

MANNA

ISSUE 57 | October–December 2008 | **Christians in the Community**

Thanksgiving • Social Justice and Christianity • Overcoming Leukemia with God

“The goal of Manna is to inspire believers to live an active faith through mutual encouragement and the study of biblical truths.”

Dear Reader,

With the recent economic downturn we all face many difficulties. Many people are getting laid off, losing their income, and using up their savings. Those who still have jobs are seeing reduced paychecks and shrinking benefits.

A natural response to these problems is to turn to God, because we know that He is the greatest source of comfort during times of distress. He does not give us more than we can bear, but refines us through trials.

While knowing this can be a large step away from understanding and submitting, we can always take heart from the experiences of other members. From God's guidance through a period of doubt, to overcoming illness, to making a difficult career choice, the articles in this issue show the great love of God.

When we trust in Him with all our heart and rely on Him, we will see our relationship with Him grow and our faith strengthen.

THE EDITOR

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Christians in the Community

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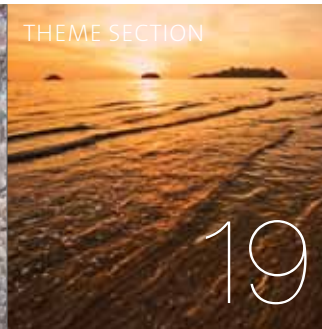


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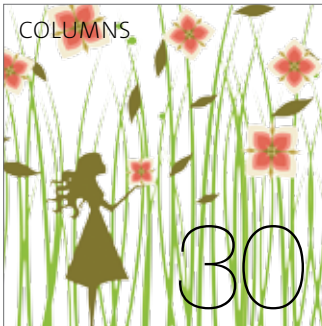
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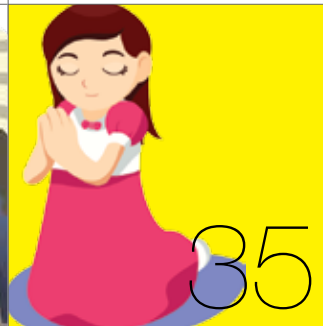
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The Golden Boat

Sarah Pai—Cerritos, California, USA



I never planned on moving half way around the world, away from my family and friends. But through the guidance of God, I left Taiwan and came to the US, where I grew closer to Him and strengthened my faith.

TURNING AWAY FROM GOD

After I graduated from university, I worked for a few years as a kindergarten teacher. I enjoyed that job, but, by the exceptional arrangement of God, I was led to the path of studying abroad to obtain a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

I started to look for schools in the US that offered such programs, and I was determined to attend a school that was close to a True Jesus Church. I found only one university that fit my criteria. But despite my diligent studying, I was not able to achieve the necessary test scores to be accepted into the program at that school. My only choice was to go to Arkansas Tech University.

In August 2005, I arrived in Arkansas where I decided to trust God and enjoy my time in the US. I thought it was possible that God brought me here to spread the gospel since there were no True Jesus Church members living there. However, I didn't have the courage to share my faith with my friends.

I made many friends who were also Chinese and furthering their education in Arkansas, and they seemed to love and respect me. Whenever I was asked to be the mediator during their disagreements, I prayed for God's help and He amazingly let those matters resolve smoothly.

I was always invited wherever my friends went: star-gazing, shopping, and later on even going to bars. The only thing I insisted on was keeping the Sabbath; however, my eyes and heart gradually could not genuinely turn to God.

Things went on like this until the end of the first semester. One day I found myself walking to and from school alone. All of a sudden, those who I had thought

were my friends stopped talking to me. In loneliness, I tried to seek God, and it was at that moment that I realized how far away from Him I had gone.

This isolation from my friends was a wake-up call to me, and I was determined to draw closer to God. But because there were no other True Jesus Church members near me, I started to look for other Christians and churches to fulfill my spiritual needs.

TRYING TO DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

In December 2005, I was introduced to a family that also believed in keeping the Sabbath. After I spent some time talking to them, I found out their beliefs were similar to the doctrines of the True Jesus Church, so I joined the Bible studies and Sabbath worship services at their church.

They observed Sabbath from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday, but they appeared to be even more devoted than the True Jesus Church. They kept all of the festivals described in the Old

Testament, such as Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

They believed in speaking in tongues through the presence of the Holy Spirit, but they practiced that only at home and not in the church because they believed that it wouldn't benefit others if nobody could understand what they were saying.

Whenever I had questions, they turned very quickly to Bible passages to support their beliefs. At the time, I didn't have much time to study the Bible on my own so I gradually believed some of the things they taught. I even tried not to eat "unclean" food (such as pork, shrimp, and ham) in order to please God.

Although I had grown up in the True Jesus Church religious education system and had been involved in teaching religious education since I was in high school, I started to question my faith when I was in Arkansas. I wondered why the True Jesus Church considers itself to be the only true church that will be saved and didn't understand why those who were very devoted to loving God and man couldn't be saved.

However, no matter how many questions I had and no matter how much I doubted the doctrines of our church, there was one thing I deeply believed—that God is the most wonderful Counselor who will eventually give me all the answers.

RECEIVING ANSWERS FROM GOD

I had already booked my flight back to Taiwan before I completed my degree, thinking that I would start working once I got back. However, one month before school ended, one of my friends suggested that I apply for Optional Practical Training. If I was accepted, I would be able to work in the US for one year while still on a student visa. After considering her suggestion for two weeks, I decided to apply. My application was approved, so instead of going back to Taiwan I stayed to look for a job.

Some people told me that it would be

No matter how many questions I had and no matter how much I doubted the doctrines of our church, there was one thing I deeply believed—that God is the most wonderful Counselor who will eventually give me all the answers.

very difficult to find a job in Arkansas. But I found a job at a private school after looking only for one afternoon, and I was hired to begin working once I came back from my vacation. All of my friends there were very amazed.

During my vacation, I traveled across the country, finally flying from New York to Southern California to attend the National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS). Although the deadline for registration had passed, I decided to attend as a full-time auditor. I arrived two weeks before NYTS started.

Because I had so many questions about my faith and beliefs, I knelt down to pray every morning and afternoon. Since there were assignments for the participants before the seminar began, I started to really study the Bible. I had so many questions about Christianity that I began keeping a list, and I recorded the verses I found in the Bible that answered my questions. After I told the resident pastor that I had been joining services at another church, he helped me answer some of my questions.

One week later, a sister invited me to stay at her house before NYTS began. I tried to spend more time in prayer to ask for God's help in answering my questions. After praying longer and reading the Bible more, the answers were revealed little by little each day, and I realized that some of the teachings from the church I had been attending in Arkansas were wrong.

One Wednesday night after service I truly acknowledged the existence of God.

I felt at peace and without any doubt as I prayed and went to bed. That night I had a very vivid dream.

THE GOLDEN BOAT

My roommates in Arkansas, Rose and Emily, were standing with me on the roof of a building that was taller than the other buildings around it. I heard them exclaim in surprise when they looked up at the sky. When I looked up, I saw a golden dot. It was quite small but got bigger as it descended. Suddenly it became a golden boat. I couldn't look directly at it for a long time because it was shining so brightly, but I could see that there was a cross carved on its side.

When the golden boat came close, it suddenly became a gray cement building with a cross on the roof. There were twelve windows, and a person stood at each one. In one of the windows on the left, there was a silver basin and a white towel, so it seemed like it was a dormitory.

All of the people who stood at the windows smiled and waved affectionately at me, and I also smiled and waved back at them. Slowly, the boat ascended and moved further to the left, where it stopped moving. Even though it was far from us, we could still see it suspended in midair.

Rose came over and handed me a stack of paper and asked me to have all the people in the golden boat take a survey. We were no longer on the roof but in a room that had no ceiling. I agreed right away, but looking at the boat floating so far away, I wondered how I could send the paper there. I couldn't fly, and there was no way to make it across the sky.

I put the paper on a window ledge next to me and knelt down to pray, facing that window. After five minutes of prayer, the pages were lifted into the air and flew in a continuous curve from the ledge to the golden boat.

A little while later, the papers flew back one at a time, forming a stack on my bed. After all the papers were back, I decided to take a look at the responses. On

TESTIMONY

each sheet, there were several questions with lines provided below each one for answers.

The first survey I looked at answered each question fully, using up all the provided space. I thought this must have been completed by one of our devoted church members. However, the second one I saw appeared to be completed by a person who either didn't care about the questions or didn't know the answers, since most of the answers were either "Yes" or "No," and the questions requiring further explanation were not answered.

As I was still looking at the surveys, the dream suddenly ended.

PEACE THROUGH PRAYER

When I woke up the next morning, I sat up, my heart racing, because the dream seemed so real. I still remembered it very vividly, and I was shocked at what had taken place, but I didn't understand what it meant. Although it didn't make much sense, I didn't spend time analyzing it or thinking about it.

Later that day, I was in the car with some church members on the way to Bible study when one of the sisters tapped my shoulder and said, "Look at the sky." We saw a boat-shaped cloud with a cross and a person sitting in that boat. We were all amazed by the scene, but I didn't tell them about my dream.

Over the next few days, I forgot about the golden boat. That Sunday, NYTS began and I enjoyed my time there, learning about the Bible and being a part of the wonderful fellowship with brothers and sisters. We encouraged each other to pray for one another. I tasted the sweetness of drawing close to God, and my heart gradually grew joyful.

One of the things that I spent much time in prayer over was my faith—if I moved to California, it would be much easier to attend services and maintain my faith. However, if I went back to Arkansas, I would be able to spread the gospel to my friends and they could possibly be saved.

In my prayers, I felt that going back to Arkansas was the right choice, but I knew that my faith would be tested.

During one prayer, I shed tears as I asked God to help me stay strong and faithful to Him. Suddenly, my sorrow and worries disappeared, and I felt calm and peaceful when I heard a voice say, "You are my child." I knew at that moment that God would take care of me in Arkansas.

UNDERSTANDING MY DREAM

Although some of my questions were answered during the time I was in Southern California, I still did not have answers to the others. However, by the grace of God, the answers came to me whenever I turned to the Bible during NYTS.

Finally, I had only one question left: Why is True Jesus Church the only church that will be saved? I prayed very hard over this question and told God that I wouldn't



know how to continue in my faith if I didn't receive an answer from Him.

The end of NYTS drew near, but my question was still unanswered. During one of the last prayer sessions, I was again asking for an answer. While I was praying this way, the golden boat from my dream flashed into my mind.

All of a sudden, I understood what that dream meant. The boat represents the True Jesus Church, and the gold represents the pure and true gospel that we preach. Like Noah's ark, only the people on the boat were saved. The survey responses show that salvation does not depend on knowledge, ability, or devotion to God and man but on faith. Those who believe and receive baptism in the True Jesus Church are saved, whether they answered the survey fully or not.

God gave me the answer to the question for which I had been praying: The True Jesus Church is the only church that will be saved because she is the only church with the complete truth.

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GOD'S PLAN

After NYTS ended, I went back to Arkansas. I first worked at a nursery school, taking care of children around eighteen to twenty-four months old. Although I enjoyed that job, I quit after one month because the school couldn't help me obtain a work visa.

One day I received a phone call asking me to be a substitute teacher. This was unexpected because it had been two months since I had applied for the job, and I had never been asked to substitute.

After that first substitute teaching job, I was often called to substitute for classes from kindergarten to the twelfth grade.

My uncle called me in October to see if I would attend a student spiritual convocation (SSC) in Dallas at the end of December. He also mentioned that he thought it would be good for me if I moved so that I could live closer to other members of the True Jesus Church.

I did not like the idea of moving to another place because I felt that everything in my life was going well. During one prayer, I understood that I needed to submit and move, but at the same time my heart was crying, "What about the possibility of spreading the gospel in Arkansas?" It was still difficult to let go of that opportunity.

Since I had not yet finalized my plans for moving, I used the time I had left in Arkansas to repay the love of God and all of the people who had been kind to me. One of the things I did over the next few months was to give rides to some students who did not have a car. Some of them asked me how I was so blessed as to have a job, and I shared how God was the one who had given me everything.

Through God's grace, four of these students joined SSC in Dallas with me, and one of them received the Holy Spirit. She eventually received baptism after she completed her studies in the US. I realized then that God had plans that were beyond my understanding and that I shouldn't worry so much about leaving Arkansas and the chance to spread the gospel there.

Looking back, my heart is filled with thankfulness to God for how He led me through the past few years in America. When I remember how I was constantly around worldly friends and later worshipped with the church that I thought was identical to the True Jesus Church, I realize that, without God's help, I would have been too far from the

precious golden boat of His only saved church.

As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:5,

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.

I understand now that God's power and guidance are more than what we can imagine. And His work is being accomplished step by step around the world, even without our awareness.

Some day our stories may be forgotten, but the story of God is never-ending. I hope that we can continue to pray for the holy work in remote areas and spread the gospel wherever we go. May all the glory be to our Lord. ★

Overcoming Leukemia with God

Wendy Leacock—Leicester, UK



IN THE BEGINNING

There are some people who visit the doctor for little ailments or even go to the hospital for cuts and bruises. I am not one of these people. I cannot even remember the last time I went to see a doctor or even the last time I went to the hospital (apart from giving birth to my son).

But during the latter part of 2007, I was constantly falling ill—having colds, feeling under the weather, and not being able to fully recover. I also suffered from recurring mouth ulcers, which were very painful and took a long time to heal. During those months, I felt tired and lethargic all the time. Because of the mouth ulcers, I was not able to eat properly and therefore gradually lost weight.

I have a young family, so I did not really think anything of these symptoms—I thought that I was just getting tired from working and looking after my small son. My family, church members, and even colleagues at work became very worried about my weight loss and asked me

to have a blood test to determine the underlying problem.

Towards the end of November, I went to my GP for a blood test. The next day the hospital rang to tell me the results of the blood test, saying that my white blood cell count was a bit low and that I was also a bit anemic, so they asked me to go in for further tests. At the hospital, the doctors gave me another blood test and I was sent home.

The hospital rang me the following day saying that the results from the blood test were the same as before and they wanted me to have a bone marrow aspirate to determine what was wrong with me. Bone marrow aspiration is the removal of a sample of bone marrow fluid, which can be looked at under the microscope or tested in other ways.

A few days after having the bone marrow aspirate done, I received a call from the hospital. The doctor asked me to come to the hospital the next day, preferably accompanied by someone,

to receive the results of the tests. After hearing this, my heart felt very heavy and troubled because deep down I knew it must be something serious. My husband and I knelt down to pray, and we asked God to give us peace and comfort so that we would be able to accept whatever results the doctor had.

THE FATEFUL NEWS

On December 1, 2007, a Sabbath day, I was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. Normally, blood cells are made in the bone marrow in an orderly and controlled way. In acute myeloid leukemia (AML), this process is out of control and many abnormal leukemia cells are made. These cells are immature and aren't able to develop into normal functioning blood cells.

The immature cells fill up the bone marrow, taking up space that is needed to make normal blood cells. Some leukemia cells “spill over” into the blood and circulate around the body in the

bloodstream. These leukemia cells are not mature and thus do not work properly. This leads to an increased risk of infection as well as symptoms such as anemia and bruising caused by fewer healthy red blood cells and platelets being made.

When the consultant gave my husband and me the news, I really didn't know what to think. I just felt numb and thought, "This is not happening to me." Although she was talking to me, part of me did not want to believe the news.

She informed me that I would need to undergo chemotherapy and would have to stay in the hospital for a few months. I told her that it would be difficult as my little boy was only one and a half years old, but she told me that my husband would have to look after the family. I was not to worry about this and should concentrate on getting well.

As a mother and wife, it was difficult to stop worrying, so I suggested that my husband and son move in temporarily with my parents to give each other support and stability for my son. The consultant told me that I would need to stay in the hospital that same day. I informed her that I would return after I had been to church for Sabbath.

This life-changing experience reminds me how fragile life is. I want to grasp hold of the opportunity to work more for God and repay His love, grace, and mercy to me and my family.

We returned home to pack and also to break the news to my parents, which I was dreading. Thank God they both took it very well and were very calm, saying that everything is in God's hands. Their attitude comforted me a great deal.

An announcement was made after Sabbath service regarding my illness,

but miraculously my husband and I were the ones comforting members who were saddened by this news. I felt a sense of calm in my heart and told some sisters not to worry and that I was in God's hands. At that moment in time, I really felt God giving me and my husband strength in order to comfort the brethren. God gave me an inner peace to face up to reality. Negative thoughts never crossed my mind.

MY JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

I started chemotherapy on December 3 and stayed in the hospital for approximately four weeks. During this time, because of my weight loss, a feeding tube, which went down from my nose to my stomach, was inserted to ensure that I had sufficient caloric intake. By the end of the four weeks, I had regained my weight and was allowed home to rest before the next phase of treatment.

In total I have received four courses of chemotherapy, and each time God has been merciful and gracious to me. The most common side effects to chemotherapy are hair loss, nausea, and vomiting. Apart from losing my hair, I did not suffer from any other side effects, which made my treatment smoother and more bearable.

My stay in the hospital was a very trying experience. I had to stay for up to four to five weeks at a time whilst undergoing treatment and waiting for recovery before I was allowed home. This was truly a test of faith and patience. To pass the time, I would read the Bible and sing hymns. Singing hymns always lifted my spirit and made my heart joyful.

My biggest concern throughout this time was the welfare of my little boy and how he would cope without me. Looking back, my son had always been a contented, happy child. When I became ill, I understood that God knew what lay ahead of me, so He gave my husband and me a son who would not make us worry.

When I was in the hospital, he would

happily come and visit me and would be calm when saying goodbye to me. At home he sometimes asked for me, but, when told "Mummy is in the hospital," he would be fine and did not make a fuss. This gave me peace knowing that my son was all right without me. Whenever I was allowed home to rest between treatments, my son would grasp hold of the opportunity and sit and tell me everything (in his own babble). I truly give thanks to God for such an amazing little boy.

During those few months of chemotherapy, I received many well wishes and cards from brethren all over the world. I was and still am deeply touched by the intercessory prayers that brethren have made on my and my family's behalf. These prayers gave us the strength and comfort to overcome this illness. I ask that God remember all your love.

I have completed my chemotherapies and am resting at home to regain my strength and energy. I am now fully recovered, and my blood results have all returned to their normal levels. I have monthly clinic appointments at the hospital where they take blood tests, and the consultant checks on how I am doing. They will continue to monitor me for about two years.

This life-changing experience reminds me how fragile life is. I want to grasp hold of the opportunity to work more for God and repay His love, grace, and mercy to me and my family.

God has shown me such merciful grace that I cannot but share this wonderful testimony with brethren. I have once again strengthened my relationship with God. I pray that I will not waste this new life that I have been given. Please continue to pray for me and my family.

May all glory be unto His holy name. Amen. ★



Now My Eyes Have Seen God

Olivier Djann—Sung Shan, Taiwan

Life is full of unforeseen events. Born and educated in France, I never imagined that I would one day move to Taiwan and marry someone I met there. I thought even less of becoming a Christian and a member of the True Jesus Church.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

My father is Jewish and my mother is Catholic, but they are both non-practicing. So when I was still a child, they decided that I could choose my own religion. However, religious belief always remained distant for me, and I had no interest in it.

It was my wife who first believed and was baptized in True Jesus Church. She tried to bring me to the church but was unsuccessful because I felt that I did not need religion.

I thought that it was good that she was happy with the church, but I wanted her to leave me out of it. My wife therefore attended services at Sung Shan Church without me.

One Sabbath after the birth of our

daughter, my wife needed my help to bring the stroller and other baby necessities to the church. I agreed to help her, but told her that I would only go to the door of the building; I wasn't going to go inside.

But once we got to the door, I saw that she would not be able to manage everything alone, so I helped her bring the stroller up the stairs into the church. I purposely stayed silent and didn't speak to anyone. However, God touched me through my weak point: vision.

I am a professional photographer, and I love to observe the world around me. Once I was in the church, I could keep my mouth shut, indifferent to the words spoken around me, but I could not walk with my eyes closed. I was touched to see the happy faces of the brothers and sisters, which were so different from those of the outside world.

I even saw a radiant face like that of an angel in a classical painting. I wondered, "How can these people be so joyful when life is sometimes so painful?" I

didn't believe in God that day, but a crack appeared in the wall that I had built around my heart. God had weakened the wall through this experience in church, and the crack would continue to widen in the following months.

THE KEY TO MY GROWTH

Of all the True Jesus Church locations in Taiwan, Sung Shan probably has the greatest number of brothers and sisters who speak French or have studied in France.

I had the opportunity to meet a pastor who had studied French in college, and we therefore organized a Bible study group in French at Sung Shan. I asked questions about the Bible, and the preacher was able to practice the language when answering my questions.

But I still had a problem because I refused to kneel down and pray; I did not want to feel like I was inferior to a master.

One evening, I went to service with my wife and stayed in the back of the chapel,

as I usually did, not participating very much in anything.

I watched from my seat as the brothers and sisters knelt down to pray at the end of the service. Suddenly, God spoke to me for the first time. He said, "You can spend your whole life sitting in the back of the chapel." In other words, one day I would have to take the first step toward building my faith.

From that moment on, I started to reflect on my situation. I asked myself, "Why did God take a Parisian to Taiwan to live ten minutes from the true church? If I had stayed in France, I would never have had the chance to meet or know God."

It was then that I started to pray, although without much conviction. A few weeks later, I decided that I was going to go to the front of the chapel to pray. During that prayer, I felt a breeze through my hair, and I was very joyful and wanted to laugh. But mostly I felt that I was at home.

I realized that God wasn't a stranger, as I had believed, but that He was like a friend whom I hadn't seen for a long time because I never invited him over, even

I wish and hope that everyone can see God with their own eyes and feel Him. Knowing God and drawing closer to Him is the most beautiful adventure a human being can have.

though he lives nearby. I also had this impression, that our life is like a train that passes through many stations, and the problem is that we do not know at which station it will stop.

That evening I had the conviction that the True Jesus Church was the station where I had to stop at, and, most important of all, I knew that I had to persevere in prayer. Prayer was the key to my growth.

THE DOOR TO UNDERSTANDING

One evening, when I was at home, I heard God speak to me. He said, "Now you need to think about baptism." And that was all He said. So the next day I went to church and told the brothers and sisters that I wanted to receive baptism. They were happy for me and congratulated me, but one sister asked me a very good question: "Why?"

I was surprised by the question because I simply wanted to be baptized. I had an urge to get baptized, and that was my reason; I had no logical explanation. On the other hand, the question was reasonable because baptism is an important sacrament that should not be taken lightly. I felt a bit upset when I went home because I was bothered by that question.

That night God gave me a very clear answer to the sister's question. While I was asleep, God told me in a dream, "Be baptized. Baptism is the door, and when you pass through it you will understand everything."

I decided to receive baptism a few months later at the October 2003 spiritual convocation. During the convocation, I

again went up to the front to pray. I had another strong impression, as interesting as the one from my first time praying in the front, but not as peaceful. I felt like I was surrounded by heavy fog and was struggling hard to approach a dim light far away. It was difficult to bear the darkness, and I wanted to get out.

After the prayer ended, the preacher told me I had received the Holy Spirit. At first I was very surprised and I told myself, "So this is how one receives the Holy

Spirit." I was quite disappointed, because everything I had heard from others about receiving the Holy Spirit was very positive and very joyful. But I came to understand that this was only the beginning of my experiences with the Holy Spirit.

WELCOMED BY GOD

Two days after my baptism, I told myself, "Now that you are a newly baptized person you need to form good habits." So I decided to start praying every morning before starting work. After the prayer, I turned on my computer and I saw a vision—it was like having a dream, but I was not asleep. I was in my house in Taipei, and someone rang the doorbell. I opened the door and saw a Caucasian man about forty years old standing in front of me. He asked me if he could enter my house.

I let him in, and even though I had never met him before, I knew that he was my paternal grandfather. Although he had passed away before I was born, I recognized him from the photographs of him in my father's office.

After we talked for a while, he told me that he had to leave. I asked him, "Can I give you a hug?" He said, "Of course, my son." I began to cry, and I saw myself shrinking in height as he became very tall. He held me in his arms, and I felt peace and immense joy.

For me, God is like my grandfather—very loving and very protective. He welcomed me not only as a child but also as a lost sheep.

Since my baptism in the True Jesus Church, I feel like I have experienced this verse from Job 42:5, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (NIV).

I wish and hope that everyone can see God with their own eyes and feel Him. Knowing God and drawing closer to Him is the most beautiful adventure a human being can have. I can see how my life is now more peaceful and bright. May all glory and thanks be unto God. ★

How to Sustain Community Outreach Events



For the past eight years, Queens Church in the USA has been active in evangelizing through street fairs. In New York City, there are multiple street fairs every weekend from April to October where vendors set up booths to sell merchandise or food. At least once a year Queens Church joins a street fair to introduce True Jesus Church to the hundreds of people who walk through.

From our experiences in this outreach work, we have learned much on what to do and how to keep this work going.

Have a Goal

Our purpose is to introduce our church to others so that they begin to study the truth with us and eventually receive baptism. So we try to participate in street fairs that are close to our spiritual convocations and evangelical services. We want to keep in contact with anyone who shows interest in our church, so we make sure that we have members who will be in charge of calling those who want further information.

Be Aware

Each time we take part in street fairs, we have to find out which one we can join and then take care of logistics. For every street fair, we have to make sure that we follow all the rules and procedures that have been set up. (This is true for all outreach activities, but especially for the ones that do not take place on church property.)

For example, there is the matter of knowing who is sponsoring the street fair. The sponsor or theme of the street fair could affect who attends the street fair. If we are aware of this beforehand, we can prepare early for these circumstances or choose a different fair to join.

Plan Ahead

In the weeks leading up to the street fair, we check our supplies of flyers and other church publications to ensure that we will have enough to pass out. We also start to prepare all the members who will participate in how to approach people to hand out flyers, simple questions they can ask to spark interest, and how to answer questions that are commonly asked.

It's a good idea to role-play and practice beforehand so that everyone involved feels comfortable performing the tasks that need to be done.

Be Proactive

It is difficult to gather the courage to initiate conversations with strangers, but with practice it gets easier. One of the most important factors in preparation is prayer, both before the event and right before leaving for the street fair. It is essential to have the guidance and power of God with us.

When we are at the street fair, we take turns standing in front of the booth and passing out flyers. We ask passers-by if they have heard of the Holy Spirit, or if they would like to believe in Jesus. If they show interest, we talk to them and take down their contact information. And if they ask more questions, we bring them back to the booth so that the members there can answer them.

Those who sit in the booth also take the initiative and let people know that the publications in our booth are free and conversations start from there. It is important to be well-versed in the Bible and our basic beliefs in order to answer questions or engage in longer conversations with those who stop and are interested in hearing more about the Bible or our church.

It is a great blessing to share the gospel with others. Although participating in street fairs is only one of the many ways we can evangelize, this yearly event has helped us realize what a special position we are in as children of God, and we want to continue to preach because we are moved by the joy we feel when we do this. It is wonderful to see the fruit of our labor when we contact people from the street fair and they come to church.

Questions and Answers



What about those good pagans who have never heard of Christ? Can a person be saved through other means?

Even those who have not heard of the gospel are without excuse “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them” through His creation (Rom 1:18-23). Not only so, God’s law is written in their hearts, and God will judge the secrets of men on this basis (Rom 2:15, 16).

God rewards eternal life to those “who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Rom 2:6-11).

The Bible clearly states that Christ is the only Savior: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12); “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn 14:6). We are saved by the atoning work of Christ, who brought God’s grace and reconciliation to the world.

Although we do not know exactly how God will judge those who never heard of the gospel, we do know that God’s judgment is always just. He demands from everyone according to what they have been given (Lk 12:48).

We do not need to know how God will judge the pagans. Each person will have to be accountable to God on an individual basis. Instead of speculating about the salvation of the pagans, we need to be sure that we respond to the gospel we have heard (Heb 2:1-4).

Aren’t we saved the moment we believe and confess Christ (Eph 1:13)? Why do we have to partake of the sacraments? They are only symbolic of salvation that we have already received and have no effect.

In Ephesians 1:13, Paul’s message to the church may seem to suggest that a person is already in Christ the moment he intellectually agrees with the gospel. “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). It would be a mistake to interpret “heard” or “believed” as only intellectual agreement that occurred at a specific point in time. The hearing and believing must include accepting Christ, confessing of sin, repentance, receiving the sacraments, and entrusting one’s whole life to the gospel, all of which make up “the word of truth.” If Paul’s words referred to a moment in time, then he would be literally saying that a believer is included in Christ the second he hears a Christian message for the first time in his life (in this case, even before intellectual agreement). His confession of sin and repentance have no effect. They are only symbolic of the salvation he has received. Such interpretation is not only out of context, but also without biblical support.

Sacraments are not just symbols. God works through them to bring us salvation when we receive them with faith.

The saving effects of the sacraments are clearly stated by the Lord Himself. We cannot reduce them to mere symbols or even deny their necessity just because we do not understand how God’s saving effect can take place through some outward actions. If a person believes that God raised Christ from the dead but does not believe that he can receive a new life through baptism, he doesn’t qualify as a true believer. If a person confesses that Jesus is Lord but rejects footwashing, he would be like those who call “Lord, Lord” but do not do what He says (see Lk 6:46). True belief in the heart would encompass acceptance of the sacraments, and that is the belief that justifies. True confession would encompass receiving the sacraments in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that is the confession that saves.

Facts, Stats and **Syntax**



Polls and Statistics

An estimated **79 million** Bibles are distributed each year.

1.87 billion people, or **28%** of the world's population, have not heard of Jesus.

Taken from <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/globalchristianity/resources.php>

Word Study

The word “Bible” comes from the Greek words *ta biblia*, which mean “the books.” However, reading the Bible is not like reading any other collection of 66 books. The name “Bible” is used to imply that it is the collection of books, the books we really should read, because they are the right books.

Did You Know?

There are five chapters in the Book of Lamentations, and the first four chapters are acrostic. This means each verse or set of verses begins with subsequent letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters so the chapters begin with the first letter, Aleph (א), and ends in the last letter, Tav (ת).

Lessons Learned from My Trip to Korea

Alice Jung—El Monte, California, USA



On the plane home after four extremely uplifting weeks in Korea, my heart stirs with all kinds of emotions. Exhausted, I close my eyes in an attempt to get some rest, but my mind continues to replay all of the memorable scenes from our time in this part of Asia.

Not only did this trip expand my appreciation for another culture, but most importantly, as I slowly put all that we encountered into perspective, it helped me gain new insights and gave me moving reminders as a child of God.

Ever since we got married more than fourteen years ago, my husband, TJ, and I talked about visiting Korea one day. TJ, or Pastor Tae-Hoon Jung, often talked about his homeland with much affection. Most of all, he missed the churches where he grew up.

The chance finally came when the Korea General Assembly invited TJ and his father,

Elder Jung, to help with the 2007 Spring spiritual convocations at four different churches in the cities of Seoul and Busan. Some of TJ's relatives in Korea asked that he bring his entire family during the trip so that they could meet us.

We were thrilled, especially our children Anna and Jesse, as we prepared for the long journey to the other side of the globe. It would be our children's and my first trip to Asia, and about sixteen years since the last time TJ was in Korea.

FRAGRANT SACRIFICES

[L]ove one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. (Rom 12:10, RSV)

I doubt there was actually a competition among the members in showing honor to us, but we could see how the loving

brothers and sisters did try to “outdo one another” in the way they received us. Wherever we went, we knew right away that we were the special guests and treated with the best that they had. Of course, it was overwhelming to all of us.

At first, I thought that it was kind of wasteful to pamper us with so much good food and gifts. I reasoned that it was probably because of Elder Jung. Before relocating to the US, Elder Jung had been the resident minister at one of the churches we visited and a long-time servant in our churches in Korea.

But someone told me that the churches treated all visiting guests with special honor. I soon learned from TJ that it is an insult to refuse your host's kindness. Slowly, our family learned to receive everyone's generosity with grace and thankfulness.

As I pondered upon the love we received



so bountifully from all the members, I came to this conclusion: The extravagant treatment that our Korean brethren showered upon us reminded me of the alabaster jar of oil that Mary so willingly poured upon the body of Jesus.

In a similar manner, wanting to take their chance in showing their love to the body of Christ, our brothers and sisters poured out their best. The fragrance of their sacrifice warms my heart every time I remember them. They inspire and encourage me to also “outdo one another in showing honor” the next time God gives me a chance.

SOAK IN THE JOY OF THE LORD

*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!*

During that moment of praise and worship, they seemed to have no worries, no troubles, no stress, and no concerns of the world. It was a pure expression of enjoying the presence of our Lord.

*Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the
LORD! (Ps 98:4-6, RSV)*

I have learned that Koreans are much more musical than other Asians. Not only do they love to listen, sing, and play instruments, most of them are very gifted at it, too. Just from my own observation of the two cultures that I know best, Korean and Chinese, the former are more free in expressing themselves while the latter are more reserved.

As a result, I witnessed and experienced the uplifting effects of such joyful hymnal worship in all of the Korean churches we visited. The members were so exuberant and uninhibited in their praises of the Lord. Their bodies swayed to the slower

rhythms and their hands clapped to the faster beats. They sang as if there was no one else there, and they were simply soaking in the joy of the Lord through the music.

Watching the joyful faces of these Korean members as they sang, I saw how they all appeared to be like little children. During that moment of praise and worship, they seemed to have no worries, no troubles, no stress, and no concerns of the world. It was a pure expression of enjoying the presence of our Lord.

I think that is exactly what Jesus seeks in His children: to find the simple pleasure of being with the Lord in songs that glorify His name, praise all of His wonderful deeds, and give thanks for His saving grace. Music is such a powerful tool to open the window to the soul so that we can connect with the Maker of music.

From now on, I told myself, I want to use every hymnal worship time as the best way to give my Lord all of my adoration, praise, honor, and thanksgiving. I know that Jesus does not care when I sing out of tune. But I know that I can please Him when I sing to Him with my most sincere heart.

RESPECT OUR ELDERS

*Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.
(1 Tim 5:1, 2, RSV)*

Having lived among Koreans for the last fourteen years prepared me and my children for a very old and important tradition that is still practiced in Korea: showing respect to those who are older than oneself. The younger person shows respect by bowing when greeting elders and by using honorifics.

Similar to Japanese, there are at least three different ways to say the same thing in Korean. One way is used when speaking to someone who is older,

another when speaking to peers, and a third way when speaking to someone younger. Obviously, it can be extremely confusing to a foreigner who is not used to the culture. Needless to say, I have made several mistakes over the years.

At first, I thought this old tradition quite bothersome and unnecessary. Slowly, I found it quite nice to have kids bow to me as they greeted me. When we were in Korea, I also observed how young people would always yield to those who were senior to them. It was quite a pleasant departure from the “me-generation” in western culture where children and young people often think of no one but themselves.

I find that most children in the US show little respect even to their own grandparents. I now realize that showing respect and honor to your elders in this way is good training for Christians. Korean culture teaches children from a young age to give regard to others, to show respect, and, directly and indirectly, to learn humility.

The more I think about how Jesus would view this age-old tradition, the more I come to appreciate the idea of showing respect. If we don't even know how to show respect to those close to us, how are we to show respect to our Creator, our Lord, the King of kings who deserves all our honor, praise, and respect?

I am quite pleased to say that after four weeks of practice, my kids have grown to be rather comfortable in showing the proper respect to all those who are older than them. I intend for them to continue this good habit. Of course, this means I will need to set a good example first and remind them constantly until it becomes automatic. May the Lord help me.

REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. (2 Tim 4:2)



One of the privileges of our visit to many of the Korean True Jesus Church locations was to be able to learn about some of their holy work. As most people know, Christianity is very saturated in most parts of the country. It has been very challenging to spread the truth, especially because True Jesus Church is listed as a cult in Korea.

Nevertheless, each local church has to come up with creative ways to reach out to their community and to bring people to church. Three of the churches we visited told us about their community outreach programs:

Pastry-making Classes

At Teban Church there is a brother who is a chef at a large hotel restaurant. This brother uses his talent and skills to teach anyone from the neighborhood who

comes to church how to make different pastries.

We happened to visit when the class was in session, and we saw how easily the church members and the neighbors made friends while kneading and shaping the dough together. At the end, when everyone got to taste the delicious final product that they had put so much effort into, it created a special bond that only good food and friends can bring.

The pastor of Teban Church told us that this was their first time trying the pastry-making class. They plan on having this class once a month so that they can get to know their neighbors. After six months, the church will invite these friends to come for an evangelical event where they will be taught more of the truth and encouraged to pray for the Holy Spirit.

Free Drinks at the Park

There is a large and beautiful park near Incheon Church where the resident pastor likes to jog, often with some church members. They discovered during their runs that the park is flooded with people on weekends, and they thought that it would be a good opportunity for community outreach.

They decided to set up a small table in the park where visitors could get free drinks. Each of the small paper cups that they hand out has imprints of our church information. They hope that this will increase people's awareness of True Jesus Church in that area.

After School Homework Club

Pusan Church is right next to a large elementary school. Two years ago, the pastor and his wife set up an after-school homework club for students. They got to know the students and their parents very quickly. The members helped in every way possible to make these students and their families feel welcome during the club sessions.

Soon after the club started, some of the students began to join Sabbath services and their parents slowly followed. After one year, twenty-seven students and their parents received baptism in that church. Praise and thank God.

I felt encouraged by the efforts of our Korean brothers and sisters in reaching out to the souls in their community, and I thank God that I was able to witness the fruit of their labor. I pray that God will also work among the churches in America so that we may be able to reach out to the lost souls around us.

I truly thank God for this wonderful opportunity to visit Korea and, especially, our churches there. By the end of the fourth week, I felt burdened with a heavy debt—a debt of love from all the brothers and sisters in Korea.

Their generosity and hospitality inspires

Their tradition of showing respect teaches me the importance of training children while they are young so that they may learn to be more humble.

me to be a good hostess the next time the Lord sends someone my way. Their love of singing praises to the Lord encourages me to devote my totality every time I come before my Lord during hymnal worship.

Their tradition of showing respect teaches me the importance of training children while they are young so that they may learn to be more humble. Their creative ways of reaching out to the community shows me that God can work through us when we are willing to use what He has given us and invest our time and effort in the people around us.

I cannot thank God enough for this fruitful experience in Korea. I pray that these important lessons will continue to stir in me and remind me to practice what I have learned from this trip. If God is willing, I am sure that He will bring us back to Korea. ★

English Writers Retreat 2009



June 28 - July 3, 2009
Calgary, Canada



“English Writers Retreat? Oh, but I’m not good at writing.”

The above response is one that I’ve commonly received when recommending EWR to others. But EWR is not about being a good writer. It’s about challenging and furthering our faith by learning and understanding the word of God. It’s about opening our eyes and discovering the hidden treasures in the Bible. It’s about knowing God and helping others to know Him through His word; it’s about becoming a faithful messenger.

Take this opportunity to see how God can inspire the writer in you, and you’ll leave with a renewed sense of appreciation, wonder, and awe toward His word.

– Hain-Lee

Go to <http://events.tjc.org> and follow the link to register.
Registration ends May 31.



Christians in the Community

One of the most difficult aspects of Christianity is reconciling our life on earth with the fact that we are “not of the world” (Jn 17:15). Because we have been sanctified as God’s children, we no longer belong to the world. Yet we must interact with the world every day.

We are a part of the neighborhood, workplace, campus, city, country. It is not possible to ignore what is around us—we must find a way to shine the light of Christ while we contribute to society without being influenced by it.

The theme articles in this issue remind us that opportunities to make a difference in the community around us can be a chance to share our faith with others. They also encourage us on how to maintain our faith while we live in the world. May God guide us as we strive to follow His words.



Social Justice and Christianity

PCC

Angry protestors. Men-hating feminists. Tree-hugging hippies. All too often, these are the images that come to mind when anyone mentions issues related to social justice and equality. The general public often conjures up equally unflattering images whenever the topic of Christianity comes up—Bible-thumping evangelicals, money-hungry televangelists, blind and brainwashed followers, and the like.

So what might a sincere activist and a devout Christian have in common? One is that both are often caricatured and misrepresented in the media due to the extreme views and actions of a few. More importantly, though, the socially conscious and the spiritually minded may share this in common: the desire to do good, to make a positive difference, and to help others.

In the secular world, this concept has been loosely branded as “social justice.” While the term is usually associated with the fields of sociology and community organization, it is increasingly being used in Christian circles.

The specific phrase “social justice” is not mentioned in the Bible. However, in a world where so much abundance exists alongside so much inequity, these topics cannot be ignored by Christians living in an increasingly complex and globalized world.

So if the Bible doesn't talk about social justice specifically, what does it say in regards to issues of justice and equality in our society? What did Jesus say? What did Jesus *do*?

The goal of this article is to move beyond our preconceived notions, to

move beyond what we may have seen, heard, or read third-hand. Instead, we will go directly to the source—the words of God—as we examine how to respond to some of the stark realities in our society today.

Loving others is essential because it is a way of demonstrating our love toward God.

SOCIAL JUSTICE—WHAT IT IS AND WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Before we begin to explore how to fully live out our faith as both heavenly and global citizens, let us first establish a standard definition of the term social justice. Issues related to justice often filter down through academia, activist circles, and religious groups in the form of words such as social equity, equality, peace and justice, human rights, faith-based action, and so on. We will work with the term social justice, as this is currently a popular umbrella term.

Because entire books have been written on the subject, not surprisingly, definitions of the term have varied greatly. We will use the following definition so that we are all on the same page: social justice is the idea that everyone in society should have the same basic rights and opportunities.

What weight does the Bible give to helping others?

Jim Wallis, a prominent Christian activist and author on the topic of social justice and Christianity, often describes how he and a friend once took scissors and an old King James Bible and cut out every verse that had anything to do with peace or justice. When they were finished, they had very little left of the Bible. Wallis and his friend would often bring the Bible to workshops, stressing that one would have a hard time reading the Bible without

emphasizing issues of justice.¹

So what are some of those verses that might fall into this category? One of the most oft-used Scripture references in regards to living out our faith in society is Micah 6:8:

*He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God.*

Here, we see that intentions (“to love mercy”) and actions (“to do justly”) are combined in an effort to obey God via caring for humankind. We are asked to not just passively support such endeavors but to actively take steps to make those endeavors happen. And as we do so, the Bible carefully reminds us to do it all with humility. Instead of being proud of our supposed good deeds, we should view ourselves as dutiful servants simply carrying out the tasks God expects of us.

Jeremiah 22:3 also stresses how God expects us to make a conscious effort to make right what is wrong:

Thus says the Lord: “Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.”

In this passage, God clearly tells us what we should do: execute justice, deliver the plundered, and so on. He also tells us what we shouldn’t do: do no wrong, do no violence, etc. Thus, we can see that the sins of omission, the absence of doing good, and the sins of commission, the act of doing evil, apply to the realm of social justice as well.

While the notion of the wicked being punished for their wrongdoings is not a new concept, we tend to forget that God will also hold in harsh judgment those who do not commit evil but do not do good either. In other words, those who commit

the sins of omission. Matthew chapter 25 explains how God will divide the “sheep” from the “goats,” or those who will receive everlasting life versus those who will receive eternal punishment. Verses 41-46 describe the fate of individuals who neglect to care for the needy:

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.” Then they also will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?” Then He will answer them, saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.” And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Here we see that ministering to the hungry, the sick, and others who are undergoing hardship is not a suggestion but rather a command that affects our salvation. In contrast, those who do provide for others’ basic needs will “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34). This passage highlights that loving others is essential because it is a way of demonstrating our love toward God.

If those who neglect to do good must face the consequences of their inaction, those who willfully perpetuate injustice—sins of commission—must also face the judgment of God. As Isaiah 10:1-3 sternly warns:

*Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees,
Who write misfortune,
Which they have prescribed
To rob the needy of justice,
And to take what is right from the poor of*

*My people,
That widows may be their prey,
And that they may rob the fatherless.
What will you do in the day of punishment,
And in the desolation which will come from afar?
To whom will you flee for help?
And where will you leave your glory?*

As we can see, those who consciously commit acts of evil and rob the needy and the helpless of their basic rights and resources will undoubtedly have to face God's wrath.

Although the threat of God's punishment can serve as a sobering reminder, we should be motivated to help the helpless out of our love for God and humankind rather than out of fear. And if that's not enough of a motivator, we can remind ourselves that the Bible also spells out the reward we will receive when we do good to others.

As it says in Jeremiah 7:5-7:

*For if you thoroughly amend your ways
and your doings, if you thoroughly execute
judgment between a man and his neighbor,
if you do not oppress the stranger, the
fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed
innocent blood in this place, or walk after
other gods to your hurt, then I will cause
you to dwell in this place, in the land that I
gave to your fathers forever and ever.*

SPIRITUAL NEEDS vs. MATERIAL NEEDS?

While there is no question that the Bible commands us to care for the disadvantaged, some may question the logic of giving without getting anything in return. Should we still care for others even if there are no long term effects or results either in their material or spiritual lives? Should we tend to the downtrodden of society only when we have the opportunity to preach the gospel to them or bring them to church?

Using a cost-benefit analysis, investing without returns may seem illogical, even wasteful. In today's modernized societies,

giving without receiving can sound like an outdated practice. However, the Bible states that the wisdom of the world is often foolishness with God; in the end, God's logic trumps human logic.

When Jesus came to earth, He did not only love those who gave Him something in return or who noticeably and immediately changed their ways. In fact, what is so unique about God's love is that He gives of it freely, even when we don't deserve it, even when we take it for granted. Loving others is not easy. Sometimes, it is thankless.

There are some who might contend, though, that caring for someone's spiritual needs is far more important than caring for someone's material needs. The following dilemma then ensues: can or should we merely care for a person's basic physical needs without addressing spiritual issues?

First, we should make it clear that we should not devote our time and energy

only toward making changes to our temporary earthly lives. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mt 16:26). At the same time, we should also note that caring about our material circumstances does not necessitate that our spiritual circumstances are being ignored.

Likewise, 1 John 3:17 focuses on providing for the physical needs of others and illustrates how this in itself proves that God's love abides in us:

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

We are not told to give only if our work is appreciated, only if we see that our efforts have long-lasting impacts, or only if we bring those individuals to Christ. Thus, the act of unconditional giving, void



of any terms or conditions, is what God requires of us.

Therefore, rather than pitting spiritual needs against material needs, we should understand that both are necessary and that emphasizing one shouldn't then negate or neglect the other. When Jesus began His ministry, He stood up in the synagogue on the Sabbath and spoke the following words to an awestruck crowd:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the
Lord." (Lk 4:18, 19)*

Some may interpret this passage quite literally; that is, that Jesus came to preach to the poor, the captives, and the oppressed. Others may take these words in a more figurative sense, understanding that Jesus was speaking to those who were spiritually bound, oppressed, or in need. However, the Bible contains many instances where God's words have both a surface meaning and a deeper spiritual meaning.

As a result, we can take this passage to mean that Jesus was emphasizing both the literal and the figurative, the physical and the spiritual; God anointed Jesus to care for those who were materially and spiritually lacking. The solution to the dilemma posed earlier is therefore not a matter of one need versus another, but rather, reframing the parameters themselves and taking the perspective of both earthly and heavenly needs.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

Now that we have established that serving both spiritual and physical needs is an important biblical principle and command, it is up to us to close the gap between understanding and practice. As

Rather than pitting spiritual needs against material needs, we should understand that both are necessary and that emphasizing one shouldn't then negate or neglect the other.

with many aspects of our faith, we often know the good that we ought to do but seldom actually do it. So, what can and should we do in reality?

A few years ago at my local church, one sister suggested that some of us visit a home that helped senior citizens transition out of homelessness. After some coordination and encouragement, about ten of us cooked dinner for a very gracious and friendly group of septuagenarians and octogenarians.

When the meal was over, we presented a few hymns. Afterward, we all agreed that the experience was truly fulfilling on many levels: we were able to share the love of Christ with others, we were able to bond as a group, and finally, we were exposed to a set of life experiences that we might not come across on a regular basis.

That said, our experience also raised some tough questions: should we make this a one-time visit or should we establish something more consistent? Are our money and time being used "efficiently" on a group of people who might never come to believe, given difficulties with transportation or even ability to retain information?

As is often the case, difficult questions may require even more complex answers. Therefore, we should try to answer these questions on a case-by-case basis depending on each church's individual circumstances, resources, and peoplepower.

More importantly, experience and

know-how should take a back seat to relying on the power and wisdom of God's Holy Spirit.

As Paul advises in 1 Corinthians 2:5, "your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Just as with other types of church work, we should not depend on our own efforts or skills but should put our efforts into prayer. God's work includes things that are done both in and outside of the physical church building, and they all require us to ask for God's abidance before, during, and after we embark upon each of these endeavors.

In our case, we did end up visiting the senior center only once but felt that we were still able to spread God's love both indirectly (serving a meal) and directly (singing hymns), and that was by no means a "waste" of our time.

In contrast, members in the Dallas church have been consistently providing meals for the homeless for the past several years. It all began when a recently baptized member, who was formerly a pastor at another church, encouraged some other members to become involved with the homeless ministry.

Eventually, a group of less than half a dozen members started visiting a homeless shelter on a weekly basis. There, they were able not only to feed and clothe those in need but also offer their counsel, prayers, and in some cases, were even able to preach. Since then, former recipients of the church's volunteer efforts have come to believe and receive baptism.

While God's miraculous design is evident throughout this example, it is not to say that such works will take place without any difficulty. The obstacles we may face when we embark upon efforts related to creating a more just and fair world should by no means be taken as an indication that the work should not continue or that our work is in vain.

All holy work is, in a sense, a spiritual battle. Lest we become discouraged, we can use the difficulties as a humbling

reminder that when we are weak, God can make us strong (2 Cor 12:10). Although we might not see or feel God's presence at the moment, we only need to persevere in heart and in prayer and God will take care of the rest.

CONCLUSION

While God commissions us to actively pursue a more socially just society, we should not take God's commands to a skewed extreme. Caring for the disadvantaged doesn't mean God expects us to quit our jobs, move to a remote country, and set up an orphanage. While we should think globally, we can act locally—that is, in our daily lives.

We do not need a coordinated event to carry out acts of kindness or justice. Whether or not we are officially and collectively representing the church, we are always ambassadors of Christ. Therefore, all of us as individuals can and should act toward a more godly and just society, be it in an office with our co-workers or in an orphanage with small children.

Our church as a whole may still have some ways to go to become consistently involved with volunteer work, but we should not use this as an opportunity to point fingers or criticize others for their seeming lack of compassion or concern. The responsibility to carry out God's commands in this area may fall more easily upon the shoulders of the believers who are better equipped in terms of language and navigating the ways of society and who are no longer recent immigrants.

The earlier waves of immigrants were responsible for laying the foundations of our churches; now that there may be more members who feel that their country of residence is also their home country, more emphasis can be placed on reaching out to the community beyond the confines of our church or home.

However, when trying to improve the condition of those around us, we should also be reminded that we should never

make waves just for the sake of making waves. We know that Jesus often spoke up and took action to carry out what was just. The catch for us is that we need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to help us discern what is just and right in God's eyes. This requires constant spiritual cultivation and renewal.

We must be careful to remember that while we are making efforts to be "wise as serpents" when righting wrongs in society, we must also take care to be "harmless as doves" in our thoughts, speech, and actions as we do so (Mt 10:16).

The opportunities exist in which we can help to make the world around us a more socially just place and where we can shed God's light and even spread His word.

Besides working with the homeless, individuals or groups can become involved in tutoring programs, volunteer construction projects, community clean-ups, walk-a-thons and runs that raise money for a good cause, environmental awareness projects, or prison education programs. The possibilities are truly endless.

So long as we are willing to look, God will open our eyes to see. ★

1. Wallis, Jim. *The Soul of Politics: Beyond "Religious Right" and "Secular Left."* New York, The New Press, 1994. pp.149-151.

Suggestion for further reading:
God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It by Jim Wallis



Participating in the Election Process: an Opportunity to Be Salt and Light

Susan Estrada—Pacifica, California, USA

SHARING GOD'S GOODNESS

Christians are sojourners on earth. We are simply passing through, here only for a time. Some day, we shall leave this tent of a body behind (2 Cor 5:4; 2 Pet 1:13) and go to the place that Jesus has prepared for us (Jn 14:2-4). This is because our true citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20; Jn 17:14).

However, for the time that we are here, our Lord has said that we are to be the salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13, 14; Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34, 35).

Just as salt seasons and preserves, we are to bring God's goodness to the world and preserve against moral decay in our environment. And [a]s the lamp gives light to everyone around it, we are to manifest God's truth and goodness to the people around us and thus be a witness for God.¹

How can you and I live up to such a calling in our corner of the world today?

If you are a citizen of a nation with a democratic form of government, you have many opportunities available to you.² One of the most important rights granted to us is the right to vote.

We have the chance to share God's goodness by the choices we make when we vote. Our government encourages our participation. For example, according to the website of the chief legislative official in the U.S. House of Representatives, it is clearly stated, "U.S. citizens have the right to influence public policy...The right to vote allows citizens to help choose the officials who will determine public policy."³

If we have the right to participate in the affairs of government, then we should view this as a wonderful opportunity to be a witness for God.

JOSEPH AS A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

Government and public policy go all the way back to the Book of Genesis. One example is Joseph. Sold into Egypt as a slave by his brothers, he found himself thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit. However, through extraordinary circumstances, Joseph found himself in the service of Pharaoh.

Joseph was thirty years old when Pharaoh appointed him to the position of prime minister, the highest-ranking public office in all of Egypt. Through this position, Joseph brought God's goodness to the people of his time. Pharaoh believed the Lord was with Joseph so he trusted Joseph to implement public policy that would save his people from starvation and his country from economic ruin.

Pharaoh said to Joseph,

“Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” (Gen 41:39)

Events unfolded in Egypt just as Joseph had said they would. During the seven years of bountiful harvest, Joseph worked with a team of commissioners around the country to prepare for the seven years of famine that were to follow. They collected and set aside 20% of the harvest (Gen 41:46-49).

The famine brought pain and suffering. When the people of Egypt brought their troubles to Pharaoh, he simply told them to go to Joseph. People from other countries came to buy grain from Joseph, including his biological family (Gen 42:1-3).

In those dark days of the famine, Joseph was like a lamp that gave light to everyone around it. He provided immediate relief, and he also helped the country plan for the long term. Joseph manifested God’s truth and goodness to the people around him. Joseph was a faithful witness for the Lord.

NEHEMIAH AS A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

Government and public policy can also be traced to the Book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king of Persia. It was a palace job that came with special privileges most people could only dream about.

Through this position, Nehemiah had the opportunity to help rebuild Jerusalem. One day, the king observed that Nehemiah was not his usual self. The cupbearer confessed the burden of his heart, saying,

“May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?” (Neh 2:3)

The king granted Nehemiah everything he needed for a safe trip. He also provided

the materials Nehemiah would need for his reconstruction efforts once he arrived in Jerusalem (Neh 1:1-2:9).

Appointed governor, Nehemiah created and implemented policies that stopped Jerusalem from falling apart physically, morally, and spiritually. In spite of many obstacles, the reconstruction works were completed in record time.

Nehemiah’s policies brought peace and security back to Jerusalem as well as improved living conditions for the Israelites. Because taxes were high, many Israelites were in debt and those with money were taking advantage of the less fortunate. Nehemiah rebuked the latter and reminded them to fear the Lord. He turned the Israelites back to the Lord so they would know how to love their God and their neighbors.

Nehemiah loved Jerusalem, and he loved the Israelites. Through his leadership and by the example he set, Nehemiah showed God’s people how to live a life that was pleasing to the Lord. He was like salt that seasons and preserves. He brought God’s goodness to that part of the world and preserved it from moral decay (Neh 5:1-18). Nehemiah, too, was a faithful witness for the Lord.

It is the Lord our God who determines what government is in authority at any place in any given time during the course of human history.

CHOOSING TODAY’S PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Joseph and Nehemiah were appointed to public office: Joseph was appointed by the pharaoh of Egypt, and Nehemiah was appointed by the king of Persia. However, in many places around the world today, men and women in public office are there

because the nation’s citizens have voted for them. These public officials become the government in authority.

Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that the government in authority was God’s “minister” (NKJV) or “servant” (NIV). Paul let it be known that the government in authority did not come about by chance. Rather, it is the Lord our God who determines what government is in authority at any place in any given time during the course of human history (Rom 13:1-7; Dan 2:21, 4:17; Jn 19:11).

From our study of the Bible, we also know that it makes no difference to the Lord whether a ruler is a Jew or a Gentile (cf. King Cyrus, Isa 44:28). God, who created the earth and all things in it, is sovereign. He has a plan, and His will always prevails. It was true in Bible times, and it is true today.

In a democratic form of government, citizens have a role—to participate in the election process. They are granted the right to vote for the candidates of their choice to serve in public office. This is not something to ignore or take lightly because public officials create and implement policies that impact our lives. Often, these policies impact our children’s lives as well, and sometimes, the lives of future generations. This applies to any level of government, be it city, county, state, or federal, including your local school board.

So how do we “help choose the officials who will determine public policy”? How do we make wise choices? During campaign season, there is always too much information and misinformation swirling around us.

If you are a registered voter, you may already be familiar with the voter’s guide published by the elections department of your county government. There will also be other guides published by various groups. Campaign materials put together by the candidates and their supporters will come in the mail. You may find their messages staring at you from small yard

signs in your neighborhood or from large billboards along the freeway.

There will be radio and television advertisements. Information may appear as articles in the morning newspapers or as blogs online. Talk shows will fill the air waves. Once in a while, you may even catch sight of a candidate who has come to speak in your town or city to ask for your vote. Last but not least, poll figures, as well as public opinion pieces, will attempt to sway you one way or the other. The wise voter will study all these with interest and objectivity.

CONCLUSION

As followers of Jesus Christ, we make our choices rooted in the teachings of the word of God. We need to remember this because we are engaged in spiritual warfare every day. When we forget, we no longer keep our eyes on Jesus, and we become side-tracked on our walk with the Lord. When we forget, our priorities shift, and we will fail to stand firm on the principles laid out for us in the Bible. When we forget, we are no longer the salt and light of the earth.

The test for us during each election season comes by way of our decision-making process. Are we going to vote for a candidate because this person has promised to deliver on a campaign issue? Are we casting our vote for a certain candidate because everyone we know is voting this way? Are we being persuaded because the pundits seem to be making such a very good argument for the candidate of their choice?

Or do we find ourselves in a dilemma over how to spend our vote? Do we feel our vote would be better spent on another candidate? Are we afraid to look foolish in front of our family and friends? Do we fear that we might be singled out and be laughed at or picked on because we have made our choice based on biblical teachings? Are we conflicted over if or how to explain why we are not voting like everyone in the group?

The outcome of an election is in God's control. Events unfold in this world as they do according to the will of the Lord. As such, we do not need to take the defeat or victory of the candidates for whom we voted for personally. What is important is that we took hold of an opportunity to do our part to shine a light and preserve God's truth through the choices we made.

Finally, according to the word of the Lord, we submit to the people in authority (Rom 13:1; Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13; Mt 22:15-22) and we pray for them (1 Tim 2:1, 2). In this way, we can do our duty to our country as well as be a faithful witness for the Lord.⁴ ★

1. True Jesus Church Bible Study Guide, Matthew, p. 196

2. The U.S. Government's Official Web Portal
<http://usgovinfo.about.com/blinstst.htm>

3. Kids in the House – Learn About Congress
<http://clerkkids.house.gov/congress/index.html>

4. True Jesus Church Bible Study Guide, Thessalonians, Timothy & Titus, pp. 170-171



In the World, not of the World

Bright H

"I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (Jn 17:15, 16)

This is part of the final intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus just before His arrest and consequent crucifixion. Being a prayer immediately prior to our Lord's physical death, it reveals His deepest concern for His disciples. *I do not pray that you should take them out of the world... they are not of the world.*

To be in this world, and yet not of this world—this seemingly paradoxical theme continues to resonate through many a Christian sermon, down the generations.

Jesus is God incarnate. He came from heaven to bring truth and peace. In terms of the authority and fame He wielded while on earth, Jesus was not like an

earthly king. When the multitudes pushed for Him to become their king, Jesus immediately retreated. He was in this world to save man from the corruption of this fallen world, not to become a part of it.

CHOSEN TO NOT BELONG

The world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 Jn 5:19). It continues down the path of corruption after the fall of mankind when Adam sinned against God.

With Satan as the king of the world, we see how the world becomes more corrupt by the day. Almost daily, we read or hear of unfathomable atrocities or freak crimes committed. Immorality and darkness keep a tight rein on this world.

In the midst of corruption, God wants to preserve for Himself a special group of people, righteous and holy, not

succumbing to the evil of the world.

Throughout history, God has always chosen one person, one lineage, to be separate, to be preserved as His own. As early as one generation after Adam, God demonstrated His pattern of salvation. He found Abel, son of Adam, a righteous man and showed him favor. After Abel was killed by Cain, God chose Seth. Thereafter, we see the emergence of Noah, then Abraham, down to the lineage of David.

Whenever God chose His special people, He made a covenant with them. Bringing the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt, God said to them,

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." (Ex 19:4, 5)

To be chosen as God's special people means that we are part of the covenant to be a royal priesthood, to be holy towards God.

TO BE A PART OF THE COVENANT

Today, we are this chosen people. When we are baptized, we are washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We belong to Jesus, the descendant of David, so we are a special people of God.

We also become part of the covenant in that we agree to be a sanctified people, to live in His light. This covenant gives us the hope of eternal life and the guidance and truth of the Lord. We belong to Him, not to the world.

It is far too easy to see only the requirements of the covenant and forget the blessings that come with it. But let us not treat lightly the manifold grace embedded in this covenant. As God's people, Satan has no hold over us. If the Lord Jesus does not allow it, not one strand of hair on our heads will be touched because we are under His protection. Because we are His.

In this journey of faith, many have witnessed and experienced hindrances when they resolve to come before the Lord to receive baptism and be a part of His kingdom. It is no wonder that Satan wants to thwart any attempt to come before God. Spiritually speaking, once a person is baptized and washed by the blood of Christ, Satan cannot touch him.

LIVING LIFE APART FROM THE WORLD

So how does one live in this world but not belong to this world? We can easily avoid being tainted by wickedness if we isolate ourselves and live an ascetic life on some mountain. Similarly, we see many spiritual lives at their zeniths, with fasting and long prayers and extensive Bible reading, at training seminars.

The essence and goal of such seminars, however, is not for us to isolate ourselves. We need to be in the world, carrying the

Jesus is the light. The world is full of darkness, so it rejected the light and hated it. Similarly, we cannot expect to be popular with people who engage in activities of darkness.

light of Christ. Jesus wants us to be in the world so that we can influence it as He did while on earth.

Even as we try to influence the world, things in this world—what we see and hear—will inadvertently find ways to influence our thoughts and actions. Our hearts have to be truly turned towards the Lord. Judas Iscariot followed the Lord Jesus for three years. Yet, his heart never did convert to the Lord. His heart completely belonged to the world, overwhelmed by greed.

It is too easy to fall for the many things in this world. Wealth, sexual desires, food—this world has much to offer when it comes to leading our hearts astray. Greed is the state of hankering after things beyond what we need. Crucifying our desires on the cross becomes a task we need to engage in daily.

In addition to overcoming our greedy desires, we should expect to be rejected by this world when we do not belong to it. “[A]nd the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (Jn 17:14).

Jesus is the light. The world is full of darkness, so it rejected the light and hated it. Similarly, we cannot expect to be popular with people who engage in activities of darkness.

As children of God, we will find life tedious if we do not overcome this world. “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4). By holding on to God, we can overcome this world.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 Jn 5:4, 5)

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

To overcome the world is to transcend those things that do not have a place in the kingdom of God, whatever form it takes. Overcoming the world is not as complicated as it is sometimes made out to be. There are basic principles that underpin any situation:

Obedience to the Word of God

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn 17:17). Life would be less of a struggle if we resolve to obey God's truth without compromise. The kind of life we lead will then be a joyful one.

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word... Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. (Ps 119:9, 11)

The word of God is our protection against the world. When the word of God dwells richly in our hearts, we will have clear vision as to what is right and wrong.

The word of God is the sword of the Holy Spirit. It is our defense against Satan and our source of strength in resisting temptations.

The Lord Jesus used the Scriptures to counter the devious suggestions of the devil. The Scriptures are food for angels; God's words are for savoring. Bible reading is not meant for cursory skimming so as to get through quickly. It is only when the words in the Bible possess significance in our hearts that the word of God can become a source of strength for us.

Prayers with Intercession

Living our lives prayerfully is another way to help us overcome the world. Prayers, especially intercessory prayers, go a long

way toward shielding us from the darts of Satan. The Lord Jesus prayed for Peter when Satan asked to have him, as one would sift wheat.

Living under the influence of worldly values can be likened to being sifted as wheat. In the same way, Jesus is interceding for us today. We should intercede for other brothers and sisters in turn.

The power of intercessory prayer cannot be overstated. Moses' prayer on behalf of the Israelites quenched the anger of God. Jeremiah's tears and prayers moved God to hold back offensive foreign forces.

Today, intercessory prayers remain just as effective. Brothers and sisters receive the Holy Spirit when others fast and pray with them. Prayers of worried parents have turned back the feet of many who were crossing the border to unpardonable sins.

Close-knit Fellowship with Brethren

"[I pray] also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You..." (Jn 17:20, 21)

Once, in response to strife between His disciples, the Lord Jesus cited that even the devils are united as one in Satan's kingdom. What is most detrimental to the kingdom of God is division among the brethren, for the devil will then be able to devour the members one by one. Fellowship in the church therefore becomes of utmost importance.

Each of us has an assignment to ensure that we fit in church and to reach out to those who may not be as fortunate. Without fellowship with brothers and sisters, our walk of faith is a very lonely one, and it is easy for us to give up.

Family service is one way to generate fellowship with one another. A few families who live in close proximity to one another ought to gather together for Bible reading and prayers. In addition,

such small groups can share problems and help one another out.

When church members are bonded together, Satan will find it difficult to attack. On the other hand, if a church is cold and love cannot be found, members will not have any sense of belonging. When members do not become as one, individual members will not be able to overcome this world and will succumb to the devil's ploys.

This world indeed is dark, but we are the light of the world. One small flame can push back much darkness. But let us not be only that one small candle, because a small candle can easily be extinguished by a strong gust of wind. Let us instead be a strong beam of light, just as our Lord Jesus is the light of the world.

May we all rise above this world of corruption and perversity and work out our salvation by not belonging to this world. ★



When God Is Your Matchmaker

Julie Lin—Baldwin Park, California, USA

I am joyful to testify that God has guided me in the biggest decision of my life—that is, my marriage. Growing up, my mother was a believer, but my father was not. There were times when I could not participate in church activities because my father thought that there were more important things in life than one's faith.

I saw how my mom expended so much effort to bring my siblings and me to church. She spent a lot of time kneeling before God and shedding tears to preserve her own faith and her children's faith.

Growing up in church, Religious Education teachers often reminded us that we should not be yoked together with unbelievers. As I matured, I became convinced that I wanted to marry in the Lord because I did not want to spend a major portion of my lifetime fighting for

something that was as essential to me as my faith. I simply wanted to build up a Christian family and serve the Lord.

FEELING INCOMPLETE

Under the Lord's guidance, I went back to Taiwan for my undergraduate degree. I had grown accustomed to Western culture since immigrating to the US when I was twelve, and there were many adjustments I had to make when I went back. It was a different society, and I lived a very different type of lifestyle.

In college, most of my friends were Gentiles, and most of them had boyfriends or girlfriends. The common view was that freshmen could be the most selective about choosing a guy. Then, in sophomore year, one should lower one's standards, and by junior year, one should hurry up because it

would be hopeless by senior year.

At times, I felt lonely. I would go out with my friends, but they would have to leave me in the middle of our outing to meet with their boyfriends. That started to become a weakness of mine, because I, too, wanted to have company, and I, too, wanted someone to care for me. When there were suitors, these thoughts would intensify.

But thanks to the grace of God, I would kneel down to pray when I had doubts. I started to pray about my marriage in my freshman year of college, not because I was desperate for a husband, but because I received a lot of comfort in my prayers. God told me to wait for His timing and arrangement.

When I prayed for my marriage, I didn't ask for any conditions or list any

requirements. When I was a little girl, I heard a story about how we're all like a circle with a piece missing. Although we can't see the piece we're missing, I deeply believe that God sees above all and knows what I need. He'll find this lost piece for me.

GOD'S CALL

During my junior year in college, I spoke to my mom almost every day, and she would tell me of various matchmakers who wanted to match me up with someone. Like some of you, I didn't like the idea of matchmaking. I thought it was for older people. Also, I was in Taiwan at the time and did not want to get involved in a long-distance relationship.

I had made a lot of plans for the summer entering into my senior year. I was going to take GRE classes and get a job. But in my prayers, I had a feeling that I needed to go back to the US that summer. Since that wasn't in my plan, I brushed it off.

As the end of the school year neared, that feeling grew stronger and stronger. I could not help thinking that perhaps God wanted to lead me somewhere, so one week before school ended, I altered my plans and booked a ticket back to the US.

It so happened that the 2003 National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) was being hosted at Baldwin Park Church that summer, so I registered as a part-time participant. Before the seminar began, a matchmaker approached me and said that I needed to see a brother by the name of Steven Lin, who would be visiting Southern California to attend the seminar. I said, "No."

Perhaps I've seen too many movies, but I always thought that I would meet my future husband in a romantic way, and matchmaking was definitely not on my list!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When the seminar began, I remember my first impression of Steven was not very

impressive. I didn't know who Steven was, so my sister pointed him out to me across the hall. If you don't know him, he seems quite intimidating when he doesn't smile. The first thought that crossed my mind was, "No way!"

But the matchmaker kept coming back, and my family members continued to encourage me. I thought that maybe I should not hold on to my own judgment but instead leave this matter in the hands of God.

I started to pray about this during NYTS. I also fasted. I thought that I should fast for my own marriage, whether it was going to be with Steven or someone else. At first, I just asked God to guide my way and my marriage. After a while, my prayer started to change—I found peace in my heart. I asked the Lord to tell me clearly if Steven was the one, because this was a decision that would affect the rest of my life.

Up to this point, the matchmaker had only spoken to me and had not yet talked to Steven, so I asked God to let him approach me and talk to me first as a sign that he was the one, since I would not approach him myself.

I started to pray about this during NYTS. I also fasted. I thought that I should fast for my own marriage, whether it was going to be with Steven or someone else.

TRUSTING GOD TO LEAD

On Wednesday evening, I bumped into the matchmaker in the chapel lobby. She asked if I had made up my mind since Sunday. I thought to myself that since I am an appropriate age and he looks like a nice guy, perhaps we could try it out. But before I was able to answer the matchmaker, a sister came to look for her, and they both walked away.

At that moment, I heard a voice coming from my heart asking, "What is trust?" This question shocked me. I paused and asked myself, "Really, what is trust?" Is trust just mentioning my request to God in prayer, or is it continuing to have faith in Him even if He doesn't give me an answer?

If I gave the matchmaker an answer, then all the prayer and fasting would have been in vain. I would have directed my own way instead of trusting God to guide my way.

When the matchmaker came back for my answer, I told her, "I haven't received a response from God yet." The matchmaker replied, "What if you do not receive a response before he leaves?" "Then he's probably not the one," I answered.

THE SIGN

After prayer the following day, I went to the dining room to eat dinner. Since students were cleaning the tables, half of the dining room was already closed. There were other brothers and sisters eating at other tables, but I chose to sit alone.

This is what Steven told me happened afterwards: He originally approached a table with five brothers, but they all left right when he sat down. He looked around and saw me at one table and Pastor Liang and some other brothers at another table. He is not the type of guy who would sit alone with a sister, but when he was about to go sit with Pastor Liang, there was a voice that told him to go and talk to that sister. He had reservations, but then another brother sat down with me, so he thought that it should be okay now to sit at my table.

We sat at opposite corners of the table and quietly ate our dinner. All of a sudden, he said to me, "Hi, my name is Steven." Perhaps he didn't know, but I was in shock because I knew God had heard my prayers and had answered it clearly.

Next he asked, "How old are you?" The second question was just as shocking.

I didn't stay long. I quickly finished my dinner and left because I couldn't wait to go back to pray and ask God, "Is this it? Is this it?"

Not only have I found a life-long companion, he is someone who will walk with me in the Lord, who can kneel down and pray for me without me asking, and who will support me when I am facing trials in life.

ME, STEVEN, AND...THE PASTORS

That night, I told the matchmaker that I was willing to start off as friends, so the matchmaker approached Steven, who said he would pray about it.

On Sunday, under the arrangement of the pastors, we had our first official meeting. We were called outside during the morning class prayer. Steven told me that, when Pastor Hwang called him from the classroom because the sister was waiting at the front door, Steven said, "I need to pray more," but Pastor Hwang replied, "There is no time. You go, and I will stay and pray for you."

That afternoon, Pastor Jung took us out for lunch and we talked. I thank God for all the pastors that encouraged us. The next day, Steven left for New Jersey. Two weeks later, I returned to Taiwan.

When I told my friends what happened to me, they thought I was insane and was desperately in need of a boyfriend. They questioned how I could make the decision to treat someone as a potential husband when we had only met for two hours over lunch. But they did not understand that God is the controller of all things and that I trusted Him—the One who holds the promise and blessings of marriage.

Steven and I first wrote emails and then eventually started to talk on the phone. In our first exchange of emails, I wrote him a small paragraph about some of my favorite verses and the teachings that I

learned. Steven returned to me a three-page summary and analysis on the Book of Isaiah. He said it was the homework that he was supposed to turn in to Pastor Hwang, and he wanted to ask me what I thought about it.

Thanks to the guidance of God, Steven and I were engaged two years later. I moved back to the US for graduate school, and he moved to Los Angeles because of his job.

We spent a lot of time praying after our engagement. We would set a time to pray together because we knew that God had to be the center of this relationship, or else it would not last.

Looking back, I thank God for everything. I realize that God was my real matchmaker. He not only led me to someone who was compatible with me but gave me someone who was more than I could ask for.

After we were married in May 2006 at Baldwin Park Church, I felt that life was indeed very joyful. Not only have I found a life-long companion, he is someone who will walk with me in the Lord, who can kneel down and pray for me without me asking, and who will support me when I am facing trials in life.

BE PATIENT...THE MATCHMAKER IS ALSO WORKING ON YOUR MISSING PIECE

I encourage brothers and sisters to be open to all the possibilities that God has to offer because to be able to marry in the Lord is a blessing beyond imagination. When God is your matchmaker, marriage is not something we have to run away from.

*Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD! (Ps 27:14)*

In this age, we face a lot of temptations. When we walk out into the world, we're the minority. In a school of thousands

of people, you may be the only believer. Because of peer pressure, we are tempted to make compromises, but remember what the Lord told us—that He is a faithful God and will always prepare the best for us.

Guard your heart and reserve that special place for that special someone. Let God bring your beloved to you and you to your beloved. Perhaps it might be the other end of the continent or the other side of the world, but patiently wait for Him. ★



Thanksgiving

J. Ouyang

A DIFFICULT DECISION

During a recent Bible study, we were asked to share reflections on our lives since last Thanksgiving. I pondered the question and realized that I have a lot to be thankful for.

Several months ago, my boss approached me and asked if I would consider relocating to the main office after my contract expired in December. I was lukewarm about the idea because I realized that if I were to accept the offer, I would have to live hours away from the closest church. It would be difficult to sustain such a long commute to observe Sabbath every week. I asked my boss to give me more time to think about it. I also asked him to help me explore other

job opportunities that would not require relocation.

As the last day of my contract drew closer, I began to realize that management would not allow me to work away from the main site. The choice came down to this: If I were willing to relocate to the main site, I would have little trouble transitioning from a long-term supplemental position to a permanent position. I would also be given priority to move to other internal openings, if I so desired. However, if I chose not to relocate, I would be on my own.

This was a difficult decision to make. I postponed the decision as much as I could, hoping that with the extra time a compromise could be found.

I found it hard to leave a company that offered me a stable job. As a young engineer, I benefit both professionally and intellectually by learning from colleagues.

When I realized what leaving meant for my career, I was not sure of what I would do. I knew all along that I needed to put God first, but I was not sure if I had the courage to do what was right. For several weeks, my wife and I prayed for God's guidance, hoping that He would open a way for us to work and stay close to church for our spiritual survival.

GOD'S MERCY

We finally reached a decision several weeks later. We realized that, even though relocating to the main site would

be good for my career, we couldn't rely on that potential because nothing in this world is certain. We both agreed that moving far away from church would not be good for either of our spiritualities in the long run.

Thinking through the problem and realizing what needed to be done was relatively easy. My wife and I decided that we did not want to move unless it was absolutely necessary. The difficult part was finding a job that would allow me to stay close to home.

I felt depressed as the end of my contract approached—I had a lot of work to do in addition to the unpleasant task of finding another job. I was so busy that I didn't have time to prepare for interviews. I knew I made the right decision in choosing not to move, but I was afraid of the consequences of not being able to find a job close to home. I worried that I had been too stubborn by insisting on where I wanted to work.

About two months before the last day of my contract, I saw a job posting for a company close to home. It was a pleasant surprise, because there had not been a start-up in the area for years. I submitted my résumé online right away and made a mental note to drive by the company on my way home that night.

Before the day was over, I got a call from the hiring manager. He had seen my résumé and wanted to know if I could stop by in two days.

Two days later, I went to the company for an interview. They asked me questions on technical subjects that I had not studied in a long time. I was disappointed after the interview because I did fine but not as well as I needed to secure a job offer. I wished that I could have studied some more before the interview.

By the end of that day, I was certain that I would never hear from the company again. I comforted myself with the thought that I could at least treat this interview as practice and take lessons away from it for the next interview.

There were also moments of peace when I realized that I made the right decision by not accepting a job that would take me far away from a church that has been like a home to me.

About a week later I was pleasantly surprised when I received an email from the hiring manager. They were satisfied with my interview and indicated that they would like to proceed to salary negotiation.

GIVING THANKS

I am very thankful for God's guidance throughout my job search. There was a moment of shock and disbelief when I realized that my future with my previous company was about to come to an end.

There was a moment of uncertainty when I realized that companies that I wanted to apply to were too far away. There was a moment of sadness when I cleaned my cubicle late into the night.

Finally, there was a moment of vanity when I realized that, even though I had worked long and hard, coming home late at night and working on Sundays in an office without air conditioning, I had to leave everything behind.

But there were also moments of peace when I realized that I made the right decision by not accepting a job that would take me far away from a church that has been like a home to me. Regardless of the cost, I felt great peace with my decision because I knew it was the right one.

There were moments of thanksgiving when I realized that God provided me with a job despite my not exactly acing my technical interviews. I was fully aware that, given the state of the industry, I could not expect to keep the same job until my retirement thirty-five years from now. I am thankful for all that I have learned

during the time I was with my previous company.

I am thankful because I did not suffer weeks of unemployment and started work at my new job right after my contract ended.

This experience has given me more faith for the future. I have no idea what will happen a few years from now, but I know that as long as I continue to put faith in God and focus on doing what is right, He will somehow provide a way.

It will not always be easy. But as it says in Philippians 4:13,

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. ★



Praying in front of Unbelieving Roommates

Priscilla Kuo—Baldwin Park, California, USA

THE PRAYER THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

One afternoon during the first week of college, I was sad when I heard that some of my fellow True Jesus Church college peers were too busy to attend our campus fellowship Bible study. It was only the first week of school.

Perhaps they had more school assignments than I did, but their workload couldn't have been so heavy that they already couldn't spare an hour or two in their schedule to come before God. To me, it was a reflection of their priorities.

My heart was heavy and I wanted to pray. However, my roommate was in the room doing homework. Although I had already explained our prayer to her and

she nonchalantly consented to my praying whenever I needed to, I still tried to pray when she wasn't in the room. But that afternoon, I no longer cared if she would be surprised at the sound of prayer; the only thing on my mind was that I needed to cry out to God to lift the burden on my heart.

I quickly asked my roommate if she would mind if I prayed, and she shrugged and said "Go ahead," so I thankfully knelt down to pray. As soon as I was before God, I started to cry in my prayer because I was worried that my fellow brothers and sisters would gradually push God further away in their newfound college freedom, forget Him, and pursue after the world.

I was also anxious that our campus

fellowship would fall apart, as it did during previous generations, because the members became busy with their own lives. During my prayer, I desperately asked God to watch over us and to not let us forget His grace.

Suddenly, I felt warmth around me, as if someone was really hugging me. In shock, I opened my eyes to see my roommate praying beside me in silence with her eyes closed and her arms around me.

I was so touched that she could look past the different way I prayed and show her concern by stopping what she was doing to pray with me. I felt God comforting me through her gesture of compassion and love. Then I cried even harder because I knew that God understood and that He

was with me.

During that spontaneous afternoon prayer, I had my first experience with God in college. Since then, I have learned why continual prayer is so important. I would like to share with you three points why I believe that a consistent prayer life is necessary in every Christian's life.

WHY WE NEED A CONSISTENT PRAYER LIFE

One: Because the Holy Spirit helps us not to enter temptation and helps us in our weaknesses.

As humans, we are created flawed, with weaknesses in God's design to allow us the chance to experience His love and power when we ask Him for strength. Lord Jesus encouraged us in Luke 22:40 to "pray that you may not enter into temptation."

He spoke these words when He lived among us and experienced the weaknesses of the flesh. He warned the disciples to beware of the tendency to follow one's fleshly desires. How? Not through awareness, intelligence, or strength, but through prayer.

Romans 8:26 explains that the Holy Spirit

helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

We do not know what is to come or even what weaknesses we may have. God, however, knows and is willing to aid us when we turn to Him.

Two: To continue to grow and to experience God on our own.

That afternoon prayer was the beginning of closer friendships with my roommate and with God than I could ever have imagined. I really thank God that He allowed me to cross paths with my roommate. She was one of my closest friends throughout college and remains

As I began to treasure my time in prayer, I began to understand Him first as a father who provided for me and then as a friend who walked with me day by day.

so today, even after we have both moved home.

From my relationship with my roommate, I see parallels with how my relationship with God grew. My roommate and I spent countless hours talking about everything. Not only did our personalities complement each other, but talking about God, our faith, and our struggles also drew us closer.

Likewise, I put in more time and effort into talking to God. As I began to treasure my time in prayer, I began to understand Him first as a father who provided for me and then as a friend who walked with me day by day. I began to turn to God not only in times of trouble but in everyday events.

For example, I no longer had the help of my sister to correct my essays in college, so I learned to pray about my anxieties with writing essays. God heard me and helped me by bringing to mind different ideas to write about.

There was one specific essay I fervently prayed about, and that was the time I received my first "A" on a college essay. That experience allowed me to see that I could tell Him everything, even the mundane, in prayer, and He would listen. He became a faithful friend who supported me time and time again.

Three: Because intercession is powerful.

Right after the moving prayer with my roommate, I had the courage to call my peers again and ask them to come to Bible study, not allowing myself to be discouraged if they were unwilling. Thank God that, beyond my expectations, they agreed without making any excuses and came regularly. From that day on, I witnessed the power of God changing

their hearts and moving them to seek after Him. Remembering others in prayer is simple yet effective.

Looking back now, it is hard to believe how helpless and alone I felt a few years ago. In our campus Bible studies on Paul's letters, I learned from Paul how to consistently intercede for others. In Colossians 1:9, Paul demonstrates the way he and the apostles prayed for members when he said,

[W]e also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Our supplication on behalf of others may move God to grant them the strength they need or even save their souls.

OVERCOMING YOUR FEAR

Often, to have a consistent prayer life means praying before unbelieving roommates. There are many ways to approach the subject of how we pray with our roommates. The most direct and perhaps easiest way is to tell them you are a Christian and that it is a common practice to offer daily prayers. It is then very easy to explain to them exactly how we pray.

Other ways include turning a conversation onto the subject of religion by asking them about their religious beliefs, talking about the week and what you do on Sabbath, or sharing your past and including how God has guided you. Whichever method you choose, the best time to tell your roommate is as early as possible. It allows them time to grow accustomed to the idea that you pray regularly and to expect the way you pray.

Of course, we need to be considerate of our roommates and try to make the situation comfortable for everyone. Some tips to consider: schedule your longer prayers when your roommate is out of the room so that you can pray openly and enter deeper into the spirit in the prayer, and get up earlier or sleep later so that you can offer thanks before and after your day.

Even so, there will come a time when we must face our fears and pray before our roommates. Whether it is before we sleep, before a meal, or in times of great distress, we cannot put aside or postpone our prayers because prayer is simply vital to our spiritual survival.

Some people may not understand, others may be curious, but they will come to respect it as our way of living out our Christian faith. God will also see the desire in our heart to pray to Him and will open a way so that we have the opportunity to talk to Him heart to heart. He has already promised He will be with us in our lives. It is now up to us to respond and accept His offer.

Hear Him calling to us today:

*Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right
hand. (Isa 41:10) ★*



Holding onto God

Summer

NOT ABLE TO BE HAPPY

The first two months after my son's birth were not particularly eventful. I was exhausted like any mother with a newborn and two older children would be. A live-in nanny helped with the cooking and household chores, but since I was nursing, I still had to get up during the night to feed my son. Besides not getting enough sleep, things were pretty normal at home.

However, about three months after my son was born, I began suffering from anxiety. I had many of the symptoms associated with anxiety such as loss of appetite, the inability to feel if I was hungry or full, tingling in my body, numbness on parts of my head, loud ringing in my ears, difficulty falling or staying asleep, being easily startled, and having panic attacks.

I would suddenly wake up with a racing heartbeat, gasping for air in a state of panic. There were nights when I had only

one to four hours of sleep, and these sleep problems lasted for about six months. My inability to fall asleep or stay asleep took a toll on my mind and body. Some mornings I would lay in bed, and I would see frightening things in my head.

I began to feel sad, and I couldn't feel happy even though I had many reasons to be happy at that time. I was blessed with wonderful children, we were living comfortably, and my family was actively attending church and serving the Lord together.

Yet, I felt confused, could not focus or concentrate on anything, and sometimes felt like I was going crazy. However, these feelings would begin to subside in the late afternoon. The later into the night, the better I felt. When morning came, it was as though a switch was turned on and those bad feelings would come back

again. This cycle continued day after day for several months.

My condition also evolved into obsessive compulsive disorder, and I would go through days constantly thinking or worrying about my condition and what I should do to get out of it. During most of the day, I lost interest in things I used to enjoy doing. I had trouble taking care of my children, my bills, my work, and was needy toward close friends and relatives.

One of the hardest things to deal with was that I had trouble with prayer. I knew that prayer was vital to my recovery, but I couldn't get my mind to cooperate. Sometimes during prayer, my mind would play tricks on me, telling me that my prayer did not reach God but was instead heard by Satan. It was difficult for me to dismiss these lies my mind was telling me, but I didn't stop praying.

A STRONG DESIRE TO SEEK HELP

During this period of time, I tried hard to rely on God by continuing to go to church, praying, singing hymns, and reading the Bible. I told my condition to ministers, church workers, and friends in church, and my name was put on the prayer list. I knew that this was an essential part of my recovery process no matter what course of action I took later on.

Looking back, I thank God that He allowed me to have a very strong desire to get well and seek help. When I looked at my son, I knew that I was losing precious time to enjoy his infancy while I continued to suffer.

It was painful to be with my young children but not be able to enjoy their presence. Valuable time was slipping away, and that motivated me to cry out for help.

It was not easy, however, to accept my condition because I had always been a self-motivated, disciplined, and goal-oriented individual. Friends and family were perplexed by how suddenly my mental state had deteriorated.

drug or adverse side effects. Furthermore, it just didn't make sense for me, a Christian, to be depressed or on anti-depressants.

However, during the course of my suffering, I spoke to people who either encouraged me to seek psychiatric help or had success with anti-depressants. I spoke at length with a friend of a sister from church.

To my amazement, the lady's condition was so similar to mine, particularly with how her symptoms would begin to subside and improve as the day progressed. That led me to think that perhaps my condition was due to a chemical imbalance. The thought of seeking psychiatric help began to make more sense, and I decided to do so.

Recovery

A sister who had been close to me throughout my suffering prayed with me one day and asked God to help me find a Christian doctor. I felt it was important that the doctor was a Christian so that I would not be swayed by secular theories of psychology. Within a very short time,

medication soon after. With a well-rested body and mind, some of my symptoms disappeared.

The doctor also prescribed an anti-depressant, which eventually helped most of my symptoms to disappear. Through counseling from a doctor who also believed in God, I was able to understand myself and my condition better.

THE LOVE AND CARE OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Although I took prescription medication, I believe that my husband and church members directly contributed to my recovery. Without them, I would not be testifying to God's mercy and grace.

I know that marriages can be torn apart by depression, and I am very thankful to God that my husband stood by me, prayed for me in tears, and continued to love me during my suffering even when my condition was so foreign and confusing to him.

Many members from different True Jesus Church locations prayed for me, ministers laid hands on me and prayed for me, and members visited me often. Some sisters spent many hours counseling and encouraging me, and some also brought food to my home, cooked and cleaned up for me, and provided me the company I needed so much while my husband was at work.

I can still remember a day when a few sisters came to my house. One of them gave me a nice blue notebook and taught me to list the things I could be thankful for. The exercise left an impression on me and has helped me even to this day to see the positive side of things and to thank God for His blessings that I took for granted in the past.

As I recall those months when I struggled, I thank God that He restored my physical and mental health, kept me in my faith, and allowed me to counsel others using what I learned.

From this experience, I learned to be content with what I have and discovered

I believe that my husband and church members directly contributed to my recovery. Without them, I would not be testifying to God's mercy and grace.

I tried to find out as much as I could about my condition and how others had been able to recover. I talked to people with similar problems or who were familiar with my condition. I sought answers from the internet, tried Chinese medicine and acupuncture, and consulted non-psychiatric medical doctors. But none of these methods helped me, and I could not decide what I should do next.

I was not open to using anti-depressants to treat my condition due to the stigma of mental illness and negative things I heard about such drugs. The most worrisome ones were long-term dependency on the

another sister, who had heard about my condition but didn't know I was looking for a doctor, called me and referred a psychiatrist who was a Christian.

Accompanied by the sister who had been with me all these months, I went to see this doctor, who understood my initial fear of anti-depressant and anti-anxiety drugs. I felt reassured after seeing him and started to take the anti-anxiety medication that he prescribed for my sleep problem.

I thank God that the medication worked right away—my sleep was restored, and I was able to stop taking this

the many blessings that God has given me. I used to be a perfectionist, a worrywart, and a pessimist. Now I am happier, more thankful, more optimistic, more sympathetic, and place less emphasis on earthly things.

I used to think that my past achievements were because of my abilities, but now I know I am nothing without God. In the past, when I prayed to God about my problems, I would hold on to them, never truly letting God solve them. When I was going through such difficult times, I began to learn to let go of the problem and hand it to God.

Do not be afraid or embarrassed to seek help, and when you do, make sure the people you talk to are knowledgeable about such conditions.

God is faithful and He will never ever forsake us. He will not let us go through a trial that we cannot bear even though the journey can be very painful. Hold on to God and never let go. ★



Reflections on the 2008 Ministry Volunteer Program

What Is MVP?

The United States General Assembly held its first Ministry Volunteer Program (MVP) from July 8-21 at Garden Grove Church. This two-week internship was created with several goals: to cultivate future workers for various ministries and to spread awareness of the need for volunteers; to provide in-person training in highly-specialized areas; and to provide an opportunity for youths to volunteer for the church during summer break.

This year MVP consisted of four projects: GA Library, E-Library, Freshman Survival Guide, and Commentary on the Gospel of John. Team leaders led each project, and the participants were divided into the teams based on their interest.

GA Library

Members of the GA Library team worked each day at the USGA office implementing

a book and CD library system under the guidance of an experienced librarian. They catalogued the many different genres of books in the USGA library and input all the information into a database. A large set of audio CDs was also catalogued.

With the book and CD library system organized and set up, members from the USA will be able to make good use of these resources from the USGA library. In addition, having learned the process of implementing a book and CD library system, members of the GA Library team can put their newly-acquired skills into good use at their respective churches.

E-Library

The E-Library team learned various aspects of e-library content management including formatting, uploading, and indexing web content. Participants in

the E-Library were in charge of preparing publications such as Bible Study Guides and RE textbooks so that they can be viewed online. These resources are now available through the e-library website.*

Freshman Survival Guide

The Freshman Survival Guide team contributed to the creation of a collection of college-related testimonies and experiences that will be given to high school seniors. The team edited over fifty testimonies in addition to writing their own testimonies for the guide. All of the testimonies and articles were categorized into different aspects of college life, which can be a useful tool for encouragement for members entering college.

Commentary on the Gospel of John

Participants in this team learned ancient Greek and studied key chapters of the Gospel of John in preparation for in-depth analysis of the book. Learning the Greek alphabet and vocabulary allowed team members to start translating short sentences and reading the original text of the New Testament. Through systematic study of key words in the book, participants drew out the teachings into articles.

Jessie Yang

I thank God for giving me the opportunity to attend MVP full time and be part of the commentary team. Though I had little idea of what the workshop would be like, every moment was a blessing from God.

Prior to MVP, I thought we would perhaps read the Gospel of John and comment on the verses. Having attended Bible study for many years, it seemed like an easy task. However, when we were told that we would be learning Greek for the majority of the time, I realized that there was more to it than just "commenting."

We learned the Greek alphabet as well as grammar and sentence structure, which gave us the tools to start studying key words in depth. Participants were divided into pairs for word studies on certain key terms in the Gospel of John. Each verse with that key term was studied and analyzed within the context of the chapter, then categorized according to its usage.

Finally, we analyzed each category in detail and summarized our findings in an article on the given topic. The learning process was not an easy one, yet it was such a rewarding experience.

I realized that it was through the most basic step of learning Greek that God wanted me to re-examine my attitude and heart in serving Him. There had been moments in the past when I felt I was ready to serve, yet I was faced with challenges and discouragement and my zeal soon disappeared. Why was it that

It truly takes determination, dedication, and endurance to fully ready ourselves for God's use. All three are necessary in serving God, and none can stand alone.

my fervor could not last through both sunshine and rain?

After two weeks of MVP, I found the answer I was looking for: Moses is an example for us to follow in staying zealous for God. Though Moses was chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, God waited for eighty years before calling him. When Moses felt he was ready to do God's work, to deliver His people out of suffering, God did not use him right away.

So likewise in our service, we must also be trained prior to being used by God. God's work is not accomplished overnight but step-by-step. Learning the Greek alphabet is the foundation; with it we will be able to understand the original text of the Bible and better understand God's word. This is like our daily spiritual cultivation of reading the Bible and praying; with them, our spiritual life will be healthier, helping us understand the will of God.

It truly takes determination, dedication, and endurance to fully ready ourselves for God's use. All three are necessary in serving God, and none can stand alone. Determination is to know that we will serve God until the end regardless of what we may face in the future. Once we have a clear understanding, then there must be dedication.

It may sound easy, but it is very difficult to maintain a dedicated heart, mind, and soul. Dedication is to strengthen our determination with the help of daily spiritual cultivation. By this, we will have perseverance and endurance through all the challenges we might face in our service for the Lord.

Lastly, MVP has shown me that we are indeed one in the body of Christ. Although the participants spent most of the time in their respective teams, we all put our totality into serving God and His church. God has given each participant different gifts and abilities; as long as we have the heart to learn and to serve Him, He will add strength to us.

It does not matter what part of the body of Christ we are because all are equally important.

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Cor 12:26)

I thank God for giving us the opportunity to learn to serve Him better; to serve Him faithfully.

Kelly Wu

God truly works in mysterious ways. Before coming to MVP, I was struggling to find peace and joy in my heart because my life was so busy. I was mentally tired of all the things going on around me and in me. It felt like I was on a train that never stopped.

I was excited to attend MVP and join the commentary team because I knew I would be immersed in God's word, learning and commenting on the Book of John. What I didn't know was that I would have to learn how to read, write, and speak Greek, learn the skills of exegesis, and how to research topical studies.

Would something like this give someone a heart of peace and joy? On paper, the answer may be no, but this was exactly the medicine I needed. I came out of MVP with not just a heart of peace and joy, but a heart overflowing with peace, joy, and zeal to continue to serve the Lord.

At MVP, I would wake up every day refreshed and ready to go, excited to learn, hear, and see what was going to be new. All the classes, prayers, sharing, and fellowships were like drinking a cold glass

of water after running a marathon on a hot summer's day.

It was such a good feeling to see all the participants in different projects working diligently and completing their tasks. Although we were separated into four different groups, we all worked together as one body in Christ, and all of our labor was put forth in service to our almighty God. What glory and honor that is!

Sometimes, after serving the Lord for years, we fail to remember the true essence of why we are serving the Lord. We begin to wonder what others think about our service, and forget about how the Lord considers our service. This is where I failed. Many times in my servitude, I felt alone, discouraged, and wanted to give up. It felt overwhelming to take on certain tasks.

But through MVP, I learned valuable lessons from Moses' life that I didn't realize before. Moses also felt alone, discouraged, and did not want to take on the task of leading the Israelites out of Egypt. However, he did not go empty handed. Before Moses took on this great task, God trained him for eighty years and equipped him with three signs (Ex 4:2-10).

The rod that Moses carried with him to do all the signs and wonders was not his rod, but God's rod. Likewise for us, the Lord will provide for us and will equip us before we do His work. We each carry a rod in our servitude, and it is a rod that God gives to us that belongs to Him. And because our rod belongs to God, He will surely bestow on us power and strength to carry out any task.

Sometimes, after serving the Lord for years, we fail to remember the true essence of why we are serving the Lord. We begin to wonder what others think about our service, and forget about how the Lord considers our service.

As we hold onto this rod in our servitude, God promises that His spirit will forever be with us, only an arm's length away, as long as we do not let go of our rod.

The blessings that God has given to us freely cannot be numbered. We are not worthy to serve this almighty God. But because this Lord that we serve is so loving and merciful, He has given us this chance, this opportunity to pay Him back for all He has done for us. This in itself is a blessing in disguise.

MVP is not just about finishing the project we are assigned to do, but it is about learning how to serve the Lord, giving back to the church, reviving the fire within our hearts, working as one body of Christ, and understanding who we are as royal priests.

I thank God with all of my heart that He has given all of us this precious opportunity to serve Him. God has and is always faithful to His loved ones. I can only hope and pray that as the days go by all of us, coworkers near and far, will be able to serve Him faithfully and keep this fire burning within us day and night. ★

*The e-library can be viewed at:
<http://ia.tjc.org/elibrary/Landing.aspx>

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Author Guidelines and Editorial Calendar

Issue #61:

Genre: On Campus

Articles due: June 1, 2009

This column seeks to illuminate the many ways in which our Lord walks with us during the period of life we spend as students. If you sought and experienced God while in school—picking a major, deciding what music to listen to, or dealing with science classes about evolution—your experience can glorify God and edify other students in our church.

We also welcome articles focusing on life outside of the classroom. How were you able to overcome the overwhelming temptation to conform in social settings? Did you have a faith-defining moment while serving at your local church? How did relationships with your family members or dorm mates affect or affirm your faith?

Whether you are an international student, transfer student, or a “super senior,” we hope that you’ll share how your unique student experience has brought you to a better understanding of our Redeemer.

In your submission, please include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number.

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

CONTENT

- Content should be biblically sound and adhere to biblical principles.
- Article should be organized and have a logical flow of thought.
- The main point or teaching of the article should be clear to the reader.
- Readers should be able to apply what they have read to their daily lives.

GRAMMAR/STYLE

- Use active instead of passive voice.
- Write concisely.
- Use concrete words and ideas instead of abstract concepts.
- Use “plain old English” instead of obscure, academic language.
- Use the NKJV version when quoting Bible verses.
- Use American spelling, if possible.
- Adhere to the IA Style Guide, except for He/Him when referring to God/Jesus.

Manna is looking for certain types of articles, or article genres. Each genre constitutes a different subject matter and writing approach. If you are planning to write an article (regardless of topic), please try to adhere to one of the genres below.

Christian Living

A Christian Living article gives practical biblical guidance on real-life issues and how to use Jesus’ teachings in our daily lives.
Article length: 1500-2000 words.

Bible Study

A Bible Study explores a passage or character from the Bible and draws out the teachings for readers to apply to their lives.
Article length: 2000 words.

Doctrinal Study

A Doctrinal Study examines an aspect of True Jesus Church beliefs and may present it in comparison to other beliefs.
Article length: 2000 words.

Exhortation

An Exhortation encourages and admonishes the reader in different aspects of the Christian faith.
Article length: 1500-2000 words.

Testimony

A Testimony recounts an experience in the Lord that will encourage and edify the reader.
Article length: 1000-1500 words.

Creative Writing

Creative Writing pieces include poems, parables, or short stories that illustrate a biblical teaching or idea. Keep in mind as you’re writing: how will this edify the reader?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please email electronic files of articles (Microsoft Word) to manna@tjc.org, or send hardcopy and disk to:

Manna

General Assembly of True Jesus Church
314 S. Brookhurst St, #104
Anaheim, CA 92804 USA

Please direct any questions to manna@tjc.org or
Phone: +1-714-533-8808
Fax: +1-714-533-8878

In your submission, please include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number even if you wish to remain anonymous.

True Jesus Church

Articles of Faith

Jesus the True God

The One True God was manifested in the flesh. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for the redemption of sinners, was resurrected on the third day, and ascended to heaven. He is the only Savior of mankind, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the only True God.

Holy Bible

The Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible are inspired by God and are therefore the only authentic scriptures which testify to the Truth.

Church

The True Jesus Church was established by our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (the Latter Rain) and is the revival of the True Church of the Apostolic Days.

Salvation

Salvation is given by grace through faith. However, it is necessary to rely on the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness and to keep the biblical teachings of honoring God and loving humanity.

Baptism

The Baptism of Water is the sacrament for the remission of sins and for regeneration. The baptist must already have received baptisms of water and the Holy Spirit. The baptism must be immersion in natural, living water and must be administered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the candidate's head facing downward.

Foot Washing

The Washing of Feet is a sacrament which enables one to have a part in the Lord and teaches mutual love, holiness, humility, service, and forgiveness. The sacrament of the washing of feet must be performed in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to all newly baptized members. Mutual washing of feet may be practiced when necessary.

Holy Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a prerequisite for entering heaven; speaking in tongues is the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit.

Holy Communion

The Holy Communion is the sacrament to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It enables us to partake of the flesh and blood of our Lord and to be in communion with Him so that we may have eternal life and be raised on the last day. This sacrament should be held as often as possible. Only one unleavened bread and grape juice should be used.

Sabbath Day

The Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is a holy day, blessed and sanctified by God. It is to be observed under the Lord's grace for the commemoration of God's creation and redemption and with the hope of eternal rest.

Judgment Day

The Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven on the Last Day to judge all people; the righteous will receive eternal life, while the wicked will be eternally condemned.

TRUE JESUS CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the True Jesus Church, contact us or visit us on our website. We look forward to hearing from you!

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