

Stories from your Missionary Brother



Description: Meeting with North Korean defectors for discipleship in a camping car (above)

My classmate and his family visit the VOMK office (left)

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About Faith

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (John 21:18 ESV)

When my sister and I were young, we both believed in God and Santa Claus. As we became older, in our teens, we both became atheists. But, strangely, although my sister stopped believing in God, she only stopped believing in Santa Claus after becoming an adult. I think this may be because belief in Santa Claus makes quite a bit more sense to us as humans than believing in God. When we believe in Santa Claus, he gives us what we want. And that makes sense to us. But, when we believe in God, He gives us what He wants.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the stories of persecuted Christians can be so exciting and attractive to us is because the stories often start out with God working miraculously through faith in the ways that we want and that we would expect him to in times of danger.

We can see this in the book of Acts. In the beginning of Acts, the church undergoes severe persecution, but the signs of God's presence are very obvious and comforting. The disciples receive the Holy Spirit and do miracles of healing, escape from prison, etc. The Holy Spirit also speaks to the disciples in obvious ways, telling Philip to talk to the Ethiopian eunuch, telling the believers in Antioch to set aside Barnabas and Paul for a mission trip, telling Paul's entourage where to go and where not to go on their mission trip in dreams and visions.

We can read and hear about the same types of things happening in the lives of persecuted believers in modern times. In [The Heavenly Man](#), Brother Yoon fasts for 74 days in prison while God gives him miraculous dreams and visions. In [These are the Generations](#), Sung-do

I am a Free Methodist affiliate missionary serving persecuted Christians with the non-denominational NGO Voice of the Martyrs Korea (VOMK) in South Korea.

Did you know that you have persecuted brothers and sisters in North Korea and other countries around the world?

It is my privilege and my great joy to be able to spend each day serving and doing life together with persecuted Christians and North Korean defectors.

More importantly, it is my privilege to introduce these family members to you through the stories in these newsletters!

They tell us that they are praying for those of us in the free world. I hope you will pray for them, too.

your Missionary Brother,

Trevor Foley





Not a Cult

One day, I was talking with my co-workers outside of my apartment building when a woman hailed me over to help her start her car. My co-workers told me to go, so I went over and helped her.

She was thankful and asked me this and that about myself and, due to a linguistic miscommunication, seemed to come away with the idea that I live together with a large group of Christians in my small apartment.

Over the course of some months, when I saw her on the street, I noticed that she dresses a certain way, leaves her house and comes back at strange times, and brings strange people to her house. I started to suspect that she may be a prostitute and decided to stay far away from her and avoid her if I saw her.

One day, we passed in the hallway, and she said to me, “You’re not a cult, are you?”

Maybe she had also seen me dressing a certain way, leaving my house and coming back at strange times, and bringing strange people to my house, too.

sits still and listens for God’s voice to tell him exactly what he needs to do to save his village from poverty and raiders again and again.

The stories of the experiences of our favorite saints can birth in us “spiritual disciplines”. We may fast like Brother Yoon (though not as long) in hope of experiencing God in the same way he did. We may be inspired by Sung-do to sit still and listen for God’s voice to tell us what to do when we find ourselves without answers to life’s questions like God did for him.

When we behave like this, we really are trusting that God will act on our behalf. So it is a kind of faith. But it is the faith of our youth—a kind of Santa Claus faith. When we are young, we relate to God in ways that make sense to us and, graciously, he responds back in ways that make sense to us (like special feelings, miracles, and escape from danger). But, when we are old, and our faith matures, we learn that God is good even when what He gives us is not what we want, and even when the way He gives it to us does not make sense to us.

I am currently nearing the end of a Ph.D. program. Last year, I finished drafting my dissertation and went through the process of defending it against a committee over the course of three meetings. During the first meeting, the committee was impressed with the dissertation. However, during the second meeting, they started to show signs of hesitation, but still allowed the dissertation to pass through to the third and final meeting.

On the day of the final meeting, I was very nervous. I prayed to God that he would allow my dissertation to be accepted at the meeting. As I did so, I felt a strange peace come over me. I felt like God said to me that my dissertation would be accepted. I went into the meeting with faith that God would do so.

But, at the end of the meeting, the committee told me to revise the dissertation and try again next year.

Needless to say, I was very disappointed, but mostly confused. Maybe I heard God wrong (maybe He said my dissertation would be *excepted?*). In fact, this was only one of several things I believed God would allow me to accomplish in 2022—not one of which came to fruition. I had faith, but why didn’t God act for me even though I really felt like He would?

I realized that what I had was not faith, it was actually hard-headedness. I was not trusting that the things God gives to me and the ways He gives them are good. Instead, just like when I believed in Santa Claus, I was trying to stubbornly coerce God into giving me what I think is good in a way I think is good in exchange for me doing spiritual disciplines and unwaveringly expecting that He will act for me in ways that make sense to me.

I have found that one good thing that happens when all your plans fail, though, is that you become discouraged enough not to care as much if your own goals get accomplished. I think that may be how God matures our faith from “my will be done” to “thy will be done”—by disappointing us until we stop wanting what we want so much and start letting God be God.

And that hurts. But I think it’s a lot better for me than getting what I want.

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If you do decide to make a donation online, please make sure to include my name in the comment section of the donation. However, if you choose to donate by check, please write “VOM Korea” in the note. Thank you!

