

Dwelling in the Divine and Living Stream: The Impact of Christian Testimony at a Medical University in Taiwan

by Ya-Han Lee, Li-Yi Liu and Hsiang-Yin Chen

Preface

I have had the pleasure of traveling to Taiwan four times over the last seven years as a consultant and visiting professor for the College of Pharmacy at Taipei Medical University. Interacting with faculty and students at the university and with pharmacists at its three teaching hospitals has been richly rewarding and enjoyable. But there is much more to the story. During each visit I was also blessed with the opportunity to attend a Sunday meeting at one of the local churches in Taipei. In every case the experience was overwhelming. A sojourn that was based on professional and educational purposes suddenly became profoundly spiritual. And to my surprise, the faith impact of my time in Taipei extended beyond formal church gatherings. In a land characterized by a relatively small proportion of Christians, many of the faculty, pharmacists, and students I encountered were not only believers, they were passionate evangelists. It would be a gross understatement to say that I was impressed—stunned would be a better word. This was a classic case of the teacher becoming the

student, the expert becoming a novice. I witnessed a faith, both corporately and individually, that was tangible, vibrant and effusive. Absent were the trappings of disparate doctrines, denominational boundaries, and divisive religious agendas. What I witnessed was unity—pure, simple and sincere—born of one Spirit, one body of believers, one Gospel, and one triune God. The message was resoundingly clear, “It’s all about Jesus!”

What you are about to read is a tale of true discipleship that is deeply passionate, fully authentic, and outwardly selfless. It provides a glimpse into what it must have been like to witness the commitment of Christ’s earliest followers. The freshness and enthusiasm of such an abiding faith is inspiring and reaffirming. As you read this love story, told by three Taiwanese sisters in Christ, you will come to understand what I mean.

-Daniel Brown, *PharmD, Palm Beach Atlantic University*



Longshan Temple, located in Wanhua, the oldest neighborhood in Taipei, is the spiritual heart of the city, representing the ancient history of the region.

The Divine and Living Stream

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reveals to us a divine and living stream. *“And a river went forth from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided and became four branches.”* (Genesis 2:10)¹ *“And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.”* (Revelation 22:1-2)¹ The water of this divine and living stream is actually the eternal God Himself as the living water Who has been flowing throughout the ages to reach all parts of the inhabited earth, bringing life to man. In the early twentieth century, the stream extended its flow into Taiwan.

Situated off the southeast coast of China, the island of Taiwan is almost 14,000 square miles, about the size of south Florida from Miami to Orlando, with a population of 23.5 million. Its peculiar geographic terrain makes it difficult for streams of water to flow naturally, but the divine and living stream flows abundantly. The history of the country reflects a vast diversity of faith, with one study ranking Taiwan as the second most religiously diverse country in the world. Roughly 45% of the population holds some type of traditional ancestral belief system, 20% are Buddhist, 13 to 15% belong to miscellaneous religions, and only 7% identify themselves as Christians. Nevertheless, despite constituting such a small minority, there is an assembly of Christians in every city or town of Taiwan. Having received the Lord Jesus as their life source, they regularly come together in the Lord’s name with a profound sense of oneness and a strong mutual commitment to share the source of their joy. This is the testimony of the local church.

The practice of local churches is really the recovery work of God according to His plan of redemption and reconciliation, in which God’s Spirit is combined with the spirit of every believer through the life-giving sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The origins of the local churches can be traced back to the early twentieth century, when God called two faithful evangelists to spread His Word among the people of China: Watchmen Nee (1903 – 1972) in the south and Witness Lee (1905 – 1997) to the north. They embraced Jesus as Savior and dedicated their lives to His service, upholding the Holy Bible as the one true standard by which to preach and proclaim the truth. Stepping away from traditional denominations, they sought instead to proclaim the glory of the Lord through smaller gatherings in homes, establishing such local churches in many locations across China.

Following the communist takeover of China in 1949 and subsequent persecution of Christians by the new communist regime, Witness Lee relocated to Taiwan to continue the work. Watchman Nee was arrested in China in 1952 and imprisoned until his death in 1972. However, the ministry of Watchmen Nee did not pass away. His numerous writings in Chinese and English have continued to supply Christians all over the world with rich spiritual nourishment to this day. Meanwhile, Witness Lee continued his work of shepherding the faithful and preaching the Gospel in Taiwan. By 1957, after just 8 years of ministry, the number of believers in Taiwan had increased a hundredfold. In 1962, Witness Lee was led by the Lord to travel to America and share his ministry with the English-speaking world. Over the next few decades, many local churches were established in the U.S., Canada, South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe, as well as Africa. At the same time, Witness Lee returned frequently to lead the churches in Taiwan and the Far East. In the 1990’s, the divine flow made its way to Russia and Eastern European

countries through a collaboration of believers in the West and in the East. Thus, in a half century, through the coordination of the Christ followers all over the world, the biblical testimony of the Lord’s recovery reached all five continents.

The Lord’s recovery is God’s design, expressed through the truths of the Bible, to recover what Watchman Nee and Witness Lee described as the “normal Christian life” and the “normal Christian Church life”. According to the New Testament, all believers are regenerated with God’s eternal life and their spirits united in oneness with the Holy Spirit of God to become living members of the Body of Christ. Each believer is gifted in begetting, nourishing young ones, teaching scriptural truth, and building up the Body of Christ as one universal, corporate New Man, consummating the New Jerusalem. This is not a matter of doctrine; it is simply a new way of living, which is currently being practiced faithfully and joyfully by numerous brothers and sisters all over the world as they nurture each other’s spiritual recovery through active participation in a local church community.



Taipei 101, a famous tourist attraction, is located less than a mile from the campus of Taipei Medical University. It rises high above the city’s skyline as a testament to the bustling commerce and modern progress of Taipei.

Church Life in Taiwan

The church life in meeting Hall 40 of the Church in Taipei depicts the joyful and blessed nature of their faith practices. About 230 believers attend the Lord’s Day meeting on Sunday morning. Through mutual fellowship, prayer, and mingling, all in attendance are knitted closely in love. Many stand to share personal testimony during the service, which is a shared and collaborative process that is loosely guided by a group of elders without the formal direction of a pastor or minister. During the week, every member of the church – young and old alike – engage in the practice of sharing the Gospel with passersby on the street or with neighbors in the community. The elderly are inspiring by their persistent determination to evangelize, often braving extreme weather conditions or trudging up and down multiple flights of stairs to spread the Word with love and hope. Such outreach forms the core of the local church, eagerly spreading the Good News to all who will listen. They proactively visit homes, approach co-workers, pass out Gospel tracts, invite people to Sunday meetings, or anything else they can do to share the living water with a person in need. It is a continual joyful process that is considered to be a valued opportunity, not a burdensome task. Occasionally, it bears fruit in the baptism of a new brother or sister. Every baptism is viewed by the local church as a cause for major celebration, to commemorate the fact that one more human spirit has been saved out of Satan’s authority and joined the corporate Body of Christ.

The Living Stream within the University

The divine stream also flows through the campus of Taipei Medical University (TMU), a private medical university that is composed of 9 colleges (one of which is pharmacy), 12 departments, 23 graduate institutes, and 3 major teaching hospitals. The total enrollment of TMU is over 6000, and more than 6000 faculty and staff are employed by the university or one of its affiliated institutions. The campus is located in the flourishing Xinyi District of Taipei, with the towering landmark, Taipei 101, within walking distance (see photo). Although Christians are a small minority in Taipei, a dedicated group of TMU faculty gather together over lunch every week for fellowship and Bible study. TMU students have a Bible Study Club of their own with about 30 members from a variety of disciplines, such as medicine, pharmacy, and other health-related fields. They enjoy spreading the Gospel, studying the Bible and pursuing God's truth. These students are not conformed to the pattern of the world. Instead, they offer an opposite testimony, emanating from their love for Jesus Christ and their fervent desire to proclaim His name on campus. *"But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."* (2 Timothy 2:22)¹

At the start of every school year they reach out to freshman, and thereafter invite classmates to join them in weekly meetings to sing hymns, pray, and study the Word. Meetings in small groups are often held off campus at nearby homes, where hosts prepare "love feasts" so students who attend will feel welcome as they enjoy a tasty meal. These gatherings are characterized by the warmth and divine love of God's family. Students care for each other, share their fresh experiences of the Lord, and pray for each other's needs. Sometimes they come with grief or anxiety due to a heavy workload or academic pressures, but they leave relaxed and smiling with renewed strength and hope. Shin-Mei Liu, a sophomore majoring in medical laboratory science and biotechnology, was baptized in the autumn of 2014. She describes her experiences at TMU in her own words: *"My first time hearing the Gospel was at the beginning of the freshmen year. I doubted it very much at first. But it was the sisters' passionate and constant caring for me for weeks touched my inward heart, making me willing to accept the salvation of Christ and baptize. During my second year in TMU, I had morning revival prayer with sisters in their place every Thursday, and started yearning for the God-men mingled daily life together with them. But my family disagreed. They concerned my study a lot and were strongly against it. My companions and I couldn't do anything but only returned to the God and prayed to Him for making the way for us. Our Lord is experiential! After a semester-long praying, He made His move. I didn't meet any obstruction anymore in my second communication with my family. I moved into the sisters' house. Now I get more edification in the church. I have wonderful companions who are never tired of explaining to me for clearer understanding of the truth. Through each morning revival, night prayers, every group meeting and the Lord's day meeting, I truly realize that the life-giving Spirit being the eternal God reaching me and dwelling in me become my reality and joy. Praise our Lord for His unreachable abundance!"*

Faithfulness of Student Evangelists

The believers of Christ at TMU are neither ashamed nor afraid to proclaim the Gospel, for they understand that salvation is a gift of God that is given freely to anyone who is ready to accept it. As the apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15:58, labor for the Lord could never be in vain. The practice of Gospel outreach at TMU,

whether passing out gospel tracts or singing hymns on campus, has resulted in more than 100 students hearing the message and roughly 15 brothers and sisters being saved every year. They testify that prayer is the key to God's blessings on the campus. Before each gospel action, they gather together and pray for the seeking ones. Afterward, they lift up prayers that God will cause the seeds they planted in the hearts of non-believers to germinate. With persistent shepherding, many of them remain in the church life today. The process of shepherding requires that shepherds be grounded in their own faith, equipped and vitalized to inspire others. Jesus Christ is the model shepherd and it is through shepherding in love that the lost can be found. Some students initially accepted the invitation to attend a group meeting out of curiosity, but were then attracted to the love of Christ by the love they experienced from His believers. Through the persistent prayers of the believers at TMU, many students regularly attend the meetings and come to accept the Lord as their salvation. These group meetings are the highlight of the week for many students, not only because of the spiritual nourishment derived from God's Word, but also from the care and warmth they receive from one another.

Many members of the group are not gifted as public speakers or social extroverts, but they overcome their shyness and muster the courage to openly reach out through the power of prayer and the intercession of Christ. They realize that it is only by the strength of the Spirit that one can overcome the weakness of the flesh. Prior to every meeting the members pray for guidance and blessings. For them, there is no higher purpose. The following is a testimony on shepherding from Yu-Hsin Wang, a first year medical student, in her own words: *"I grew up in a Christian family, thus it is familiar and easy for me to participate in a meeting. But I started to find it difficult to prepare and minister the Words to the new members in group meetings after entering into college. From my natural disposition, I am really not an outgoing and high-energy one. But when I was reading John chapter 21, there the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him. When Peter said, "Yes, Lord, You know," the Lord told him to feed His lambs. It reminded me how the Lord loves us, like good Shepherd to the sheep. He expects me to love His sheep within this divine love as well. Afterwards, I started to care more about them in daily life, encourage them to have praying habit to God. And I was strongly impressed by seeing their growing in spiritual life after a whole semester. May this vision direct me, keeping my heart in His shepherding heart."*

According to the Bible, God often works in the world by calling upon faithful overcomers who have set themselves apart from the current age and are willing to serve as His instruments in pursuit of His will. The Christian students at TMU pray that their time in college will be redeemed and that the effect of their learning, whether professional or spiritual, will enable them to be instruments of the Lord. They consecrate themselves to be lovers of Jesus and living overcomers, who see the heavenly vision and meet the Lord's need.

The Living Stream outside the University

The TMU story extends beyond the boundaries of the university to include its three affiliated hospitals. Numerous pharmacists at Wanfang Hospital have come to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. As believers assumed leadership roles within the pharmacy department and openly shared their testimonies, many others were inspired to come to Christ. It started more than a decade ago with the director of pharmacy at Wanfang and gradually spread to include

the associate director and area managers. These Christian pharmacy leaders understand that they are merely tools in the hands of God. It is the Lord Who causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him. Two of the Wanfang pharmacy managers became believers during their short term clinical training in the U.S. – one in Iowa and one in Los Angeles. Through the coordination and intercession of shepherds at Wanfang Hospital and in the U.S., they accepted Jesus in baptism and have continued to grow in faith and church life since returning to Taipei.



Student members of the Bible Study Club at Taipei Medical University, representing the various schools on campus.

The Lord expanded the TMU mission field in 2009, with the opening of Shuang Ho Hospital as the third TMU teaching hospital. In continuing the tradition, some of the Christian pharmacists from Wanfang Hospital assumed positions of leadership in the pharmacy department of the new facility. Over the years, many pharmacists and sales representatives of pharmaceutical companies in Taipei have come to believe in His name. Furthermore, the Lord has also sent forth many TMU pharmacy graduates who became believers and received spiritual nourishment as students. Their impact on the pharmacy community in Taipei and throughout Taiwan is a testament to the power of their witness and the depth of their faith. They have willingly and proactively served as vehicles by which God has changed lives for eternity. For it is only by the power of God that one can prepare the heart of another to receive the Gospel message.

A new opportunity for outreach began to take shape in 2013, with the advent of a new 6-year PharmD program at TMU. Clinical pharmacy in Taiwan, as in most Asian countries, is still in its early stages. The TMU PharmD program is only the second of its type in the country. As God's will would have it, the former director of pharmacy at Wanfang Hospital, who so faithfully sought to bring others to Christ during her many years in pharmacy practice, was appointed to the position of Director of the Clinical Pharmacy Department in the TMU College of Pharmacy, with the responsibility of overseeing the development of the PharmD program. It is an academic undertaking that will open new doors through which the soldiers of the Lord at affiliated hospitals and in the college of pharmacy can gain access to legions of lost souls who thirst for the life-giving water of the divine stream. The efforts of those developing the program are grounded in prayer. They seek God's guidance and blessing, submitting every task into His hands so that everything they do will be the work of the Lord, not of man.

The Eternal Flow of the Living Stream

Witness Lee once shared a parable about a flowing creek that was filled with dead leaves which drifted along passively with the current.

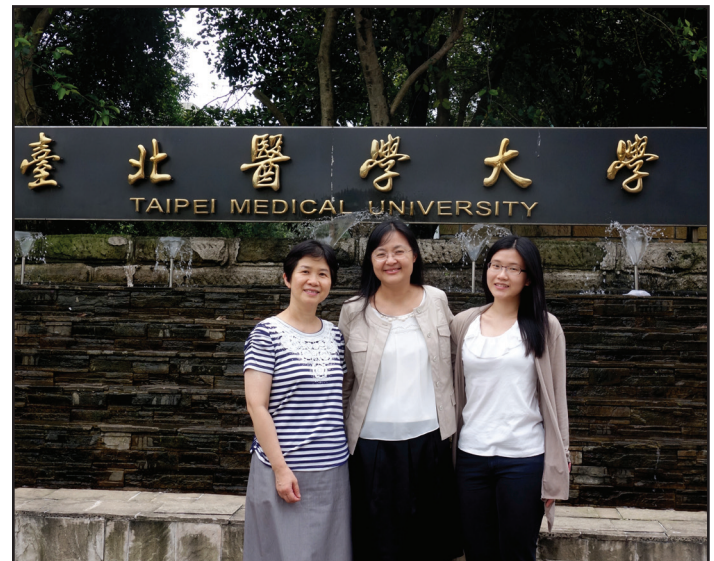
Among the leaves were some tiny fish that were actively swimming upstream in the opposite direction. Because the fish were alive, they could swim against the current, in contrast to the leaves that were simply being carried along by the current. It is a fitting metaphor for the world today, in which people are swept up into a self-serving, deceptive culture that prevents them from accessing the true life and glorious destiny that God has ordained for them. As Lee explained, *“Once we were dead and carried away by the tide, but now that we have been made alive, the current cannot move us.”* How ironic it is that the power to swim upstream against prevailing cultural norms is granted as a simple matter of faith. It merely involves accepting the life-giving Spirit found in the water of the divine stream. All currents of that stream flow into God's kingdom and there are no dead leaves to clutter the path. Perhaps it is fitting that one of the symbols of the early Christian church was a fish (and still is today)!

The water of the living stream is the Triune God Himself flowing as the thriving life, and where the water flows everything will live. This divine stream comes from the throne of God, flowing from ancient times to the present day, and it will keep flowing to the New Jerusalem. It carries out the Lord's plan in every age, step by step, working in each campus, each hospital, and among you and me in our daily lives. It flows unceasingly. We believers, by breathing, drinking, and eating Him, can be filled with the Lord and become His flowing channel. In this way we can live with God and participate in His work now and forever. This is the most glorious and blessed life on earth. Hallelujah!

“He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38)

References

1. Recovery Version, 1991, published by Living Stream Ministry.



From left to right: Ya-Han Lee, BS, is a graduate student, Li-Yi Liu, BS, is a research assistant, and Hsiang-Yin Chen, PharmD, is associate professor and director of the Department of Clinical Pharmacy, College of Pharmacy, Taipei Medical University, Taipei, Taiwan.