same time, hope. For a glimpse of hope, he endured.

Six months after the treatment, Ah Moon found that the liver enzyme has increased suddenly. This was due to his rising threshold to medicine, and the medicine was not effective

anymore. Ah Moon was disappointed. In the midst of his pain and disappointment, he remembered his dream – “Transforming Temple Street into Jesus Street”. Should he stop or continue? Or should he choose an easier way out? There are moments in life when we are confused and struggling.

At Gethsemane, before Jesus died, He said: Rise, let us go! (Matthew 26:46). With this verse, Ah Moon decided to walk courageously towards death.

Through prayers and meditation on words of God, Ah Moon lived in the shadow of death. How to overcome the authority and control of death? Only by the power of Jesus who died and rose again, and who is our eternal hope. It is His grace that turns weakness into strength. Actually only a fine line separates life and death.

Ah Moon was once again filled with enthusiasm and excitement towards life. He went on his usual daily busy schedule, running from places to places. Sometimes, when his face turned pale, his colleagues would persuade him to rest but he would say: “The glory of an evangelist is to die at the pulpit, not in bed.” Then he went on and continued his work.

Every day, he was counting down his life. Every moment was important; every breath was precious, because life is not to be taken for granted. Yes, one must cherish life.

In 2000, the church had a need to acquire a space. At that time, the church had only 70 dollars in the church building fund. However, they needed 7 million dollars for the new venue. Ah Moon wanted to do something good for the church before he would die. Getting a place on Temple Street would bring the church closer to the vision God had given them. The seven months that followed, Ah Moon worked very

hard to raise the fund. Due to insufficient sleep, his nose started to bleed profusely. Under the state of exhaustion, liver enzyme continued to maintain at the highest point. Nevertheless, he kept going until the church officially purchased the new venue on Temple Street on July 7, 2000.

A life that brought you out from death is given by the Creator who gives us life.

*“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” John 12:24*

## IV. POSTSCRIPT

2.

### **Not simply a supernatural event, but a heal miracle** (written by Sam Lai, translated by Mandy Lam)

Sam had a body check by chance in 2004. The result showed that neither hepatitis virus nor antibody was detected in the test.

“There must be something wrong with the laboratory apparatus,” Sam responded in doubt. “We used to providing lab test service for the government during the SARS outbreak and I can assure that our apparatus has perfect zero error performance,” the doctor replied. However, with reservation about the doctor’s response, Sam continued. “It is just impossible. Over the past thirteen years, expert doctors from local universities and in the mainland have conducted numerous liver tests for me. All these medical reports, which I have still kept with me, show that I am a Hepatitis B and D carrier and they have all told me that nothing more could be done. So what you have just said is totally impossible. How come the virus has vanished without a trace. I can’t believe it.” Having listened to that, the doctor seemed to be a bit hesitant. “Generally speaking, the virus is killed with the help of antibodies. However, your case is really weird as you have neither virus nor the antibodies. So in order to make sure what your situation is, how about having one more blood test?” he suggested.

Sam started to immerse himself in rational / emotional struggle. Is it possible or impossible? Is it real or fake? All these questions popped up in Sam’s mind. His feelings fluctuated between excitement and fear. On the one hand he was convinced that every thing is possible with God, but on the other hand, he habitually took out the medicine from the drawer as he always did over the past thirteen years. “Should I take the medicine or not?” Sam was in internal conflicts again.

With the result of the second blood test on hand, the doctor said, “The result shows that there is indeed no hepatitis virus in your body. And as a doctor, I have yet to come up with a medical explanation as to why the virus has suddenly disappeared without the antibodies in the case like yours. All I could say is that it is supernatural.” Sam jumped up with excitement, thrusting his fists in the air and hailed, “Yeah...” At that moment, tears kept falling down Sam’s face.

With cheers of victory,

tears of thanksgiving,  
and acclamation of joy,  
Sam calmed down and wiped away his tears. “Doctor, it is not simply supernatural; it is a great miracle of God. With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”, Sam answered the doctor.

Sam was like a butterfly through the processes of metamorphosis, being reborn to a new man with brand new days ahead.

On his way home, Sam drove pass on the highway. Despite some traffic jams, he could drove smoothly all the way through. Sam faced ahead in his car with his whistles on.

The power and existence of God’s miracles  
surpass and override all creations;  
they are out of our understanding and control;  
all we could do is to remain in solemn silence.

“Now to him who is able to do in full measure more than all our desires or thoughts, through the power which is working in us.” (Ephesians 3:20)

“Jesus said to him, If you are able! All things are possible to him who has faith.”  
(Mark 9:23)



## **IV. POSTSCRIPT**

3.

### **Witness of Sam's family doctor (written by Doctor Maza)**

Chronic hepatitis B remains a major health problem in Asia. There are 300 million hepatitis B carriers in the world, while three quarters of these infected people are living in Asia. They have been mostly infected when they were born. About 70% of the infected have uneventful chronic infection throughout their lives. However 30% of the patients will have chronic active disease leading to cirrhosis of liver (fibrotic change of liver) or even liver cancer. Hepatitis D has a world-wide distribution. In non-endemic areas, such as Hong Kong, the transmission is mainly caused by parenteral drug abuse. Chronic infection with hepatitis B and D can occur and this frequently causes more rapidly progressive chronic hepatitis and finally develops into cirrhosis or even cancer.

Rev. Lai has been known to be a hepatitis B and hepatitis D carrier for many years, but he remained asymptomatic. In 1992, he felt extremely weak and got very tired easily. He had a blood test and it showed that his liver function was deteriorating. So he consulted some specialists and various tests confirmed that the viruses were actively dividing and damaging the liver. Then he received chemotherapy in two of the best hospitals in Hong Kong. However, the response to the treatment was poor and the viruses still continued to multiply and the damage of the liver still continued. The general condition of Rev. Lai was still poor. Finally, the specialists decided to discontinue the treatment. They told Rev. Lai that nothing could be done and there was a very high chance that he would have cirrhosis of liver and cancer in the future.

Knowing that his liver function was deteriorating everyday and his life on earth was limited, Rev. Lai worked even harder to glorify God. He compassionately made many missions and organized many ministries. His work has touched many souls in many places in the world; many had hope again while many started new lives. Sometimes, he really felt extremely exhausted and weak, but he fought on.

In 1999, Rev. Lai had a test on his liver and it showed that the viruses were still attacking his liver. He just put the result behind and devoted all his time for the glory of God. He deeply trusted God would guide him through all these difficulties. He took rest only when he was extremely weak and exhausted.

In 2004, Rev. Lai was asked to have a health check up for the purpose of health insurance. To his surprise, the test showed that his liver function was normal and no virus was detected. He could hardly believe it. He took tests again in other laboratories. The results clearly showed that there was neither hepatitis B virus nor hepatitis D virus in his body. His life-long infection was cured. What a miracle!

In the face of fatal disease and death, Rev. Lai has continued his missions and ministries whole-heartedly. He has accepted trials in his life. He has accepted God's direction in his life. He has surrendered himself to God. So he always has love, hope and peace no matter what the circumstances are.

Having recovered from the fatal illness, Rev. Lai becomes more determined to glorify God by serving more people in more countries. He becomes busier than before, and his work load is heavier than before. But deep in his and my heart, we are so thankful to God for the trial, the direction and the miracle that have worked in Rev. Lai over the past years.





## **APPENDIX I: Chronology**

- 1954 Birth of Samuel Lai.
- 1969 Ceased studying, joined the triad society, and started taking drugs.
- 1973 Joined the Royal Hong Kong Police, stationed in Yaumatei.
- 1977 Arrested by the ICAC, later charged with acts of corruption, imprisoned for one year.
- 1978 Charged with hiding drugs, imprisoned for three months.
- 1979 Charges with burglary, imprisoned for the third time.
- 1980–83 Five occasions of attempted rehabilitation at Shek Kwu Chau Volunteered Drug Rehabilitation Centre.
- 1983 Received Christ as personal savior at Shek Kwu Chau Volunteered Drug Rehabilitation Centre.
- 1983 Received Gospel-rehabilitation treatment. In the same year ex-wife requested a divorce.
- 1984–88 Received training at Youth With A Mission (Hong Kong), started living by faith.
- 1986 Began the outreach ministry at Temple Street.

1988           Established in Temple Street “Shepherd Community Fuk Lam Church” (also known as Fuk Lam Church).

1989           Married to Ruth.

1989 The Temple Street ministry began to attract media attention, and a series of interviews were carried out by the local TV channels, and the BBC (in the program “Vision Hong Kong”. There were also reports in local newspapers and magazines.

1990           Ordained as minister and Head Pastor of Fuk Lam Church.

1991           Fuk Lam Church acquired her office premises.

1998           The Lai family went to Australia for six months to study Family Ministry.

2000           was given the Diamond Award of “outstanding anti-drug workers” by Actions Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) and The Outstanding Young Persons' Association. In July that year, started with a capital of HK\$70, Fuk Lam Church successfully raised HK\$7 million and acquired Fuk Lam Community Service Centre, with Samuel Lai serving as its chief executive.

- 2001 By invitation of the Head of Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau, became a member of the ACAN Sub-committee on Treatment and Rehabilitation
- 2002 Re-elected as member of the ACAN Sub-committee on Treatment and Rehabilitation, until end of 2006.
- 2004 Was given the "Outstanding Partnership Project Award" from Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa at the recognition ceremony for the "Caring Company Scheme".
- Experienced heal miracle for his liver disease through the amazing power of God

\* Shepherd Community Fuk Lam Church has been officially renamed as "Fuk Lam Church Limited" since 2004.

## APPENDIX II: Brief Introductions to Services at Fuk Lam Community Service

### Centre

#### A. Meal-box Ministry

Our volunteers prepare and cook dinner for, and then give them out to the local street sleepers every Tuesday. Through practical care giving, the Service Centre is able to build up relationships with them, and sometimes even gaining their trust. We would squat on sidewalks to have a chat, and with a rice-box. We tell them that we care. The visits are even more significant during festive seasons, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Eve of Chinese New Year, because these are the times when family members get together and we want them to experience love in these special days. We welcome your participation in this ministry.

#### B. Lazarus Recovery Ministry

This ministry is dedicated to help ex-drug addicts to live a new life, and receiving freedom from bondage of addictions. Through outreaches we take the initiative to care for them, and build up a relationship of trust with them, and where necessary refer them to Christian rehabilitation centres. Some of the ex-addicts join our church and form a small group in which they willingly share their past even when some of the experiences were shameful or hard to express. With much empathy, support, and encouragement, they grow together in the Lord and restart new lives.

#### C. Community Visits.

On the last Tuesday of each month, we go in groups to the nearby fast-food restaurants, parks and residences for evangelism. Also, through spring-cleaning of buildings and flats and delivering essentials such as rice grains, the love of God is converted into specific actions and brought into our neighbours' homes.

#### D. Football Ministry

Fuk Lam lines up three football teams and organizes various football

activities for new friends who are interested in football games. Apart from building friendship, the activities aim at introducing Jesus to the new friends. Fuk Lam football teams play against other teams quite often and achieve good results over the past few years. There would be prayer time at the beginning and the end of each football game. Also, testimonies and new friends are welcomed. The interaction and friendship become evangel dynamics to lead people to the Lord.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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Facsimile: (852) 2771–0847

Email address: [info@fuklam.org](mailto:info@fuklam.org)

Web-site: <http://www.fuklam.org>

\*\* For donations toward ministries of Fuk Lam Community Service Centre, please make your crossed cheque payable to “Fuk Lam Church Limited”, together with your name, contact address and telephone number, and send the same to our address above in order to receive our Official Receipt. (Claim for Hong Kong tax deduction available for donations above HK\$100 or more.)



## APPENDIX III: Media Interview

### 1. Uncle Sam, Leader of the Scoundrels

Written by Janis, Chiu Kit Yee

Translated by Iddy, Lee Ho Shan

Pastor **Lai Chun Moon**, or Uncle Sam, is known for his ministry in Temple Street, a sightseeing spot famed for its Open-air night market and at the same time notorious for its high crime rate. He is a typical “servant leader”, who demonstrates quite a different kind of leadership philosophy.

Transformed from a scoundrel into a pastor, Uncle Sam came back to Temple Street 16 years ago, resolved to turn it into the Street of Christ. For many years, he has led innumerable drug-abusers, prostitutes and gangsters out of the darkest corners of the street and brought them into the Light of Life. He preaches the Gospel to the grassroots and the single-parent families. Distributing food to the homeless with his wife and children has become their normal family activity. To back up these services, he meets constantly with the District Police Officer in charge of Yau Ma Tei, to intercede for the criminals active in Temple Street.

Dream, to Uncle Sam, is not about something unrealistic. Statistics shows that the crime rate of Temple Street dropped to the lowest of its record last year. Even gang leaders with terrifying tattoos follow his path to become a “good leader”. Without deep and profound knowledge conveyed, Uncle Sam presents to them a model of servant leader, whose authority comes from good deeds, and who leads his followers with love.

What is crucial to be a good leader? “You must have influence with others, an influence making people to change from A to B,” and he added, “a good leader should be a faithful and determined follower at the same time.” Seemed paradoxical, this philosophy of leadership is plain enough on Jesus throughout his life:

**“Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. <sup>7</sup>He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. <sup>8</sup>And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.” Philippians 2:6-8 (NLT)**

#### **Do What People Unwilling To Do**

Jesus Christ, who was on earth about 2000 years ago, is the one this Pastor of Temple Street follows faithfully. “I do what I do believe,” he said. “Jesus served the lepers, prostitutes and the tax collectors who were being discriminated at His time. He cared the broken hearts, the despised and the abandoned of our society.” Being a faithful follower of Jesus, Sam came back to the street of criminals ten years ago and founded a church there, to save the many frustrated and depressed souls.

Yet, the deeply wounded souls are never easy to be cured. “When you serve the single-parent families, just don’t expect any return. Ministering prostitutes is even more difficult...three comes, four leaves. Their souls are totally shattered. We have to put in extra time and resources to help the homeless and the alcoholics. From the perspective of cost-effectiveness, spending 10 to 20 years to wait for their repentance is a waste. So, do it or not?” “Yes!” Sam answered himself with strong determination. A real servant leader should do what people are unwilling to do. This is the example Jesus set before him.

### **Do What People Dare Not To Do**

Courage is important. “The Bible says we are the salt and light of the world, but do you have the courage to go into the darkest place and illuminate it? What a great challenge!” Yet, he still praises the Lord, “Hallelujah! Temple Street is great! Dark enough, ha ha!”

A few years ago, his church received the vision “Wake up! Cleanse and renew this place (Temple Street)!” So they started to motivate other churches in the same district to share this mission. They unite the residents of the community through organizing festive activities. “Nowadays, most of the people invest their lives on properties and shares, because these are profitable, whereas the poorest in our society value inter-relationship... You can’t see love, acceptance, affirmation, forgiveness and closeness in our society. People are indifferent to one another.” On the contrary, the church invests love and forgiveness on Temple Street. “Dare to do what people dare not”, Sam shows us the courage and confidence, and most of all, the insights of a real leader.

### **Do What People Cannot Do**

“To do what people can’t do” is another description of this successful Christian leader. This pastor of Temple Street held evangel events in front of temples and cast demons out of the demonized in public, just as what Jesus commanded his apostles:

**“One day Jesus called together his twelve apostles and gave them power and authority to cast out demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the coming of the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”**

**Luke 9:1-2 (NLT)**

As a result, the ministry of his church has aroused widespread reports since 1989. “Jesus in Temple Street” has become a popular topic about Yau Ma Tei.

## **Life Influences Lives**

He still remembered the first time when he held evangel event in Temple Street, the curious crowd went away in hisses. After years of toil and moil, he has witnessed lives changed one by one. “An alcoholic quitted drinking and now helps to clean the church. Some of those living under the highways and on the streets help us to distribute food, because they were helped by us before.” But the ultimate goal of the church is far bigger than that, according to Sam. “We have to help prostitutes to find happiness in marriage, homeless people a job (but not only a bed), and gangsters new lives.”

Though the number of churchgoers remains low, the leader is not discouraged, for what he concerns is the quality of lives, not church attendance. “My focus is always on releasing the virtuous qualities inside these people.” So the church does not satiate with merely fulfilling their basic needs. The long-term objective is to develop their talents and skills so that they will be a benefit to the society. For this end, his wife and he invite rehabilitants home to live with them for at least 3 months. “My role is their spiritual father. I’m trying to repair their broken lives. I am sure they need a mentor, an example to follow.” He added, “I am not wealthy, but I just follow Jesus to pick disciples and live with them. “A leader is influential, not by talk, but by humble devotion. Use your life to influence people’s lives”

## **Previous Life of the Pastor**

The Sam before us is now a man of integrity and brilliance. Below his thick beard is a countenance of kindness. Who can imagine that he was once a drug-abuser and trafficker, a robber, and had been kept in prison 3 times and rehabilitation centre 5 times?

His ruined life was gradually changed in **Shek Kwu Chau Volunteered Drug Rehabilitation Centre**. “I was despised and considered worthless by everyone outside, but was loved and considered valuable in the eyes of the missionaries.” Although he

had disappointed the missionaries time after time, they never abandoned him. One day, he ran away again. The missionaries sent someone to bring him back. As he came back, they told him the story of prodigal son in the Bible and cooked him breakfast. Sam felt that he was totally accepted. He ate the breakfast in tears of regret and since then, he resolved to begin a new life. Their unconditional love is the source of courage and confidence.

After five years of theological education in **Youth With A Mission**, he came back to Temple Street, not for drugs but for the mission to establish a church there. "This is where I have to face my previous failures. It's not easy at all. But on the other side of the coin, the beauty of life is expressed through its rebirth in God, in a man who lives up to the human image and dignity of God's creation.

Since committed to Christ at 28, he has been given what he lost one by one. "Once a drug abuser, now a member of the Standing Committee on the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (ACAN); once a prisoner, now pray with the Christian policemen; once divorced, now have a wife who studies marriage counseling and treatment and co-speak in seminars with me." Both relationship with others and personal dignity repaired.

He said he was born a fierce and aggressive child who liked sports and fighting. "The more resistance there was, the more vigorous I would be," he described his previous self. Who would expect this unyielding spirit and the tough adventure in the first half of his life are the motivations for his present ministry? God's miraculous power on him amazed him. Therefore, how he has been served, he serves others.

**And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." Luke 19:41-42(ESV)**

This article is taken from "Tan Tien Shuo Dao Gospel Page", *Mingpao Newspaper*, 21 Mar 2005

## APPENDIX III: Media Interview

### 2. Meeting the father image again

Written by Mathew Tang Tze Chun

Translated by Iddy Lee Ho Shan

In the minds of many children, a father is always expected to be a great man of courage, confidence and perseverance, who is also clever, decisive and reliable so that his child feels comfortably secure under his protection...Does this ideal father image ever exist? Most probably, it only exists in the dreams of many sons and daughters of our generation. Tragically, most of the fathers in our time were raised up without the exemplars of an ideal father image. Masculine qualities in man are dying away. How can they get back their “charisma of man”? It seems not easy...

Pastor of Temple Street, **Lai Chun Moon** (Uncle Sam) believes family is important for the development of a person. People learn how to behave, how to be a son or daughter and how to be a father or mother in their families. He sighed that our society had too many single-parent families, “the divorce rate in Hong Kong is as high as 40%. In this situation, many people are growing up without father’s care. Then, how can a boy learn to be a man, a husband and a father?” He mentioned that the average time of communication between each father and child is just six minutes per day in Hong Kong, probably the lowest in the world. Normally, taking care of children is left to women. For instance, most of the teachers of kindergartens and primary schools are female. “Many of our fathers were once children without father’s care. It is not surprising that men in Hong Kong are not like men,” he made fun at first, then really meant it to say, “Without the influence of positive father image, a man cannot grow healthily in mind, morality, emotion and spirituality.”

Sam believes Church is a family. He does not aim to develop a mega church but to develop the lives of his followers, just like what Jesus did to his 12 apostles. “I value quality over quantity. If they can inherit my spiritual DNA, I am successful.” Uncle Sam not only sets a good example before his church mates, but also changes their lives with his life, helping them to regain positive masculine image and a warm family. What they need in this process is an influential teacher with love to forgive and acceptance to teach them. “I am their spiritual father. If I am their father, no matter they fail or succeed, I will never abandon them. When I assert that they are my sons, their achievements are my greatest achievement and satisfaction.” The road ahead is very long, but Sam has made up his mind to devote his whole life to this spiritual

family. Here presents three testimonies of Sam's spiritual sons. Their lives were transformed under Sam's wholehearted devotion.

### **Without love, I Walked Into the Darkness**

**Hon Shee Wah** is Sam's first adopted spiritual son. "I was born in Malaysia. I don't know who my father is. I was brought up by my grandfather's sister. She died when I was seven and I was then taken to Hong Kong by her nephew, becoming his adopted son." He was always grumbling that the world was unfair to him. He thought, "I do not desire wealth. I only wish to have a father and a mother. Every one, whether poor or rich, has a father and a mother but I have none, why me?" He said, "No one loved me at home, so I have to seek love outside. I joined the gangsters because I thought they valued brotherhood. Now, Of course I know this is not true, but at that time, they listened to me, accepted and counted on me. That's why I worked for them without thinking myself. I seldom talked to my adopted father because whatever I said, his answer was "No". I never had the chance to express. My personality was distorted in such a growing environment. I didn't know what a man should be.

Sam's another spiritual son, Fan Wai Man, also comes from a broken family. His parents divorced in his childhood. Later, his father married again, therefore he left his family and went together with gangsters.

Both of them had been addicted to drugs for over ten years, and both met Uncle Sam one day...

### **Unconditional Acceptance**

Wah met Uncle Sam in Temple Street when he was 29 and went to the church since then. "I was struggling at first. I knew Jesus is good, but the world was better. I had one foot stepped into the church while the other still remained in the **triad** society until an incident happened. One day, I went to karaoke and drink with the so-called "brothers". I fought with someone and when the police came to arrest me, I resisted and hurt a policeman. At that moment, I was so regretted." He thought he was too shameful to see Uncle Sam again. On the other hand, Sam wrote a letter to the court to plead for him. "I was so touched and said to Sam, "Your time is so precious but you used it to help me." He replied, "My time is precious, but your life is more precious to me, because I love you." I had never heard a man said he loved me. My parents never said they loved me. I felt the love of God at that moment. God shows me His love through Sam."

After that, Sam invited Wah to live with him. “Sam and his wife were newly-wed and he has already had a child then. His flat was not a big one, with only one living room and 2 bedrooms, the kind of old flat that the ceiling dripped when it rained. I was most impressed when he gave me the keys of his flat, which means he trusts me, accepts me and doesn’t mind my past. When people treat you so well, you have to do better. When I lived with him, I learned what I couldn’t learn in my own family.”

### **Father Your Father**

Fan Wai Man was acquainted with Uncle Sam when he was young. “We first met at the rehabilitation centre. He was a drug addict at that time. He had heroin and I had syringes. We felt like old friends at the first meeting.” He met Sam again after many years and could hardly believe that Sam has become a pastor while he was still living a fallen and senseless life. One day, a traffic accident happened to him because he lost his mind after taking drugs. He was referred to the rehabilitation centre again and there he met Uncle Sam. “I couldn’t believe it when he invited me to live with him. From Sam I got what my father didn’t give me in my childhood—admiration, encouragement and acceptance. He not only expresses his love for me in words, but also in his actions of opening himself and his family to me. I see in him the unconditional love described in the Bible—we accept each other as if Jesus accepts us.

Sam’s life was an appeal to him. He found that it was exactly the kind of life he desired. “Father your father” is what he learned from Sam. “This concept is powerful. In the past, my father and I were rather distant. I knew he was my natural father, yet I felt far apart from him. When Sam told me to father my father, I went home right the way and apologized to my father. I came to realize that my father was also a victim, a fact that I couldn’t see before. I hugged him and kissed him. What a breakthrough in my life! I love him so much and he also loves me. Love is mutual.”

### **Life Influences Life**

Sam’s life attracts Lee Kwok On as well. He is another spiritual son of Sam who also left home at his early age. “I lived with Sam some time ago. I was bewildered when Sam asked me to live with him. I had lived on my own for more or less ten years. I enjoyed that freedom.” Since Sam was very sincere and he wanted to learn from Sam, he accepted the invitation. “Sam is a strong man **when speaking publicly**. He speaks with confidence and persuasiveness. So I really want to see the other side of him at home.”

Every one who lived with Sam before witnessed how he loved his wife and got along with his son. “Jesus came to **the** Earth in flesh to live among us. I see the same kind of sacrifice in Sam’s devotion. I saw how he got weary after working long hours in the church and went home with an exhausted body. However, he still spent time to communicate with his wife and son. This is a very good example for me. I saw the real life of a pastor and this motivates me to open a new life.” Therefore, Lee Kwok On took the initiative to reconcile with his parents. “Now, my mother likes to lay her head on my shoulder. This action heals my heart.”

In this afternoon, three men reminisced their previous days, sharing their weaknesses, breakthroughs, endeavors and their present lives. Standing next to them, Sam shed tears of happiness. Today, Hon **Shee Wah** and Fan Wai Man are pastors and Lee Kwok On also serves in the church. All of them have their families and enjoy their family lives. Sam said with satisfaction, “I see my shadow in their life experiences. Their lives are my greatest satisfaction and motivation.” He concluded, “Our ultimate goal is to “father our community”, to become a church with influence on our community, just like a ripples spreading out on water. The family of Jesus should not only warm its members, but should outreach into the community, to take care of the brokenhearted orphans, giving them encouragement and acceptance.”

These four men are among the best witnesses of God. Their distorted masculine images are restoring the ideal shapes under the nurture of love. With courage, faith, strength and love, they can respond to God’s calling for greater missions. The “charisma of man” is now found on every one of them.

**“<sup>15</sup>For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” 1 Corinthians 4:15 (ESV)**

This article is taken from “Tan Tien Shuo Dao Gospel Page”, *Mingpao Newspaper*, 13 Jun 2005



## **THEN AND NOW**

Today

In Fuk Lam Community Service Centre, in the desk that is covered by

photos

Samuel Lai

Lost for words, sobbing

Remembering the past, memories flocking back

All those memories... too many to count...

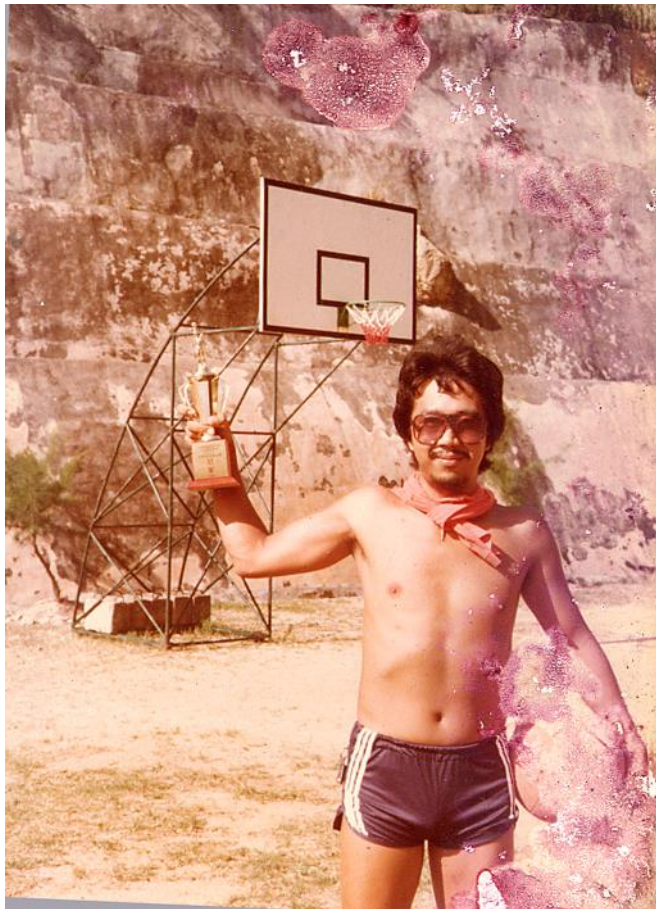
~ Samuel (right) with buddy from the dark-side at the age of 17



~ in 1975, Samuel (front row, first from the right) joined the Police  
Tactical Unit training



~ in 1981, Samuel at Shek Kwu Chau Volunteered Drug Rehabilitation Centre, not yet a Christian.



~ Spring of 1983, Samuel (first from the left) once again in a

rehabilitation centre. Although a new, believer, he was still holding a cigarette

(p. 82)



~ in 1983, Samuel (back row, second from the right) in Gospel-rehabilitation treatment centre



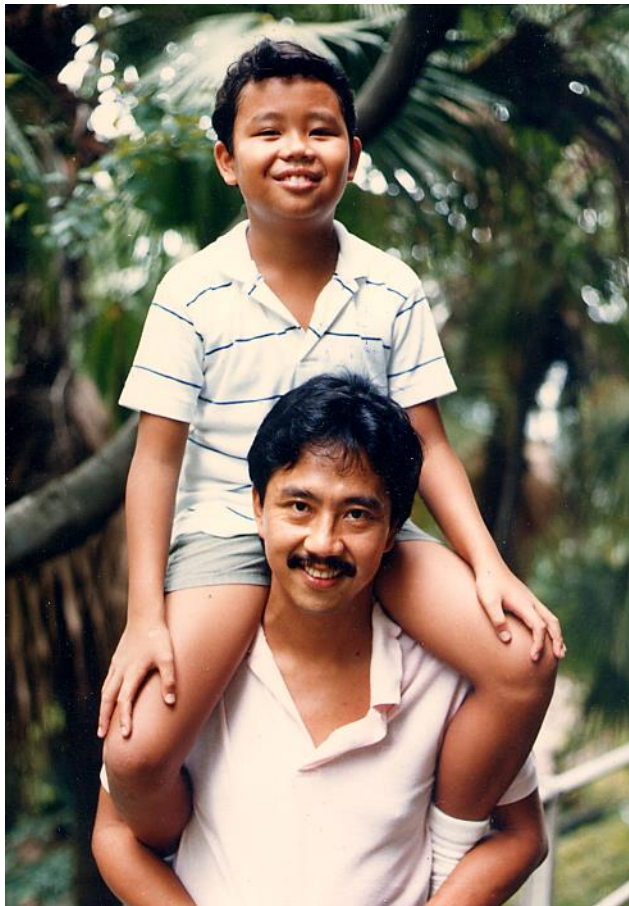
~ in 1986, Samuel (first from the right) attended the baptism of his



biological brother, who also took drugs



~ Samuel with his son, after his divorce



~ in 1986, Samuel (back row, first from the right) with classmates from

Youth With A Mission

(p. 83)



~ in 1988, Samuel with church members at a Temple Street outreach



~ Samuel was the coiffeur of a street-sleeper



~ in 1988, the first members of the early Fuk Lam Church



~ in 1989, Samuel (first from the right) with a friend from the Gospel-rehabilitation treatment centre



~ in 1989, at Samuel's wedding





~ in the early days of Fuk Lam Church, Samuel at a street evangelism in Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong



~ in 1990, Samuel was ordained as Head Pastor of Fuk Lam Church, photographed with Jackie Pullinger (first from the left) and wife



~ in 1992, the cell group of the early church





~ in 1995, Samuel at the African missions trip



~ in 1997, Shee Wah (third from the right) photographed with Samuel  
(first from the right)



~ In 1998, members of the Fuk Lam Church drama team



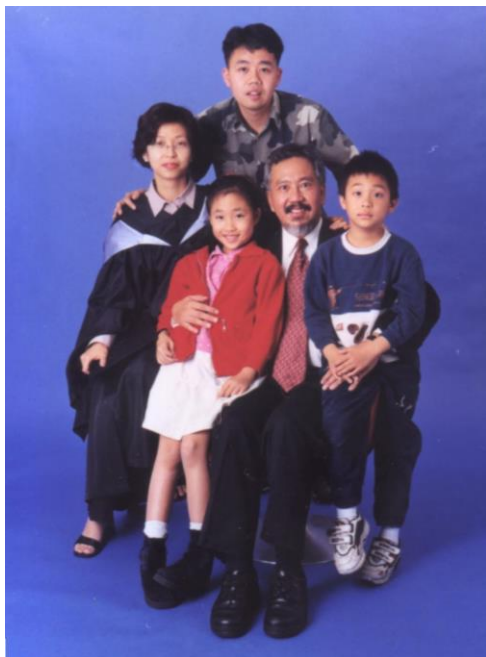
~ Volunteers at Fuk Lam Church giving out rice-boxes to street-sleepers



~ In 2000, Samuel received the Diamond Award in the First Annual Outstanding Anti-drug Workers Award Scheme



~ In 2001, Samuel's Family Photo



~ In 2004, Sam received the “Outstanding Partnership Project Award” from Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region)



~ Sam and family doctor, Dr Joseph Ma



~ Sam and his spiritual mentor, Helen Johnson, who lives in the USA.

Sam calls here his ‘spiritual mother’



## POSTFACE

Stories, true stories, written with tears and blood – there are still many more of these to come.

In the future, there will be many, many more to come.

The reason is that extraordinary dreams continue to burn.

Also because there are people, not know whether they belong to the ordinary or the extraordinary, are still laying down their lives for burning...

Giving out light – and heat, in places needing it...

Shining upon the people in the dark corners.

Also enflaming the hearts of certain people ◦

Burning with them ◦

Perhaps including my own heart?

Hopefully, yours, too.

May it be so ◦

Because it is deep into the night, yet, sadly, light is too few.

.....

.....

\* \* \* \* \*

One passage describes a picture of the future...

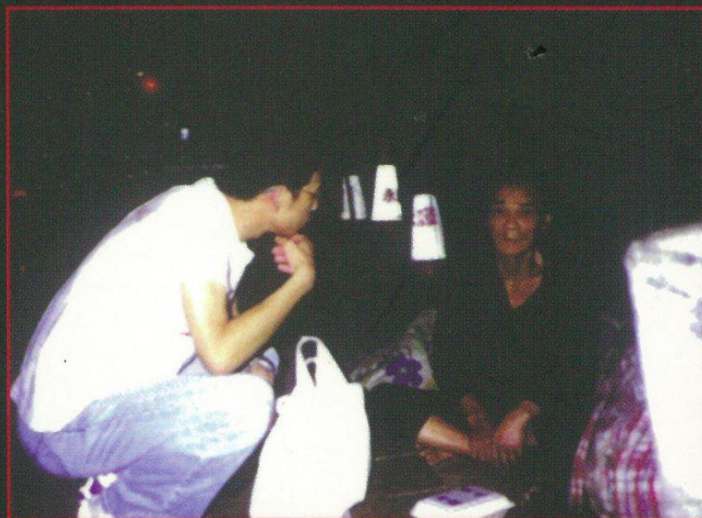
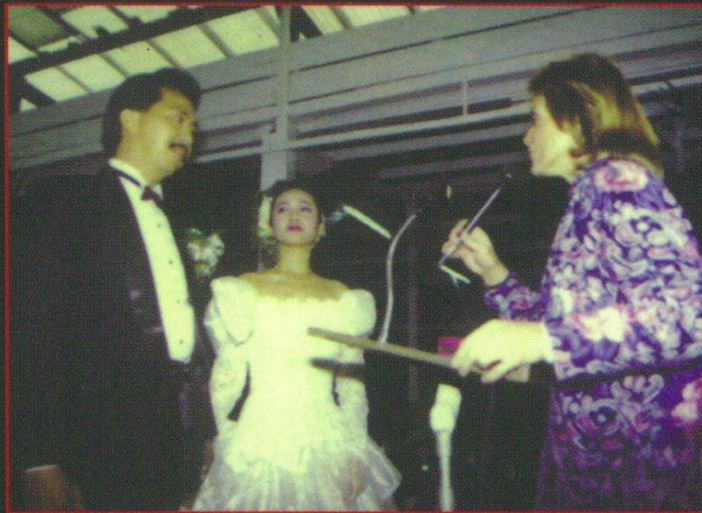
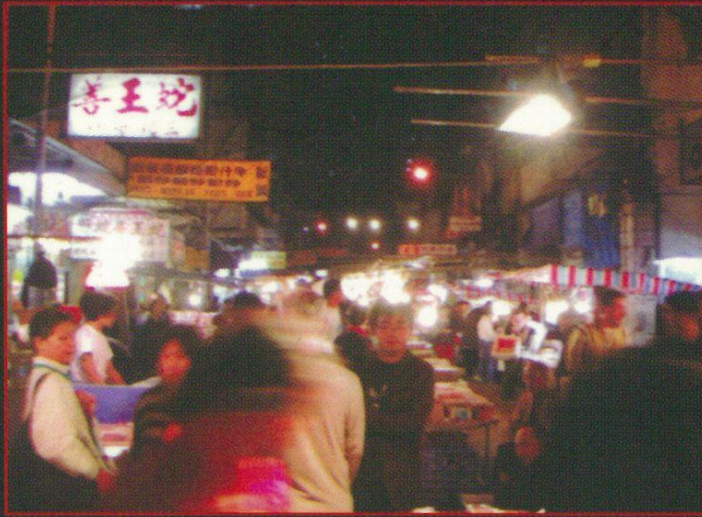
In the future that could be near or faraway, One who sits in Heaven will say,

“I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?”

And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”





Temple Street is an attractive place for the tourists, yet it is also the melting pot for prostitution, gambling and drug-trafficking. Have you heard the Temple Street stories?...I have heard Samuel personally sharing the amazing story of his earlier life: he had been a member of the triad society, also worked as a police officer. He had been a drug addict, yet turned round to help people to quit. He had struggled with the bondage of sins and crimes, and now he is a minister. He had done all sorts of illegal acts in Yaumatei, yet he established a church there. That is incredible, that is a miracle. I am moved by the stories of Samuel recorded here.

Dr. Philemon Y.W. Choi,  
General Secretary of Breakthrough Limited

.....

I knew An-Moon [Sam Lai] was special from the first time I met him. Somehow I sensed that he would go to places that I couldn't, reach people ...Later he came to live in my house and it was anything but wonderful. We had ups and downs continuously...Now I know him as Samuel and am thrilled to read the stories in this book.

Dr Jackie Pullinger To  
Founder, St. Stephen's Society

.....

This book will not only inspire faith. It also instills hope in the life of the readers who may think that their lives are broken beyond repair.

Apostle Lawrence Khong  
Senior Pastor, Faith Community Baptist Church, Singapore

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