

# THRESHOLD

LIVING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

VOL. 2, ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 14, 2010

*To be an open door to a life-changing grace.*

3001 Centreville Road  
Herndon, VA 20171  
odpcec.org  
admin@odpc.org  
(703) 318 - 8972

**Sunday Worship**  
9:25 am in Sanctuary 1  
11:00 am in Sanctuary 2

**Event Calendar**

Every Tuesday 8 pm  
Prayer Meeting

Nov 20 Manna Thanks-  
giving Brunch

Nov 20 North Korea  
Prayer Meeting

Nov 20 Membership Class

Nov 21 Reg. deadline for  
discipleship class

Dec 4-5 Discipleship  
Classes Begin

Dec 11 Singles Ministry  
Kick-off

Dec 12 Congregational Mtg

**Inside this issue:**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Announcements        | 2 |
| Discipleship Classes | 3 |
| Getting to Know      | 4 |
| Member Testimony     | 5 |
| Gambia Missions      | 6 |
| Prayer Requests      | 7 |
| The Corridor         | 8 |

**The Consuming Fire**

By Pastor Dihan Lee

There is something very mysterious and powerful about fire. The sight of its orange and yellow tongues, twisting and writhing in an intricate dance, has a way of transfixing our minds and calming our bodies. In the presence of fire, we become silent worshippers, sitting and gazing at the flames, lulled by the subtle cadence of snaps and hisses. We stare intently into its depths and feel some primordial connection—an unnamable stirring of the soul—that moves us to think and dwell upon the philosophical and existential—“What is life?” “What have I become?” “What is my purpose?” Perhaps some of us go no farther than “Where are the graham crackers and chocolate?” But surely for most of us, fire has that ineffable allure, and perhaps that is why for millennia, we mortals have gathered around it, not only to warm our hands and heat our food, but to pray, dance, sing, and think.

But why do I wax eloquent about fire? I find it compelling that our God is described as a consuming fire, and that fire is consistently the symbol and metaphor of God’s holy presence. In Deuteronomy 4:24, Moses proclaims to the Israelites: “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” In Revelation 19, John records that “His eyes are like a blazing fire.” God revealed himself to Moses as a burning bush; he led the Israelites as a pillar of fire; he consumed Elijah’s sacrifice with fire; he sent his spirit upon the disciples with tongues of fire. Our God is indeed a consuming fire.

Considering the elemental force fire seems to effect on us, it is the perfect metaphor to capture that other-worldly quality of our God. Fire is captivatingly pure. We sit around a fire at night and stare into its depth, never quite understanding the phenomenon. It is always somehow beyond description; we know it when we see it, but try to put into words and we are at a loss: “its orange...hot, etc.” God is that burning presence for whom we are to be still. In the presence of God, as in the presence of fire, we are at a loss; we stare and gape at the beauty and radiance of our God.

**“It is our hope that we at Open Door can be set on fire. Jesus calls us to be light of the world, but this implies that we are first ignited by His presence.”**

But fire is not only captivating; it also consumes. Its fiery heat ignites everything in its proximity. Its nature is to swallow objects whole in its flames; it does not stop at half the log, but eagerly desires to burn it all. That is our God. He is a jealous God. He does not taste, or nibble, but swallows whole. It’s always been all or nothing with him; no half-way. Fire can destroy, but it also cleanses and refines. And our God is indeed the refining fire, purging the dross from of our sinful hearts. Fire is also light, illuminating the darkness. How true it is that God is the light of the world.

Our God is a consuming fire, Scripture records. When I think of such a fire, I don’t imagine an innocent little re-

treat gathering out back where kids are roasting marshmallows. I think of the fiery furnace which King Nebuchadnezzar had deliberately heated seven times hotter to literally consume Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. That fire was so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who were only escorting the men near the furnace! That is the kind of consuming fire I imagine! Scripture speaks of angels called Seraphs who surround God’s throne. Their name indicates that they are on fire -- “burning ones” -- and presumably they are lit up because they are near the consuming fire himself. To come into his presence, to be near our God, is to be consumed by the consuming fire: transfixed in awe by his awesome holiness, cleansed by his refining flames, illuminated by his radiant presence.

It is our hope that we at Open Door can be set on fire. Jesus calls us to be the light of the world, but this implies that we are first ignited by his presence. And this requires that we come before God. For if you are anywhere near him, you will burn. That’s just how it is. The closer you come, the more you burn. The farther you are, the more your coal deadens until it is useless ash, worthy only to be thrown away. Where are we as a church? Are we burning? Where are we as individuals? Are we set aglow?

2000 years ago, God visited his people with tongues of fire and the first church was born in the fiery furnace of the Spirit. The church, in other words, was born in a fire, and it was to have remained in this

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Letter from the Editors

“Jesus calls us to be light of the world, but this implies that we are first ignited by His presence,” Pastor Dihan reminds us in *The Consuming Fire*, a reflection on God’s holy nature as consuming fire and an exhortation for us to be set on fire as a church.

And in this edition of the *Threshold*, we have the privilege of seeing just how God is indeed setting different parts of the body at Open Door on fire with his Holy Spirit. Johanna Lee’s testimony of how she came to faith in Jesus reminds us God’s fire burns persistently even when we are unaware. Sarah Oh invites us to consider how God has already refined us to be the light that we are as his sons and daughters in our daily lives. John Park shows us how God has set his heart on fire for his work in the Gambia, urging him to go back this winter to continue His work.

And just how do we ready ourselves so God might set us on fire? By choosing to be Jesus’ disciples and following him wherever he leads. And for those who desire to follow him, Open Door is offering, for the first time, a set of discipleship classes – in reading the Bible, being renewed spiritually, practicing Christian disciplines, sharing the Gospel with the Muslims and setting our family relationships aright.

We invite you to explore, but please do not just stop there. Join in!

God Bless,  
Gene Lee, Tina Ro, & Jackie Kwon

## Congratulations

- To Pastor Matt and Stephanie Yi, married on 8/28/10.
- To Phil and Julie Lee, married on 10/2/10.
- To Andrew and Jennie Jeon, married on 10/2/10.
- To Joshua and Caroline Strunk, married on 10/9/10.
- To Young and Hanna Ko, married on 10/30/10.
- To David Cho and Anna Park on the birth of their daughter, Mackenzie Hanna Cho 8/18/10.
- To Kwangsoo and Minhee Ok, on the birth of their daughter, Madison Hannah Ok on 9/9/10.
- To Abraham and Jamyung Kim, on the birth of their daughter, Grace Minjoo Kim on 9/23/10.
- To Sung Kim and Jane Yoon on the birth of their daughter, McKayla Ashleigh Kim on 10/7/10.
- To Roy and Judy Park on the birth of their son, Noah Park on 11/10/10.

## Condolences

To Nick Nicholson,  
on the passing of his mother.

To Charlson Choi,  
on the passing of his father.

To Ryan Sizemore,  
on the passing of his father.

## Discipleship



## Curriculum

*Below is a list of discipleship classes that will be offered throughout the year at ODPC during small group breaks.*

### 100's FOUNDATIONS

101. How to Read the Bible
102. Spiritual Renewal
103. Christian Disciplines
104. Evangelism: Contagious Christianity

### ELECTIVES

#### 200's: Christian Life

201. Spiritual Gifts
202. Inner Healing
203. Life Stage Studies [Singlehood, Parenting, etc]
204. Global Missions

#### 300's: Scripture, Theology, and Church History

301. NT Survey
302. OT Survey
303. Systematics
304. Church History

#### 400's: God in the world

401. Science and Faith
402. Christian Ethics
403. Apologetics
404. Justice


## The Consuming Fire

*(Continued from page 1)*

fire: “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thess. 5:19). As long as the Spirit was free to burn, the word was preached fearlessly, miracles were performed, and thousands came to know the Lord each day. But as soon as the fires died down, so did the church—and so we have the letters

**The prayer of the pastoral staff is that we, like the early believers, become set ablaze with the fullness of the Spirit, live passionately for Christ at all costs...**

to the churches in Revelation pleading earnestly for them to return to their first love; to being either hot or cold but not lukewarm.

The prayer of the pastoral staff is that we do not become such a church, but that we, like the early believers, become set ablaze with the fullness of the Spirit, live passionately for Christ at all costs, and see the power of God at work in the lives of people. 

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Winter 2010 Courses

Jesus was clear in his mandate for the church: "Go and make disciples..." It is therefore our desire as a church to raise up disciples who seek to encounter, exchange, and extend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This, we pray, will take place in the regular rhythms of church life—Sunday worship, service in ministry, small groups, missions, and so forth. But we also recognize the need for focused classes that take us deep into specific subjects of Christian thinking and living. To this end, we will provide "Discipleship Classes" every winter and summer during the small group breaks. We hope you will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to grow in grace and knowledge.

### HOW TO READ THE BIBLE [101]

**Teachers:** Samuel Kwon, John Sim

**Description:** In this class, we will learn to read the Bible for all it's worth. We will explore how to employ canonical, thematic, literary and historical approaches to the Bible in order that we may better understand and thus, more fully live out, the written word of God, to the glory of God and to our enjoyment of Him.

**Day & Time:** Sundays, 1-3pm @ church, starting on 12/5. Class meets for 6 weeks.

**Registration:** Email Samuel Kwon [Samuel.kwon@gmail.com].

### SPIRITUAL RENEWAL [102]

**Teachers:** Pastor Dihan, Yooshik Seo, Jean Kim

**Description:** Do you feel far from God? Have you lost your intimacy with the Father? In this class, we will seek hard after God, and pray for "spiritual renewal." We will be covering the curriculum Seeking Him, by Demoss and Grissom. Through the study we will seek to experience true humility, repentance, God's amazing grace, genuine holiness, a clear conscience, radical forgiveness, sexual purity, and walking in the Spirit. Each week will include individual study, questions for group discussion, as well as times of prayer and ministry.

**Day & Time:** Saturdays, 10am-12pm @ Pastor Dihan's Home [13518 Lammium Ln, Centreville VA], starting on 12/4. Class meets for 8 weeks.

**Registration:** Please email Pastor Dihan [dihanlee@opendoorpc.org].

### PATHWAYS: WALKING IN CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES [103]

**Teachers:** Pastor John, Ed Yu

**Description:** What does a true Christian life really look like? What keeps you from living such a life? What can you do to pursue it? If you're tired of the status quo-if you suspect that there's more to Christianity than what you've experienced, this class is for you. The Christian life is about more than being forgiven, more even than making it to heaven. The heart of Christianity is about supernatural transformation in everyday life. All of ordinary, daily life has the potential to be lived out as if Jesus himself were the one living it. In our time together, we will recover and walk the paths of the long-lost disciplines such as celebrating, "slowing", praying, serving, confessing, meditating on the Word, and more.

**Day & Time:** Saturdays, 10am-12pm @ Pastor John's home [9027 Advantage Ct, Burke VA], starting on 12/4. Class meets for 7 weeks.

**Registration:** Please email Pastor John [johncha@opendoorpc.org]

### FAMILY MATTERS [203]

**Teachers:** Pastor Sam Kim, Alice Kim, John Kim, Carol Kim, Steven Chung

**Description:** We want to see what the Bible says about the marriage relationship — its uniqueness among earthly relationships, its significance in the lives of husbands and wives, and most important, to grasp the marriage as a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the Church. We

(Family Matters Cont'd)

also want to discover God's purpose, plan and provision for raising a grace-based, Gospel grounded family, with the understanding that healthy, godly families are the foundations of the church and society.

**Day & Time:** Sundays, 1-3pm @ Church. Class begins 1/9 and meets for 8 weeks (until 2/27).

**Registration:** Please email Pastor Sam [pastorsamkim@gmail.com].

### MUSLIM EVANGELISM CLASS [204]

**Teachers:** Pastor James & Faith Cha

**Description:** Do you have Muslim friends, coworkers, neighbors? Have you ever wondered how to share the gospel to Muslims? This class will give background information on the Islamic religion, and also provide the basic tools to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Muslims that God has placed around you. We will read portions of related books, including the Quran and watch videos. Halfway through the class (3rd or 4th week) you will be asked to start sharing your faith with Muslim acquaintances. As a class we will fast and pray for the Holy Spirit to bear fruit in the lives of those with whom you are sharing the Gospel.

**Day & Time:** Sundays, 3-5pm @ Church, starting on 12/5. Class meets for 6 weeks.

**Registration:** Please email Pastor James [jcha@pmbx.net].

**Sign up by visiting**

<http://odpcec.org/connect/discipleship.html>. **Deadline is November 21st.**

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Getting to Know

### Pastor Brian Mendoza



*Pastor Brian is currently the pastor for S.A.L.T. (Seekers After Living Truth), ODPC's college-aged ministry. He is a native Northern Virginian, having graduated from Centreville High School as well as George Mason University where he received a B. A. in Psychology. He is currently working toward an M. A. in Biblical Studies from Reformed Theological Seminary. He is passionate about seeing God bring wholeness to broken lives through the Gospel here at ODPC, especially within our S.A.L.T. ministry.*

#### **Tell us a little about your life journey and how you were called to ministry.**

As a child, I used to mourn having to miss cartoons and video games every Sunday morning because my parents would drag my brother and me to church. I remember sliding around on those polished wooden pews and wishing I were on some playground. On most Sundays, my brother and I would get a good spanking for misbehaving at church. So for the first 17 years of my life, I didn't know who God was. God was distant,

boring, and the reason why I got spanked.

Growing up, I don't think I was ever really skeptical about Christianity – I just didn't see a need for it. When I made the jump to high school, I stopped going. Those first few years of high school were years of experimentation. I remember feeling uncomfortable with who I was becoming, especially since my parents raised me with good values and morals. In my junior year, I reached a point of crisis in my life and somehow came to the realization that my life would only make sense and have meaning if I surrendered it to God.

Soon after I gave my life to Christ. I began to devour the Bible and books by Christian authors. I was eager to learn about Christ and often found myself talking about him with my peers and classmates. I eventually ended up at ODPC in my sophomore year at GMU. It was during my time as a college student at GMU and in ODPC that God began to reshape my desires for pastoral ministry.

#### **Who was your pastor when you were in college and what did you learn from him that you would like to see applied in your S.A.L.T. ministry?**

I was fortunate to have many pastors while I was in college. Pastor Dihan was leading S.A.L.T. at the time. He led a men's group with myself and 3 other guys from GMU. I was also mentored by Pastor Sam through serving in our youth ministry. I think I also remember Pastor John asking me if there was anyone I had a crush on (not much has changed)! But seriously, all of these guys have taught me a whole lot about life-on-life ministry and the value of investing in young leaders, both of which are essential in college ministry.


#### **What would people be surprised to know about you?**

People are usually surprised to know that I'm an introvert by nature, especially since I love being around people and meeting new people. Also, though I haven't done it in a long while, I used to be into spoken word poetry and have shared a few open mics before, including one at an ODPC retreat while I was still a student in S.A.L.T.

#### **What challenges does the modern college student face?**

When I think of the challenges that modern college students are facing, I think of intense academic pressures and parental expectations toward success. Add to the mix the current state of the economy, and our society's trend toward extended adolescence (which may be an indicator more than anything), and you've got a lot of college students who are being challenged to grow up a lot more quickly than they realize. There are also many more fields of study and career options nowadays. I've come across several studies reporting an increase in numbers of students receiving counseling for mental health related issues. So suffice it to say, it's a lot harder now than it was in previous generations.

#### **What opportunities do you see for S.A.L.T. to grow?**

There's a lot of potential for S.A.L.T. to grow. Right now we're focused on providing a space for our college-aged members to meet and find a sense of belonging in God's family during this stage in their lives. I've been thinking about ways to get our congregation more involved in the lives of our students. We've already had several guest speakers during our Sunday meetings as well as special lunches sponsored by some of our small groups as well as our Marriage & Family Life Ministry. In the future, I hope we can assist our students in starting investigative Bible studies on their campuses. 

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Building a House of Prayer



Structural components of the new worship center have now been put in place.



ODPC members build their house on prayer.



Sharon and David Lee write their prayers for ODPC on the wall.

If you are new to our church or were not able to pledge with the rest of the congregation back in March, you still have the opportunity to participate in ODPC's "Building Our Home" Campaign. For more information about the worship center, or how you might be able to partner with us, contact [odpcec@bfc.gmail.com](mailto:odpcec@bfc.gmail.com).

## Member Testimony

### By Johanna Lee

*Johanna was one of the four believers baptized last Sunday at ODPC.*

If someone were to ask me how I came to know God and how I began my spiritual journey, my answer would seem rather ordinary. It kind of happened over time in stages. And the process is definitely still unfolding.

When I first moved to Seoul right before I started elementary school, I met a new friend and I started to follow her to a church in the area. I think I attended the church until I finished the sixth grade but I was not really devoted to God nor did I understand anything about being faithful. I think I just liked the atmosphere and the people in my church. I had lots of fun, felt comfortable, and thought of God as my father. Since my father passed away when I was little, I liked to think of God as my Father who I could lean on.

But when I started to attend a new church after I moved to the States, I no longer felt the same feeling I had in the past. And it wasn't just that particular church, but I struggled with

every church I visited. I know the main reason was because I had changed a lot since growing up. How-

---

**I believe in Him and I know He loves me, but there's still so much I struggle with. But I trust that God knows my heart and His Holy Spirit will help me learn more about Him even if it may take my whole life.**

---

ever, I think I was looking for something from each church without realizing it, and until actually discovering that unknown something, I knew I'd always feel like an outsider.

While I was in the middle of these struggles, I used to pray and ask God for help. And I always thought he would give answers in the end. I always believed that I had experienced what I had in life because of God's plan. But somehow, my view of God became hazy and I stopped trying to see Him. Then I stopped praying about things that were really hard to change. So after many years of not attending church, I felt empty, and I finally began to attend church again

because of this feeling of void.

Now I'm trying to learn more about Him and walk toward Him slowly. Nothing has ever come to me quickly. Everything I have experienced has always taken time, so I know it won't be easy or happen all at once. So if someone asks me if I'm a believer, my answer is yes, but at the same time, I know I still need to grow in faith. I see myself as a believer because I know God is there, and He loves me and sent His Son to die for me. But I know I'm not where I want to be spiritually, and there's still a lot to learn about what I believe.

As I get baptized, I'm praying God will answer the questions I have and help me know him more. I believe in Him and I know he loves me, but there's still so much I struggle with. But I trust God knows my heart and His Holy spirit will help me learn more about Him even if it may take my whole life. I pray I can put down all of me and begin as a new person. I pray my heart will be filled with His love and be more confident in my relationship with God. Please pray I never forget to thank Him for letting me be who I am under His love with His sons and daughters. 📖

## THE FIELD

**Pray for ODPC Missionaries!**

**Deleted from Online edition. If you would like to receive a hard copy, please email [odpcthreshold@gmail.com](mailto:odpcthreshold@gmail.com).**

**A few more important reminders!**



Bring your old sweaters, coats, and mittens for Manna!



**MFLM Ministry**

- Are you engaged or newly married? Marriage preparation classes will start in mid-January for 9 weeks. Email [matt@teamchae.com](mailto:matt@teamchae.com) if you're interested.
- Do you want to connect with and deepen relationships with other couples in our church as you grow in your marriage or parenting? Sign up for the "Love & Respect" or "Grace-Based Parenting" class . Classes will meet on Sunday evenings (5– 7:30 pm) over 3 months. Email [pastor-samkim@gmail.com](mailto:pastor-samkim@gmail.com) if you're interested.

## THE FIELD

## The Real Battle

By John Park

This past summer, the Lord led an intergenerational team to the Gambia, where we witnessed His heart for His people, unchanging faithfulness, and providential hand moving actively and mightily.

ODPC has sent short-term missions teams to the Gambia for the past 11 years. Through years of fervent prayer, sacrifice, determination, and dedication, our church planted a medical clinic named the Global HOMM Bijilo Clinic, which was finished in 2009. The beautiful beachside clinic provided free health care for native Gambians and served as a base for our missions teams. Our church's dreams of loving and serving the people of the Gambia through medical services had come true.

As many in our church know, the government of the Gambia took away the medical clinic shortly after its completion. Our church representatives were given notice to vacate the clinic within the month. After years of building this clinic, it was gone just like that. The question remained: Why did this happen? I have heard many reasons as to why the clinic was taken away. I have heard that it was because the government wanted to change the finished facility into a resort, or that there were some logistical complications between the government and our people. Whatever the reason, *it doesn't matter* because God is surely at work and He is still sovereign, and He graciously revealed this to our team this past summer.

After sending medical missions teams to the Gambia for years, I believe that the clinic was taken away simply because God was leading us in a different direction. After the clinic was taken away, many difficulties arose, including the lack of equipment to treat the natives effectively, harsh sleeping conditions, rooms without air-conditioning, and less room to store medicine.

Though much was taken away, the Lord gave me something greater: the

privilege of living amongst the Gambian brothers and sisters, Gambia's most beautiful children, and the Gambian missionaries. Most importantly, the Lord led me to a place where my faith would be stretched. While God led our team away from medical ministry, He invited us into a place of deeper faith, a life of prayer and intercession, and relational ministry.



Our team did something that had never been done the past 11 years in the Gambia. Since we no longer had a clinic to work with, we limited our medical duties to the first half of the day. The second half of the day consisted of prayer walking and street (or dirt road) evangelism! We went out instead of having people come in, and we believed that through prayer, the spiritual atmosphere was changing. In a 95% Muslim nation, we believe that only prayer will flip that statistic around. *Why? Because our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12).* It was challenging for many. When faith is being developed and a life of prayer is being established, it will be challenging at first; but believe me on this one: it is so necessary.

At the missionary compound, we lived among the missionary families, as well as Gambian brothers and sisters who had been kicked out of their families because of their faith in Jesus. In the past, some of these brothers served as our translators. Now that we lived with them, the Lord allowed us to minister to them and form deep

relationships with them. We ate, served, laughed, and worshipped with them; things we would not have been able to do if we had stayed at the clinic.

These brothers are so in love with Jesus. For them, becoming Christians came at great cost. I realized that God will use them to establish His Kingdom in the Gambia and that He wants to use our team to equip, empower, and encourage them. Just as the spiritual environment in the Gambia is changing, I believe our missions dynamic needs to change from one of sending evangelists, to one of training and supporting the native believers already there. I believe that God is leading our team to shift our focus to evangelism, intercession and education. I believe that, through education, God wants to place these brothers in positions of influence, and that helping them advance in the Gambian society is another step towards the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven there. While God used the medical clinic as a foot in the door for our church, He is doing new things there and I desire to be in step with Him.

The Lord has called me to go back to the Gambia this winter. Although the Lord has laid many things on my heart, my overarching vision for this winter is to seek His agenda, to go where He leads, pray what He burdens me to pray, and speak what He allows me to speak.

Please pray with me as our team prepares for our winter trip (December 18-30, 2010); for the Gambia to become a nation that declares that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to pour out upon the hearts of our brothers and sisters in the Gambia.

If you would like more information, or to support the team in prayer or financially, please email me at [un4shamed@gmail.com](mailto:un4shamed@gmail.com). 

## THE CORRIDOR

## Daily Miracles are Not Easy Sound Bites


By Sarah Oh

A few months ago, the Pinocchio story came up in a sermon. I hadn't thought of that story in years and started to remember the ending: the wooden puppet longed to become a son and a real boy. Pinocchio wanted legitimacy, respect, and family privileges; he also dreamt of a flesh and blood experience, worlds apart from his status as a carved marionette. The story relates to recent sermons that focused on our status as daughters and sons of God.

As many of us do, during my week I make choices about my identity, influenced by stories of the world's favored sons and daughters, and their alternative sources of meaning and acceptance.

In light of two competing identities, favored daughter of the world or blessed daughter of God, how do the two narratives compete? How am I supposed to tell a compelling life story with my list of Christian victories? Daily miracles are not easy sound bites: "I kept my word even though it would have been opportune to deny it"; "I felt compassion that disturbed my immediate life narrative"; "I preached the gospel of Christ

to myself over my morning coffee"; "I wasted my alabaster jar of savings to bless the Lord"; "I remembered, among many things, God's promises and his love for me."

While life's practical decisions often trump my existential questions, I know my Christian walk is part of a larger story of identity. My status as a daughter of God always turns back to a picture of the heart of God beating and bleeding on the cross, where Christ displayed a holy love that rescued me from my sin. I don't have to be a wooden puppet of a daughter, but I can rest in knowing that inner victories are privileges of being a real daughter of God. 

## A Prayer for Owen Meany

By John Irving (Ballantine, 1989); p.617

### Book Review by Samuel Kwon

Some fictional characters are memorable because they are so unlikely; some because they are so true-to-life. In *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, John Irving brilliantly succeeds in creating a character, Owen Meany, who initially comes across as helplessly fictional, yet ends up becoming so extraordinarily believable that, as readers turn the last page, they may find it hard to imagine a world without him.

The story of Owen Meany, a diminutive boy with strange religious convictions and an even stranger voice, is narrated by John Wheelwright, the son of a WASP family in Gravesand, New Hampshire. John begins: "I am doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice...because he is the reason I believe in God; I am a Christian because of Owen Meany."

From there unfolds a richly layered story meticulously evoking the privileged upper-class life in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century New England and perceptively noting the twists and turns of an unlikely friendship between Owen and John. There is also a recurring polemic against what John believes to be the corruption of the American ideal through the highs and lows of its war

in Vietnam, though this aspect may not be interesting to today's readers. The book is at its best, though, when it delves into the nature of faith, destiny and calling through the often unexpected and thoroughly fascinating life of Owen Meany.


Why was Owen so small that kids loved to pick him up and pass him around like a basketball? Why was his voice so terribly shrill that it gave the "shivers" to all who heard it? Why was he always practicing an odd catch-and-throw maneuver with John on a basketball court?

The readers, along with John and those around Owen, are led to ponder these questions as Owen and John grow up together, from childhood to young-adulthood, struggling to find their unique place and role in the world. John, in his struggle, becomes disillusioned with his country, his family, and even himself. Owen too, once so full of confidence and faith, grows less certain of his destiny and calling. Then, in an unexpectedly climactic scene that seems to call for the most extreme kind of suspension of belief, the answers to these riddles – if they can be fairly called "answers" – emerge, or better yet, converge.

Some readers may complain that Irving, in his desire to deliver a message, forced a fantastical climax, too neatly constructed to feel real. These readers would be justified their com-

plaint.

Yet this reviewer's reaction was not at all one of complaint. Rather, to his own surprise, this reviewer found that he intensely missed Owen, and that he wanted to have Owen's friendship for much longer, even if that meant having to put up with his ornery ways, eccentric habits, annoying self-assuredness bordering on arrogance and terribly shrill voice. And that underscores Irving's talent as a writer: for having successfully created such a believably unbelievable character.

It might be that that story of Owen Meany is so believable to many despite itself because many of us know deep down that there is indeed a *Personal* purpose – rather than impersonal meaninglessness – in what we are, warts and all, and what we are meant to be and do. It might be because we universally share in the desire to have the kind of climax to our own lives on which the answers to all our questions converge just as they did for Owen. In fact, I suspect Owen is praying for us from somewhere for exactly that. 

Please send us your submissions! We'd love to hear from you. You are welcome to send articles, photos or even ideas to [odpcthesold@gmail.com](mailto:odpcthesold@gmail.com). Thanks!