

Life testimony of Volker Keller

## **You will be a Blessing**

Genesis 12:2, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”

### I. Life without hope

I was born in 1953, so much past the due date that my mother got ill and I was weakened by a chronic breathing problem. Almost every year my parents sent me to a sanatorium. A sanatorium is a medical facility for chronic illness. I interpreted this as my parents not loving me and developed a fatalistic way of thinking.

At the age of seven I doubted God’s love for me. When lightning struck my aunt’s restaurant and everything went up into flames, I prayed the Lord’s Prayer without ceasing out of fear. Then I remembered all my sins, that I had stolen sweets and chocolate from my mom’s cupboard and had become a liar. I accepted God’s almighty power and thought that God was unjust because he had punished my believing relatives because of my theft. From this time on I was convinced that God was not just.

During my school years I read fairy tales and I loved to draw and sing. I could be content to sing one song throughout an entire day, which made my fellow men very nervous. After finishing school I wanted to become an artist and dreamt about Albrecht Durer, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. But the everyday life in the advertising agency was profit and performance oriented and so my dream disappeared like mist. Furthermore, my boss had an amputated leg because of a war injury. In spite of his artistic achievements he still maintained the character of a tank commander. Soon after I finished my apprenticeship, he died of cancer. Traumatized I decided to refuse to bear arms and instead of the military service do community service. During those 18 months I developed the life style of a hippy. I let my hair grow to shoulder length, wore super skinny jeans and put on red leather boots and the same parka every day playing guitar for hours and hours. While I worked with ill and handicapped people I began to think about the meaninglessness of my life and developed the inner conviction that I would not grow older than 20. The power of death robbed me of any meaning of life. Although I still thought the unknown God to be unjust, I still prayed to God, if he existed, to save me from the transitoriness of this doomed life.

### II. Life with God’s hope

One day during my community service, I met a Korean sister. I got into a discussion with her about God’s injustice. She ended my one-sided argumentation with the words, “You must pray! Then God himself will answer your questions.” I was shocked by such a

challenge and remained annoyed for almost a week by her command. One night a small boy, who happened to have the same clinical history as myself, died of a “bronchitis status”. I concluded again that God must be unjust since he should have let me die in the place of the boy. Again, I prayed the Lord’s Prayer helplessly talking to a god in whose love I just couldn’t believe.

God answered through an invitation to the 1974 Summer Bible Conference located in Seewies/Switzerland. Missionary Dr Samuel C. Lee delivered several messages, but I couldn’t understand even one word. However, I was deeply impressed by the life testimonies of the young sisters. I wished that I could write testimonies, but I couldn’t. One year later (1975) I was invited to another SBC in Frankfurt. I brought two sheep and played the Pharisee in the drama “the Blind Man”. God, for the first time, opened my eyes through Jesus’ words to his disciples in John 9:3, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” Jesus’ words moved me and the love of Jesus touched my heart. I could deliver my first Sogam with the title “I can see!”

One year later Msn. Dr Samuel C. Lee invited me to Korea for Zion training based on Titus 2:11,12, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” God also blessed our Genesis Bible study and spoke to me through Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.” I realized that God loved even me and had made me very good; I was not a creation accident. He saved me from my hopeless life and gave me new life and new hope in God.

### III. You will be a blessing

In 1976, God blessed me to establish the first house church in Germany with a wonderful woman of prayer, Msn. Ok-Su Suh, and between orient and occident. When Msn. Mark Yang came to me, I gave him John 12:24 as our key verse for the wedding. I was ready to die to become fruitful. But to our surprise, Msn. Dr Samuel C. Lee blessed our family with Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Then God sent us back to Germany with a prayer topic to be a blessing to German campus mission. Due to my physical weakness, I was unable to attend school regularly. During the 1978 Niagara Falls Conference, God spoke to me through Mark 5:36: “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” By faith I overcame fear and went to night school. God blessed my faith and enabled me to graduate from high school. At my graduation ceremony, I confessed, “God threw me into the water to learn how to swim.”

1978 was a historical year in German ministry. German campus pioneering began, when Pastor Abraham Lee was sent out to Germany as a campus shepherd. That year by

God's grace we moved to Cologne to begin pioneering the German universities together with Pastor Abraham's family. Dr. Samuel Lee helped German women missionaries to marry Korean shepherds. After 1978, many Korean shepherds came to Germany as student missionaries, including Kaleb Hong, Peter Chang, Isaac Youk, Daniel Park, Markus Kum, Johannes Lee, David Hong, Moses Hur, Peter Lee, etc. It was a turning point for German UBF to change the direction from women centered ministry to men centered and German students centered ministry. Campus pioneering began in Cologne. Men missionaries entered colleges in order to master the German language and engage in one to one ministry. Since then, many students came to flock around Cologne UBF, but they all left. Those who looked promising left the ministry. Only a few people who looked hopeless and useless remained, including me. Dr. Samuel C. Lee always prayed for me to be a man of God's hope. He also prayed for me, "If you remain faithful to the end, God will bless your family abundantly."

Although many students left, a few remnants remained. Sh. Walter Nett came from Dortmund to Cologne as the first intern shepherd after his graduation. At that time he did not know what intern shepherd meant. Still he made a decision to live according to God's calling rather than to enjoy the pleasures of the world. God blessed his common life with Sh. Andreas Krahwinkel and Andreas Oberreuter. God used them as Bible teachers, shepherds and the messengers of various conferences. Sh. Andreas was sent out to be an independent pioneer, coworking with M. Markus Kum. Despite many difficulties, God has blessed Cologne UBF to raise more than 12 shepherds and 7 intern shepherds and pioneer more than 20 chapters throughout Germany for the last 33 years.

Some years ago, Pastor Abraham Lee resigned and passed his directorship to Sh. Walter Nett. Sh. Walter is serving his ministry with a humble heart. German students really like him. Many shepherds and students are free to come to him, and communicate and cowork with him. The Cologne ministry that was stagnant is revived under his leadership. During the last three years God blessed our fellowship serving the Cologne medical school and the science department of Cologne University. Through Msn. Jonathan Kang God sent Rene Richelshagen. After two years of faithful Bible study he made a decision of faith to become a professor shepherd and established a house church with M. Grace Bang. He is bringing many sheep and is a source of blessing. By God's grace I have served the second gens (CBF/HBF) with Bible study every Saturday morning in five groups and have a countrywide united conference once a year.

God also blessed our family and raised 4 children. Among them, two are medical doctors and one a dentist and one is a student of medical computer science, and they are all shepherds for medical students. In 2007 our first son Titus married Maria Kum, a dentist, and they are currently pioneering Dusseldorf University. Last week our youngest daughter Elisabeth married Paul Chung jr. and was sent out to pioneer West Virginia. God heard our prayers and raised many medical students among second gens: The son of Pastor Abraham Lee, Dr Samuel Lee, then Dr Elisabeth Keller (Chung), then Dr Titus Keller and his wife as

a dentist. In addition God established many new house churches in Germany in spite of lots of turbulence and he allowed vision and spirit of the ancestors through the new generation.

Reviewing the last 35 years, I realize that I was only weak, hopeless and useless. But by the grace of God, my family remained faithful as a remnant in Cologne UBF and Germany. It was only possible because we remembered Dr. Samuel C. Lee and P. Abraham Lee's sacrificial love and many missionaries' prayer support. We praise and thank God for using my family to be a blessing to German campus mission for the last 35 years. I pray that God may restore Cologne UBF as the headquarters of European mission and of disciple making ministry. May God use Cologne UBF for the work of God to raise 10,000 missionaries and 7,000 house churches in Europe UBF. I am deeply thankful to many servants of God in Chicago UBF who have prayed for my family. I give only thanks, praise and glory to God who has raised my family as a remnant in Cologne and Germany up to the present.

One Word: you will be a blessing!