

Bezalie Bautista Uc-Kung

THROUGH THE REFINER'S FIRE

Jophen Bau

Bezalie received Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior when she was in third year high school. Although raised in a Protestant family where church life was an active part, she did not read the Bible until she was in second year college, when a campus Bible study leader invited her to join a cell group. In that cell group, she learned the value of a “quiet time,” a special time of meditating on God’s Word. For Bezalie, “The Bible is the Word of God, the only standard by which to measure our life and faith.”

In school, Bezalie scarcely felt that she was “different”. Her parents refused to separate her; instead, they exposed her as much as others her age were exposed to the rigors of ordinary student life. “God gave me parents who loved me enough to go through all the sacrifices to make sure that I, their handicapped child, was given life’s chances to a good education and to a decent living though modest in means.” As a result, she never felt any limitation to what she could achieve and do. She developed courage and confidence, in spite of her physical handicap.

“I was fitted with a prosthesis for the first time in my life after graduating from college. Before this, I hopped on my one leg most of the time. It was an exhilarating feeling—being able to walk normally... go to places I had never been, finally doing the things that I had long wanted to do. A new freedom and sense of freshness came all over me.

“But in 1988... a road accident dislocated the patella of my bad leg. I could not wear my prosthesis, and I was bed-ridden for nine months, unable to go to work or do anything physical. I also had to undergo a painful and stressful therapy three times a week.

“At first, I questioned God. My father was already retired and there was no clear source of income except his monthly pension which was not big.

“I sought for answers from God’s Word. God did not answer all of my questions and doubts, but He showed me that suffering could also be a gift—it refines and purifies my faith like gold under the refiner’s fire.”

Today, Bezalie is Executive Director of New Day Publishers, a non-profit publishing organization. She started as an editor and gradually rose to the top through hard work and dedication.

“There is no course in publishing to prepare entrants to the publishing business. Although I was actively involved in my college paper, I never thought that I would have a career in publishing. From the time I started in 1977 till now, most of the training for the tasks assigned to me was done on the job, and through exposure to the different facets of the work, with a lot of help coming from company-sponsored seminars and conferences.

“When I was placed at the helm of the organization in 1993, I inherited the problems as well as the fruits of dedicated labor of my predecessor. When we did an organizational analysis, we were not expected to survive for long unless we made some drastic changes that included having to terminate personnel and combining work functions for multi-tasking.

“It was a painful period in my life. I became the most unpopular person in the organization, and I felt alone and lonely. But it was a great learning process. Now, fifteen years after, New Day is still around. I won’t say that we are over the humps. But it has been a long challenging journey of faith and commitment to the work that we do by all who are involved in our publishing ministry. My staff knows that we are in it together. Without the Lord’s help and our contribution to the effort, we will have long ceased to exist.”

A “double whammy,” she calls it, Bezalie was also settling to her new status as a married woman at the same time that she was battling inherited problems at the publishing house.

“I got married in 1996. While I was adjusting to my new position as executive director, it was also the time when I was adjusting to my new role as a wife. During those times, I felt God’s guiding hand the most. Marrying at a ripe age when both your partner’s and your own ways and habits are already well set can be a real challenge.

“I learned from this experience my most meaningful lessons in character building. I had to adjust my mindset and have a paradigm shift when I took on the new role of lifetime partner to my husband. The adjustment period has not been an easy one, but I have gained a deeper sense of myself, and what it meant to love unconditionally.

“Bible reading has become of late an active ingredient in our marriage. My husband and

I spend most of our mornings reading the Bible and praying together. It has become clear to us that God should be present in all our journeys individually and as a couple. We make sure that we lay all our concerns before God. So when there are decisions to be made, whether work-related or something that is of personal nature, God's voice has to be there somewhere.

“It is sometimes a struggle when God seems to say ‘Wait,’ while you feel ready to go ahead. But even in moments of uncertainty of what God seems to be saying, It is still a faith journey with God, including those moments when I failed to listen or to seek God's face.”

Later on, Bezalie would travel across the world to get herself fitted with a modern prosthesis. God provided for all the expenses and made sure that she was fitted with the best prosthesis in the best hospital using the best facility. That trip was one of the milestones of her full life.

“I think that to have overcome my physical disability and to have made something sensible out of my life is a testimony to God's power and sustaining grace. I was created with a purpose. I was not an accident.”