

## God must love to see a beautiful smile on His children

Dr. Van B. Haywood

As I sat there in the small private airport in Jacksonville, NC, I repeated my prayer. "Lord Jesus, I still feel that I heard you right, but I don't understand what is going on here". My flight had arrived several hours ago, but no one was at the airport to meet me. After doing all I could to locate my contact person, I settled down to wait. I trusted that God was doing something in this situation, but it certainly was not clear to me what it was.

I was a faculty member at the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry. This prestigious dental school had a great clinical focus, but also strong research demands as well. In order to gain tenure and keep my job, I had to publish research papers and obtain grant money. There was a fixed amount of time in which this process must occur. Two faculty members before me had not been awarded tenure, and were now finding jobs in other states.

I had been asked by the Coastal Dental Study group, a small group of dentists in Jacksonville, NC, to come and speak about esthetic dentistry. Esthetic dentistry involves the different techniques which dentists use to create beautiful smiles. I discussed with my department chairman and others at the school the request to spend my research day flying there to teach. They quickly reminded me that if I did not continue with my research and publications, I would not be able to teach because I would not have a job! However, every morning in my quiet time, as I read God's Word and prayed about the decisions I faced, I had the strong sense from God that I should use the day to go teach. The thought kept occurring to me that since God had called me into teaching, He certainly knew what was best for me. I just needed to be obedient to His Will. This concept was the essence of my favorite hymn, "Trust and Obey". The chorus of this hymn says, "for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey". If it was His Will that I not get tenure or continue to have a job at UNC, then certainly He knew where He wanted me to go. With that insight and assurance, and against the recommendation of my chairman and colleagues, I accepted the teaching invitation.

That's how I wound up waiting in this small airport. Eventually my contact person came to find me. We went to the location of the course, and I gave my presentation on all the different ways to beautify a person's smile. As my hosts returned me to the airport, we discussed the information I had shared. One dentist commented "all the procedures you showed us to make smiles beautiful were very nice, but we don't do things that complicated here. We just make a mouthguard and bleach the patient's teeth whiter at night". Well, I was intrigued, but somewhat skeptical of this recommendation. After all, I had researched every possible option for beautifying smiles. All my personal research and publications had been on the esthetic treatment options. I felt confident that there was nothing in the dental literature that even remotely resembled the technique he had described, and I seriously doubted it really worked! On the other hand, I had that special feeling that maybe this was what God was doing in this situation. The other dentists shared that they all had been using this treatment for a number of years with great success. Then, they continued by saying that they were just private-practicing dentists, and not trained for publications or research. They gave me their blessing to return to UNC and test the technique as they had described. If it worked, they encouraged me to publish it.

Well, although I was still somewhat skeptical, I returned to UNC and researched the ingredients in the material they were using. The peroxide-based material was already approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in the mouth as an oral antiseptic, but no mention could I find about whitening or bleaching teeth. However, I remembered my wife Angie's favorite scripture "For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). I felt certain God had sent me to that group for a reason, and I needed to continue to explore this technique. I shared the information with my best friend and colleague on the faculty, Dr. Harald Heymann. Harald was also a member of my

church and a very well respected dentist in the area of esthetic dentistry. The next week, a patient came requesting treatment for the discoloration of her teeth. After an examination and consultation, we offered the bleaching option. The patient agreed, and we proceeded to make a custom mouthguard and start the process. We were amazed and excited when she returned several weeks later with whiter natural-looking teeth! It was as close to a miracle as I have seen using a dental technique. Without having to cut the teeth, remove her God-given enamel, and cover the tooth with a dental material, we had successfully improved her smile. And at a fraction of the cost of the other options! Also, she still had all the other options remaining if bleaching had not been successful.

Well, as they say, the rest is history. Harald and I wrote the first article in the world describing this technique. We called the technique Nightguard Vital bleaching, since the patient slept in the mouthguard with the peroxide material at night. The article was accepted for publication in an international dental journal for March 1989. God had blessed me with a technique that revolutionized dentistry as we know it, and a good friend who was a gifted writer, speaker, and nationally-known esthetic dentist to give validity to the technique. We both individually and collectively have continued research and publications, along with many other dental students and faculty members, on many of the variations and applications of the technique. Always for me, it was with the assurance that God had brought this technique into my life and the technique was a good one.

This bleaching technique has proven to be the most cost-effective, dramatic, simple, safe technique a dentist can offer to a patient to improve their smile. Bleaching does not just change their smile, but can change their entire personality and self concept. From ten-year old children who are being teased about the discolorations on their teeth at school, to smokers who have stopped smoking and want to erase the years of staining, to older persons who look young except for their discolored teeth, this bleaching technique has been a rewarding service for both dentists and their patients. Many products have entered the market as a spin-off of this technique, such as the peroxide toothpastes and over-the-counter bleaching products. However, none can match the ease, success, and safety of

Nightguard vital bleaching. This technique is also described as dentist-prescribed, home-applied bleaching with a 10% carbamide peroxide solution in a custom-fitted tray. An entire industry has been spawned on this technique.

Now the rest of the promotion and tenure story: The publication of the bleaching article came prior to the promotion and tenure deadline, so I had a major publication to my credit. Shortly after the article's publication, I received a call from a company who made a similar product offering me an unrestricted grant to continue my research in bleaching, also before the tenure deadline. Thanks to God's miracle, the article and the grant money, I received both my promotion and tenure. It was not by my works, but by the grace of God. Not through my wisdom, but through the guidance of and obedience to the Holy Spirit, and direction from God's Word, the Bible. It came through trusting and obeying God.

The next time you see someone with a beautiful smile, and they tell you that their dentist bleached their teeth, remember God's part in this bleaching treatment. Maybe this means that God loves to see a beautiful smile on His children. So whether your smile is a result of bleaching your teeth or otherwise, keep smiling as you trust and obey the Lord.

In Christ

Dr. Van B. Haywood  
Augusta, GA.

P.S. After surrendering my tenure and leaving North Carolina in 1993 to move home to be closer to my family, God has again blessed me with promotion to Professor and tenure at Georgia. Also published is the first article in the world on bleaching tetracycline teeth with this technique over extended time (6 months) and using potassium nitrate for sensitivity. VBH