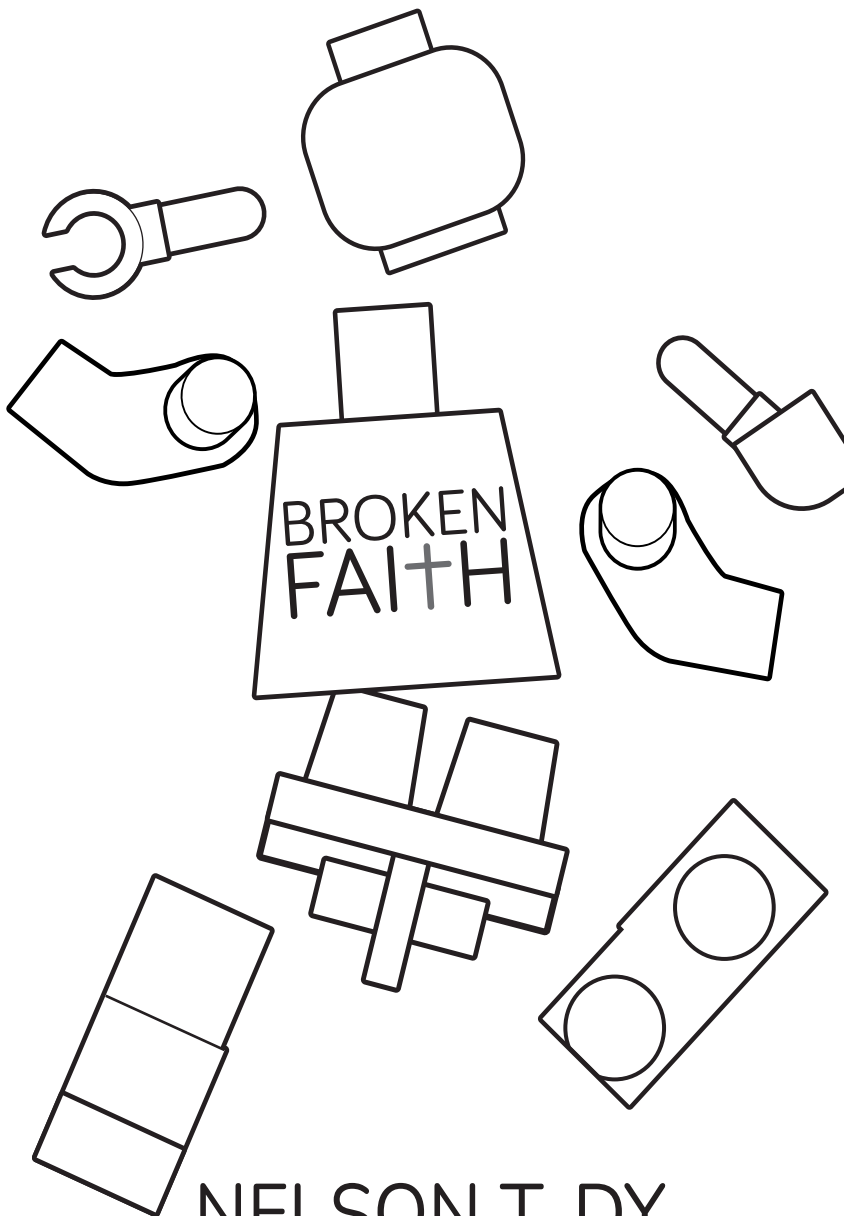


BROKEN
FAITH

NELSON T. DY

Gintong Aklat Awardee

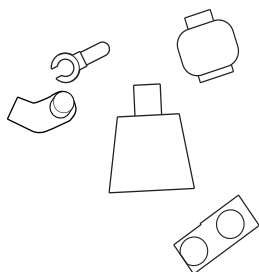
Foreword by MEL CAPARROS II



NELSON T. DY



OMF LITERATURE INC.
Manila, Philippines



INTRODUCTION

She survived COVID-19, but her husband didn't.

It was early March of 2020. Little did Bob and Sheila (not their real names) know that the virus was creeping into the country and that ECQs were about two weeks away. They went to downtown Manila to catch a movie.

Tragically, the movie wasn't the only thing they caught.

Ignorance didn't turn out to be bliss. When they manifested the symptoms, they were rushed to the hospital. Prayer warriors were alerted. Their church family poured out expressions of care and support. The wife slowly recovered, but the husband's condition went from bad to worse. He died at the ICU.

During the following months, Sheila had difficulty sleeping. Guilt and grief were compounded by the burning question: *WHY?* Why was she spared, but her husband wasn't? Didn't God hear their pleas for healing? Where was God's compassion? Was God even there at all?

Sooner or later, hard reality clashes with cherished Christian expectations. *God answers prayer. The Bible changes lives. Faith moves mountains. The church is a safe place. We have airtight apologetics.* But it's not just feeling we got it wrong. We feel deceived, led on, even betrayed by God.

This book is my most personal ever and took me years to write it. Here, I reveal the dark patches of my spiritual journey. People know me as a Christian author, Bible teacher,

and preacher. But they may be surprised to know that I wrestle with doubt.

I have tasted unanswered prayer such that I wonder why we should even bother praying. I have been scandalized by people who go to Bible studies and remain mean-spirited. And don't get me started with giving my all to the church and yet when I needed the church the most, I was left out to dry.

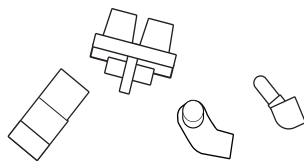
These and much more are what you'll encounter among these pages. If you are browsing through this book, perhaps some are your struggles, too. Perhaps, because of the pandemic, you just came from a funeral, folded your business, or cried your heart out. Then it seems to make more sense to cut your losses and walk out of the faith altogether.

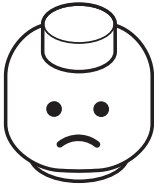
I can tell you that there's a better way.

It's the courage to admit that we do have trust issues with God. Yes, there may be Christian friends and leaders who would not understand what you're keeping inside. But they are not in our shoes. Then, again, who knows they have issues, too. They just hide them better than we do.

So turn the page and let's start a journey together. It starts by admitting that we do not have all the answers. In fact, I am weary of easy answers. Along the way, we will learn to be at peace with having no answers at all (at least, not in this lifetime).

At the end of the road, we will have a fresh understanding of this God Who bewilders us.





CHAPTER 1

DESPERATION: I NEED A MIRACLE

*Is man merely a mistake of God's?
Or God merely a mistake of man?*
Friedrich Nietzsche

My savings went down to zero. My self-esteem plunged to negative.

I was at the peak of my career. I earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and, later, a Master's degree in business management, both from prestigious institutions. I pursued a career that pays the big bucks.

Millennials nowadays are said to job hop when dangled with a better offer. Hey, I was already doing that when I was their age. I stayed in a company for at least two years and switched jobs that promise higher rank and pay. By the 1990's, I was at that peak: Country Manager for a Fortune 500 company.

The Asian currency crisis struck in July 1997. Long story short, the Thai baht collapsed and triggered a financial contagion where the Asian currencies depreciated versus the dollar, including the Philippine peso. Economic activity slowed down. Our markets shrank. That's when my employer decided to close down my Manila office and gave my accounts to someone in Singapore.

BROKEN FAITH

By then in my mid-thirties, I hit the pavement looking for my next job. I was confident that it would be a cinch for someone with my credentials to get reemployed. Little did I know that the dry spell in the economy turned my career into a howling wilderness.

I networked. I sent out résumés. I went to interviews. I knocked on the doors of headhunters. Nothing. I was living on my savings and after the first year, I was broke.

In hindsight, I thanked God I was still single without a wife and kids to feed. But I reached the depths of humiliation when I needed to go to an interview and had to ask my mom for fare. For someone with a sterling education and career (up to that point, anyway), that grinded my self-esteem to dust.

My trusty companion was an old laptop into which I poured out my grief. Buried in its hard drive were journals describing my silent agony. I felt inutile. I felt emasculated. I felt I let I let my mom down. I even felt I let God down.

It was like that, day after numbing day, for two years. Then I answered a blind ad where the employer was looking to hire MBAs. When the HR Director scheduled me for an interview, it turned out to be one of the largest conglomerates in the country. The CEO was gathering young turks for his emerging businesses.

So off I went, outdated résumé and threadbare ego on hand. But first, I dropped by my home church which was a few blocks away from the employer's headquarters. There, I talked to two pastors and told them of my situation. I coveted their prayers that this would be the end of a painful career drought.

Forgive me for sounding cynical, but they did the "pastoral" thing to do. One gave a pep talk: his daughter also went through the anguish of job hunting, but God rewarded her with

DESPERATION: I NEED A MIRACLE

a nice job at the end. "God will do the same for you," this pastor seemed to say. The conversation ended with both pastors praying over me. There we were, three dudes with heads bowed down. I don't recall the words, but I sensed those prayers were meant to wash my anxieties away and replace them with waves of peace.

Except that peace was the last thing I felt.

Without telling anyone, I found a vacant office in the church building. I locked the door behind me, sat down, hunched over the desk... and wept.

I rarely cry. My childhood idol was the stoic Mr. Spock.

The pain was churning inside of me that I wanted to wail out loud. But I had to muffle even that. Tears burst out of my eyes like floodwaters from a shattered dam. My body was convulsing.

*Peace
was the
last thing
I felt.*

"Lord, I can't take this anymore," I blubbered quietly, "I do not want to be disappointed again. Please give me this job."

Then I remembered a Bible verse. "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

So I made a bold move. I casted out every shred of doubt and claimed that job 100%.

After that, I pulled myself back together and marched to the interview.

I waited at the reception area, along with a handful of other men in business suits. Obviously fellow applicants, I thought. One lady stepped out of an office. She was smartly dressed

in pantsuit and carried a leather folder. She was also grinning. I surmised that she was the applicant before me and her interview went well. Perhaps she was given a job offer on the spot.

When it was my turn to step into that office, I discovered that my interviewer was that very CEO of that conglomerate. His name is legend in business circles.

That's right. No screening interview by HR. No IQ tests. No panel interview by middle managers. I was ushered straight to the head honcho. (Years later, I learned that his style is to handpick his lieutenants.)

The interview went well. My pitch was that not only do I have an MBA, but an engineering degree as well. If the CEO needed a business leader who understands technology, I'm his guy. I even expressed which division in that conglomerate I would like to work in.

"Okay," he said, winding up the interview, "I'll talk to [the division]."

I left his ornate office in a daze. Is this it? Is this the end of my travails? Is this God's answer to my two years of storming heaven for a new job? Hey, I claimed that job with 100% faith, didn't I? And the Bible never lies, right?

So I waited one week for that company to tell me when I will start.

Nothing.

Lest I would sound desperate, I waited for another week.

NAH-theng!

So I called up that HR Director and asked for the inside scoop.

He said, "I'm sorry, Nelson. But you didn't make the cut."

Imagine a Richter scale 10 earthquake that rips a city apart. That was the seismic shock to my faith.

WHAT?!!!

Didn't God see my torrent of tears?

Didn't God hear the intercession of those pastors?

Didn't God promise that if I believe and not doubt, I would get this job?

Didn't God...?

Imagine a wife who discovered that her husband had committed adultery. The wife is understandably hurt, but chose not to divorce her husband. She will accept the husband's contrition on one condition: he is to report to her where he is and who he is with, on the hour every hour.

The husband balks "I thought you have forgiven me! Don't you trust me?"

The wife snaps back bitterly, "That's precisely the problem. Trust has been lost!"

Perhaps you feel like that wife. You expected God to do this or that for you. They may be very valid requests. But He didn't. So you feel betrayed. You can't hold back the bile. You want to trust God, but that trust was shattered into a million shards.

You feel that if God wants you to trust Him again, He has to jump through some hoops to win you back. I'm not saying God needs your trust. But for now, it's not what you know about God, it's what you feel about Him.

For the next decade or so, my spiritual life was in a blue funk. I began to ask really tough questions about faith, prayer, the Bible, the church, even God Himself. I was sleepwalking across a theological wasteland.

I never saw God the same way again. I was even tempted to quit being a Christian altogether. But where will I go? No matter how hard I try to peer into my own future, I can see only darkness. Oh sure, I can remain a Christian, but on an arms-length basis with God. Don't bug me, I won't bug you.

"I love God but..." It's the "but" that kills me. There were mornings I woke up sighing, "I miss God". But after severe

*I love
God but...
It's the
"but" that
kills me.*

disappointments like that interview, it was like no amount of effort can piece my Humpty Dumpty of faith together again.

Perhaps you are asking the same hard questions, but never admitted them because you fear of being branded as immature, backsliding, even apostate. Well, one answer I got is that there are no easy answers. Meantime, what do you do?

What do you do when you felt that God had let you down big-time, when you needed Him the most?

What do you do when the Bible seems powerless and hollow?

What do you do when how a Christian should behave and how he *actually* behaves are polar opposites?

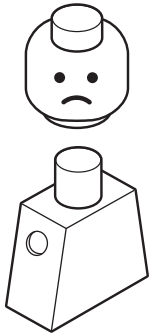
Allow me to ask the hard questions in your behalf. Perhaps, like me, you have grown weary and wary of band aid explanations like being quoted Romans 8:28 or "just trust God."

As I challenged my assumptions and understanding as to how Christianity *should* work, I came across some interesting insights. Maybe they will satisfy you. Then again, maybe not.

DESPERATION: I NEED A MIRACLE

I dare say there may be trust issues with God we have to grapple with for the rest of our lives. If so, I encourage you to find your own answers and share them with the rest of us.

Here is my journey...



CHAPTER 2

PRAYER: A COSMIC LOTTERY?

If you have an exam, study. Don't pray.
Anonymous

I used to hold a list of about 50 people for whom I prayed every day. It would take me an hour to finish the list and, usually, I did it while walking or riding the jeepney.

That was when I was a young Christian in high school. Looking back 40 years later, I wonder if I was being obsessive compulsive. But there I was: interceding for family, classmates, even freshmen to whom I have shared the Gospel. I was moved by the lives of prayer warriors such as Andrew Murray, George Mueller, and E. M. Bounds.

Today? I'll be honest. If you were to ask me to pray for you, I would accommodate you. But deep down I am not expecting anything. I am not keeping my hopes up. I am not holding my breath. I have tasted unanswered prayer several times that I wonder if we are just fooling ourselves.

Consider this news story that, among others, shook my conviction about prayer. This happened on February 14, 2008, yes, Valentine's Day.

A couple died when a passenger bus rammed their Nissan Sentra vehicle Thursday morning in Tandang Sora Village, Quezon City. Police authorities identified the fatalities as

PRAYER: A COSMIC LOTTERY?

Kevin Alamag, 40, and his wife Abella Alamag, 46, residing in San Antonio Village, QC. The police said that the male victim reportedly works as a pastor and was a rebel returnee.¹



“I wrestle with doubt. I have tasted many unanswered prayers... . When I needed the church the most, I felt abandoned and discarded.”

In his most personal book yet, award-winning author Nelson T. Dy confronts what many Christians struggle with but dare not admit: disappointment with God and disillusionment with the church.

In brutally honest reflections, Nelson shares how difficult it is to trust God when our circumstances only make us doubt Him more. What do we do when God isn't the Healer, the Deliverer, the Provider, the Peacemaker, the Answer we thought He is? What do we do when our faith is broken?

Join Nelson in this journey of seeking a fresh understanding of faith and the God who bewilders us.

If your faith has been broken by misplaced expectations on how God should have answered your prayers, or worked in your life, this book is for you.

REV. LITO VILLORIA

Senior Pastor, Greenhills Christian Fellowship South Metro

This is a book I needed to read... . One word binds the range of emotions that dogged my reading: Catharsis.

GRACE D. CHONG

Palanca and Gintong Aklat award-winning author

Broken Faith challenges our spiritual clichés and inches us out of our comfort zones.

MALOI MALIBIRAN-SALUMBIDES

Broadcaster, Author, Motivational Speaker

I encourage you to allow Nelson's courageous questions and wrestling to open a path for you to venture onto, towards an ever deepening journey of faith.

JONATHAN NAMBU

Author, Executive Director of Samaritana Transformation Ministries



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