

## **Grace Chernly's Testimony**

Brothers and sisters: Peace to you. I am very glad to be here to share with you the Lord's love and grace.

I was born in a non-Christian family. My dear mother died when I was 6 years old, and my father abandoned himself to a dissipated life. He ruined his business and himself because he couldn't handle the loss of his wife. He then couldn't take care of me. I didn't even know where he was. I had a sister who was 8 years old, and I was 6. My father came in and out of my life, but in reality, both of us became orphans.

In order to feed me and raise me, my 8 year old sister, Jane, started to earn our living by being a baby sitter and milk deliverer. She usually poured a half bottle of milk for me and then added water to the bottle before delivering it to the customer; She would also sneak to the farmer's market at night to steal vegetables to feed me; Sometimes I wanted to see a movie, so my sister brought me to the movie theater. Both of us would gently hold on to cloths of strangers, pretending that we were their kids, so we could enter the theater with the crowd without a ticket. We survived our childhood by doing these types of things.

Now, I am in my fifties. When I look back on my childhood, it was really distressful and a hardship. But we survived because of God's grace. And from the hardship, I more understand that the Lord our God has His special plan for my life. He never forsakes me or neglects me. From the bottom of my heart, I know that unless God's kindness and his grace were closely with me, I might have become a hopeless criminal.

I lived in a sinful environment. I was surrounded by drugs, alcohol, prostitutes and gambling. Truly, I was in a wicked environment. Typically, because I was alone and didn't have parenting, it was so easy for me to become one of those wicked people. However, thanks to the Lord, He saved and protected me from being drowned in that unclean ocean. Praise God, He gave me my good sister, Jane. She loved me but she was very strict and many times had a bad temper. She, Jane, too, was only a child, but had to play a mother's role. She disciplined and protected me. She helped me become a sweet- natured and obedient child.

In addition to my sister, the Lord also gave me a good friend, Christina. She was my seventh grade classmate. Her family was totally opposite to my

family: A physician's family for generations, she was wealthy, but my family was so poor that I couldn't even pay my tuition.

But my friend invited me to her house very often. I cried every time on my way home just after leaving her house. I cried and said to myself: "I must strive to better myself and study hard, to be somebody!" This friend has always been a role model in my life. She later entered Taipei First Girls High School, then Taiwan University, and then got a master degree in the U.S. Over the past 37 years, we have kept in touch and maintained a good friendship. The Lord our God put this friend, Christina, beside me, to inspire me and lift me up. She is a gift from Him.

I have loved to read since my childhood, but was too poor to go on to high school. I was full of hatred. I went to my mother's grave and wept. I cried out "Mother, why did you leave me so young with no one to take care of me?" "Why can't I go to school any longer?"

When I was 16, I had to quit school and work in a private hospital as a nurse. In those 15 months of my nursing career, the Lord sent a foreign minister to that hospital, who taught me English and shared with me the stories of the Bible. The seed of the gospel was sowed in my heart.

Psalm27:10 said: Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." The scripture also said: The Lord examines my heart and soul through every kind of hardship; He will release my feet from the snare. He is gracious to me, for I am afflicted. He looks upon my affliction, my distress and takes away all my sins; free me from all my anguish. He himself goes before me and will be with me; Hem me in, protect and comfort me, and He knows all my needs.

In 1972, I made a decision to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord. My family was traditional idle worshipers and my father, who had re-entered my life, was also a temple keeper. Therefore, I faced many difficulties and persecutions. I then turned away from God for about 15 years. In 1987, the Lord brought me back to Him.

I had dreamed of going abroad to study since I was 16, but the dream couldn't come to pass without any support from my father. As a matter of fact, from the beginning of elementary school, I paid my tuition through different sources, such as scholarship, financial aid, part-time work, etc. Therefore, I had to study much harder than others did. In 1979, I still

couldn't go to college, but I passed Taiwan National Merit Exam with a high score in Finance and Banking, and started working in a government bank. Working in a bank at that time was a very high paying career, which many people envied. Thirty thousand people took the exam but only ten of us had a high enough score to get this job. Praise God, I was one of the ten. Because of the high pay, hard work and my personal frugal habits, I could have bought my first house when I was 24 years old.

However, as my financial situation became better I was notified that my father had cancer. So, without any health insurance, I had to take care of him. Because of his seven years of illness, all of my money went to pay medical bills, and his burial fees, I once again spent all of my money. There was no money left.

I still had my dream of studying abroad, but I couldn't forsake my father who was suffering from cancer. But after he died, I began to dream again.

I was also baptized in 1987, and I started back to church. Thanks to the Lord who has embraced me. I had strayed from Him, but in 1987 He restored me. I also started my plan to come and study in the U.S. First of all, I had to earn and save money. I worked at the bank in the daytime, but at night I ran a tutoring business. In which, I tutored over a hundred students, and I hired 6 teachers to help. Because of working day and night for three years, I saved \$100,000 US dollars, which was about enough for me to pay the seven years of tuition and fees in America. In 1990, I sold my house and Tutoring Center, quit the job in the bank, and decided to come to Texas to study.

When my coworkers and friends heard about my decision, they thought that I was crazy. They said to me: "Why would a person like you, -- give up a monthly income of \$100,000 Taiwanese dollar; and a stable and good life; As 34 years of age, you are not young; You have no relatives in the U.S.; and you have poor English. You must be out of your mind!" But I knew the Lord would make a way for me. Every day was in His control, and I was not afraid at all.

In August 1990, I came to Dallas Baptist University and started my US schooling career. Again because of God's mercy and care, to my surprise, I was offered a scholarship! It was my understanding that DBU never gave foreign students scholarships. Thus I knew the Lord has been protecting and watching over me.

But, still, I was lonely. I prayed to God and asked Him for a husband and home. The Lord surely listened to my prayer. In August 1992, God blessed me with a good husband who loves the Lord. In the past 13 years, God has graced me with much love, good fortune, a wonderful family and friends. His love abounds every day in every way. So I say to the Lord: "For the rest of my life, I will be a godly woman and your servant." Amen!