

My Christian Journey

by Harry K. Zeiders

It is no small miracle of Yahweh's prevenient grace that I am a Christian today or even alive today. During the Vietnam War, lots of American GIs got their Asian girlfriends pregnant. Many of those pregnancies ended in abortion. But in my case, my parents ended up marrying and delivering me — and a year later my sister — into this world. Soon afterward, their marriage dissolved.

My mother and sister returned to Asia and my father found himself a single dad living on welfare. Instead of trying to rear his son alone, my father decided that the best thing to do was to give his son to his parents.

So, my American grandparents adopted me. The combination of their faithful Christian witness, the fellowship of their evangelical congregation, and my grandmother's nightly reading of Bible stories to me — all provided the fertile soil for my faith. During adolescence, God used the broadcasts of a televangelist to convict me of my need for a personal relationship with Jesus. Through many nights of solitary prayer I grappled with Jesus' claims on my life and invited him to be my Lord and Savior. Thus, at age twelve the vicarious faith of my grandparents became my own. Within a year I was baptized into the Body of Christ and confirmed.

As my grandfather lay on his deathbed, when I was fourteen, I pondered what I would want to be able to reflect upon when I faced my own death. Through this time I sensed God's call to ordained ministry.

After my grandfather's death, my relationship with Yahweh developed into a constant communion through which the Heavenly Father literally became my father

figure. During my teens the Father blessed me with a deepening sense of personal identity that was grounded in his goodness. By the time I arrived at university, one of my roommates dubbed me "a rock in the midst of chaos."

My knowledge about Christ and Christianity blossomed during young adulthood. Seminal works touching my life included *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* by Walsh and Middleton, and works by Stanley Hauerwas, Leslie Newbigin, Donald Kraybill, and Eugene Nida. The provocative history of Christian ideas was opened up to me in the context of fellowship and mentorship by Christian professors.

Ministry in the Washington, D.C. region (2005–2013) took place in congregations which had been centers of the Holy Spirit's renewal movement decades earlier. I witnessed miraculous healings — physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational — and had the joy of participating in the supernatural manifestation of God's will being "done on earth as in heaven." The Holy Spirit took my largely intellectual assent to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and amplified it into an existential confidence that emboldened my witness in the marketplace.

For nearly the past decade God has been stretching my trust in him as he's led me to ministry as an outsider in Northern Ireland (2013–2017) and in former plantation and Jim Crow country along the Virginia-North Carolina stateline (2017–Present). In these places I've had the privilege of building bridges between divided people. Meanwhile, the Triune God continues to cultivate and prune my growth in Christ.