

# MANNA

ISSUE 64

## Dealing with Calamities



**Understanding Suffering •  
A Greater Weight of Glory • Taking Root in the Word**

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

MANNA  
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## Dealing with Calamities

# Editorial

By Anna Khoo

Dear Reader,

By the grace of God, it has been more than 30 years since the first MANNA appeared to nourish those of us who are only able to read English publications. Over time, many brethren have labored to provide different ingredients and flavors—new columns, Bible study and doctrinal study articles—to ensure that our church’s flagship magazine meets the different needs of different readers.

### A New Feature

Apart from providing spiritual nourishment, a key function for MANNA is to connect our readers with the church’s global ministry. To complement personal reflections by workers out in the fields, we shall provide regular information on International Assembly’s (IA) activities as well as its key decisions and resolutions.

### A New Danger

This issue’s focus on ‘Calamity’ has prompted contributions on the slew of headline-making terrors, both natural disasters and man-made uproars. These articles are a critical reminder to remain vigilant in our faith, set the right priorities in life and be equipped to fight a victorious spiritual battle for the Lord.

Disasters may harm us physically but they have little to do with our salvation. More disastrous are the spiritual dangers that can harm our faith, and lead us away from eternal grace. Ironically, we are often unaware of such dangers, and thus fail to defend ourselves against them. While we face different threats as individuals, a huge threat to the church is the distortion of the truth, an assault on its very foundation. Jude’s exhortation to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) is timely and apt. In the end time, new but unbiblical interpretations will arise. As members of the True Jesus Church, we must not be swayed by these, no matter how attractive or convincing these may be. We urgently need to remain faithful to the teachings that have been entrusted to us.

Staying faithful to the truth requires deep-rootedness in the word of God because in a world of relentless change, only the word of

God abides (1 Pet 1:24–25). When He was tempted, Jesus rebutted Satan with the word of God. Note how Satan knows and quotes the Scriptures! If we are not equipped with God’s word, how can we possibly fend off Satan’s ploys? The subtle twisting of God’s words, convincingly delivered by charismatic speakers—these are real threats which can erode the pure faith that we received from the Lord. If we are not careful, we will end up propagating man’s teaching instead of God’s word. In so doing, not only do we destroy our own faith, we take others down with us. This will indeed be a calamity like no other.

Standing firm ourselves is not enough. The second imperative for us is to pass on this pure faith to our next generation. Hence, training our youths to be capable future stewards of the church and faithful servants of the Lord is crucial. Failure to do so will be yet another calamity for the church. Recognizing the importance of this, IA conducted its first Youth Symposium this year to stir up the youths’ love for God and their zeal to serve Him. However, the local churches have to continue with such an initiative to nurture the youths. It takes time and effort to cultivate Joshuas, Daniels and Timothys who can withstand the tide of secularism, be ready to take over the baton to fight a victorious spiritual battle for the Lord, and become valuable vessels of God. There is not a moment to lose so we must start now.

### A New Resolution

In summary, real calamities are not the threats to our bodies but to our faith. So we need to take a serious look at our spiritual health. Are we facing spiritual calamities? Do we still worship God ‘in spirit and in truth’, or are we just offering lukewarm service, and are no longer loyal to the ‘pattern of sound words’?

We may be able to weather this danger but what about the next generation? How much attention do we give to our youths—the future of the church? Are we nurturing and guiding them in the right things?

Do not be self-contented, but let us contend earnestly.

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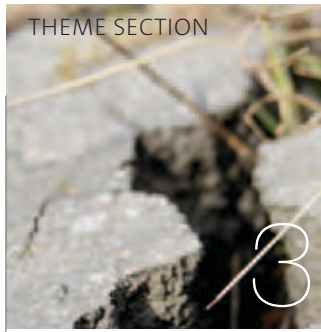
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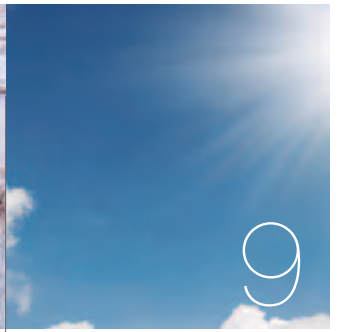


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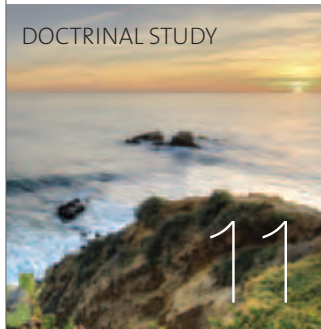
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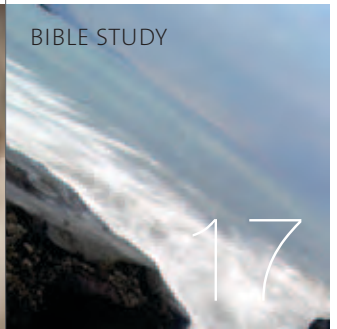
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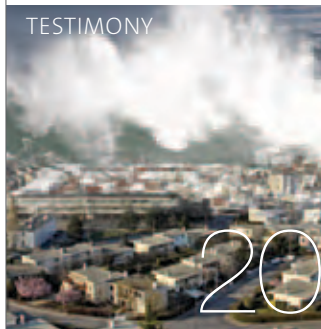
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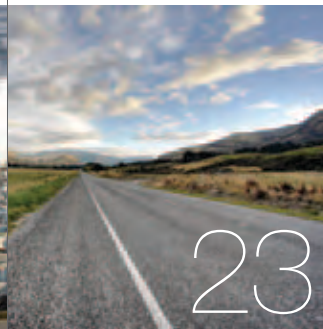
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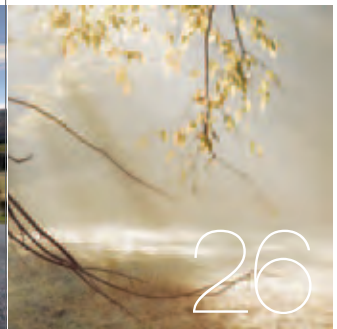
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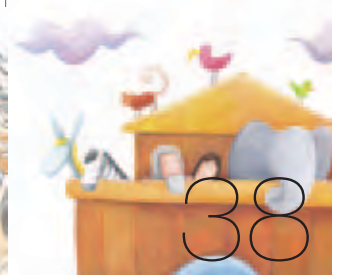
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# Dealing with Calamities



# Do Not Fear in Times of Adversity, in Quietness and Confidence Shall Be Your Strength

Philemon Wu—Tokyo, Japan

*Elder Philemon Wu first shared this testimony at the second meeting of the tenth World Delegates Conference in Taiwan from March 22 to 31, 2011, which was held only eleven days after the megathrust earthquake and ensuing tsunami in Japan. Thanks to God's grace and protection, all the members and churches in Japan remained safe.*

## IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER

I believe that everyone has witnessed the gravity of the recent disasters in Japan through the television and media. I also believe that anyone who has an ounce of compassion will be saddened and moved to tears by what we have seen and heard. But what distresses us even more is our inability to save the souls of the victims.

The wise one says, "In the day of adversity consider" (Eccl 7:14). Yet, what are we to consider? Consider how to flee from the disaster? After this earthquake, many foreigners immediately hurried to leave Japan, causing the airfares to rise by 5–20%.

With a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter scale, the earthquake also damaged the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The Japanese government's experts risked their lives to rescue and evacuate the residents within a thirty-kilometer radius of the affected plant.

The Tokyo region, where I live, is about 250–300 kilometers away from the Fukushima nuclear plant. Due to energy shortage, the Tokyo transportation system had to suspend its services. Surrounding areas also experienced a rotational power outage. Although their lives were inconvenienced, Tokyo residents were lucky compared to victims who suffered from cold and hunger or those who were separated from their family members. For this reason, we can only thank the Lord continuously from our heart.

There's a saying that states, "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong". This tells us that we cannot escape from disaster.

Indeed, God has created both prosperity and adversity, "so that man can find out nothing that will come after him" (Eccl 7:14).

## IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE SHALL BE YOUR STRENGTH

Disasters truly reveal the weaknesses in our faith. After the great earthquake, some members became timid and called the resident preacher in tears, asking him what to do. Some others even advised the preacher to return home to his family members abroad and told him that they would pay for his airfare. The preacher, however, told them that he could not leave the sheep behind and flee for his own life. Thank God for giving us such a good shepherd.

When we encounter adversity, we must meditate on the word of God and messages received through worship services such as, "Do not faint in the day of adversity" (Prov 24:10), and "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength if you rely on the Lord" (Isa 30:15).

Jesus also tells us,  
*"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33)*

Although we will inevitably meet with tribulation in this world, we should not adopt a pessimistic attitude or just sigh for relief. Instead, let us take courage to face reality, for Jesus has already overcome the world and will give us His peace, which surpasses all human understanding.

*God has created both prosperity and adversity, “so that man can find out nothing that will come after him” (Eccl 7:14).*

**TESTIMONIES SURROUNDING THE EARTHQUAKE**

• Early this year, a sister from the Japanese province of Nagano, who is also a dialysis patient, went to Taiwan for a surgery. She had planned to return to Japan on March 11, 2011 (the day of the earthquake), after her operation. However, since some Taiwanese members invited her to attend the Taipei Regional Fellowship on March 13, 2011, she postponed her return. Thank the Lord for His providence!

On the day of the earthquake, Tokyo's Narita International Airport was closed—tens of thousands of travelers were stranded and unable to travel. If this sister had returned on March 11, she would not have been able to return to her hometown, which is about 150 kilometers away from Tokyo. Worse still, she would not have been able to receive dialysis.

• A sister from Sumida church needed to have her cataracts removed. Initially, the surgery was scheduled for 3 pm on the day of the earthquake. Unexpectedly, the doctor rescheduled the surgery to around 2 pm or earlier. After the procedure, as the nurse was wheeling her to the ward, the earthquake set in. Later on, the doctor came to the ward specifically to congratulate her on her good fortune. If the earthquake had happened during the surgery, the consequences would have been unthinkable.

• The day before the earthquake hit, my whole family of four went on an outing to Fukushima province to see the cherry blossoms and the waterfalls. We left at 9 am and returned home at 6 pm on the same day. Thank the Lord; I truly know who holds tomorrow.

• On the day of the earthquake, I took the coastal freeway to the hospital for an allergy shot. Soon after exiting the freeway, the earthquake hit and the freeway was closed due to damages. Mere ten minutes decided over life and death. God truly controls both life and death, “so that man can find out nothing

*Around 30,000 people died either as victims or rescuers, and this somber thought urges us to hasten the work of evangelism.*

that will come after him”.

Thank the loving true God that He has allowed us to experience His great and indescribable love through this great earthquake. At the same time, the disaster serves as a sober reminder to me:

- This calamity has revealed the weakness of our members' faith, which reminds us to put more effort into the pastoral work.

- Around 30,000 people died either as victims or rescuers, and this somber thought urges us to hasten the work of evangelism.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely request all brethren to continue to pray for Japan. We ask God to remove His wrath and have mercy on us, for, unlike the doomed city of Sodom, there are more than ten righteous in this place. ★

*Although we will inevitably meet with tribulation in this world, we should not adopt a pessimistic attitude or just sigh for relief. Instead, let us take courage to face reality, for Jesus has already overcome the world and will give us His peace, which surpasses all human understanding.*





# Understanding Suffering

FF Chong—London, United Kingdom

Nobody in his right mind enjoys suffering. Suffering brings pain and breaks down the normal cycle of life. It disturbs the balance of peace in the heart, which, in turn, influences the ability to interact normally with others, to exhibit life's vibrancy to the full. In severe cases, suffering can threaten the very existence of a person. For this reason, we try to avoid it.

The Bible's teachings regarding suffering, however, are very different from our common concepts. Suffering can appear in various forms, such as tribulation, sickness, setbacks, disasters and even death. The Scriptures define it as a necessary part of Christian life. It is always there, and we are required to go through suffering in order to enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

Although perplexing at the time, suffering is good for Christians. In order to understand the significance of suffering, we need to fine-tune our mindset with the word of God. This will ease the stresses related to suffering and enable us to perceive God's purpose for us during trials. In addition, it will help us to reach spiritual maturity.

## REASONS FOR SUFFERING

There are two main reasons for a Christian's suffering: suffering for righteousness' sake and suffering for sin.

### Suffering for sin

Peter warns us not to suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody in other people's matters (1 Pet 4:15), since God is righteous and will not allow a sinner to go unpunished (Nah 1:3; Ex 34:7; Num 14:18).

If we sin, there are two possible prospects: punishment during our lifetime or everlasting condemnation.

No credit can be given for suffering patiently in punishment for our wrongdoings (1 Pet 2:20a). Instead, this kind of suffering simply serves to underline the fact that every single choice of ours has a consequence. This echoes Paul's message: "he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal 6:8a; Prov 22:8). The result of this corruption is to suffer punishment. This is a divine principle that we cannot ignore. Consequently, if we persistently satisfy the desires of our flesh, we do not only commit grave sin, but also mock God and despise His grace.

Once we have sinned, repentance is the only way forward. If we cover or hide our sins, we will not prosper, but if we confess and forsake them, we will receive mercy (Prov 28:13). Therefore, we can only obtain God's forgiveness if we truly confess with our actions. No matter how painful it may be, we must resolutely humble ourselves to suffer the

shame of our transgression (Ps 38:18). If we do not, the weight of sin will become more and more unbearable (Ps 38:17) and eventually drain out every ounce of energy needed to live a normal life in the Lord.

In addition, we must stop repeating the same wrong. The more we indulge in the same sin, the heavier the punishment and the harder it will be for us to shake off sin. Subsequently, we may develop a rebellious resistance to change.

Thus, our acts of repentance must be genuine and from the heart. Any change of heart must reflect the teachings of the prophet Joel: "Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning" (Joel 2:12-13).

### Suffering for righteousness' sake

In this world of sin, suffering for righteousness' sake is not only unavoidable but is on the increase—the world can no longer tolerate deeds of the light. What was once deemed good is now offensive and unacceptable. Sins have been legalized in many societies, which has blurred and often erased distinctions between right and wrong. Some genuine Christians are labeled as scum of the earth, 'of whom the world is not worthy' (Heb 11:38) and are not welcome anywhere: "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will

*We have received the Holy Spirit to help us understand why we suffer.*

suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12).

Quite often this type of persecution comes from within the community of faith. The ancient saints, for example, were persecuted for proclaiming the truth to their people. Some were hated as a result. Jesus' reprimand to the scribes and Pharisees underlines their brutality, which they practiced against those who came into their synagogues in the name of the Lord. They persecuted them from city to city, scourged them in the synagogues and even killed and crucified some of them (Mt 23:34-35).

It is, therefore, not much of a surprise when Christians are reviled when they speak up for a righteous cause. We may well be criticized if we provide reminders for the good of the church, for the Bible has already foretold that a time will come when sound advice will no longer be tolerated. The situation will only continue to deteriorate. Evil men (believers) and imposters (false prophets) will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim 3:13; cf. Dan 12:10; Rev 22:11). They will neither respect anyone, nor revere God. Instead, they will view criticism as hate crime.

Living a life in Christ after conversion is more often than not full of tribulations and trials. Sometimes, we find ourselves

in difficult circumstances for no apparent reason; life may become tumultuous—this is another form of suffering. These episodes in our life can affect our interaction and relationship with others, building up tension and hostility. We may also feel that no one is able to sympathize with our plight. Continuing our journey of faith and offering services to God may become an increasingly heavy burden. Eventually we may even reach a point where we are totally absorbed by the problem itself (cf. Ps 77:3).

### **BENEFITS OF SUFFERING**

At times, it is hard for us, who have existed in our comfort zones for so long, to fully realize the value of suffering to our spirituality. The tendency is to stay where we are and increase the level of comfort, so that we can enjoy life to the full. It is very difficult to imagine anyone in that position wanting any part with suffering. In most cases, the need to delve truthfully into our spiritual existence ends up being eclipsed by the hurly-burly of everyday, material life. The strong sense of pursuing God slowly disintegrates because we do not fully understand the good of exercising godliness.

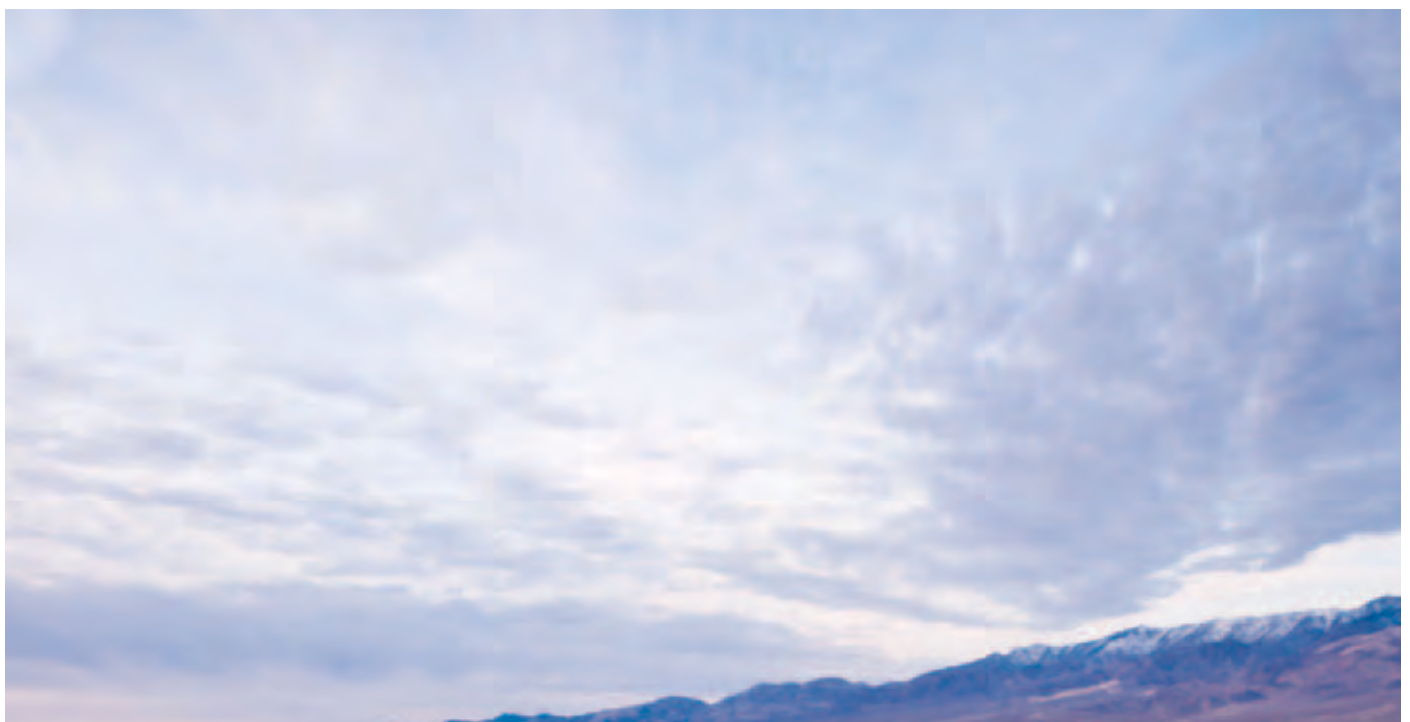
For this reason, we find it particularly tough to comprehend suffering when

it does occur. However, we need to remember that the grace of God fills every aspect of our lives, whether in times of prosperity or adversity. Moreover, we have received the Holy Spirit to help us understand why we suffer—"that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor 2:12). Sometimes it takes suffering to achieve what we could not have done by our own will; suffering ushers us into an understanding that puts our spiritual growth above everything else.

### **A HUMBLING PROCESS**

When the going gets tough in life, we have to learn to pull ourselves out from this vortex of negative feelings and depression. In order to do so, we must take a crucial step back to refocus on the Spirit's guidance. We will then realize we have been lacking the basic motivation to trust in God. Our relationship with God may not have been as good as we thought it was. To re-align our trust in God, then, becomes an exercise that we need to embrace with gratefulness and thanksgiving. Each time we suffer, we are actually given a chance to grow in faith.

At this point, coming from suffering to the realization of God's grace reminds us that we cannot do anything without Christ. We then begin to see our worthlessness and start to trust in God more than anything else. Instead of relying on ourselves, we count on the Lord in whatever we endeavor to do, putting Him first in our life.





Carefully following His principles and accomplishing His purpose for us will then be at the forefront of our Christian living and servitude. This mindset will, in turn, reinforce the importance of walking humbly with the Lord (Mic 6:8).

## A REFINING PROCESS

Sometimes we are well aware of our shortcomings and we desire to change for the better as well as to conduct ourselves appropriately before God and man. However, as much as we have this determination, we often do what

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we actually abhor and fail miserably to control ourselves. Initially, this may prove to be very tormenting to our sense of justice and moral conscience. However, as time goes by and through repeated action, we end up feeling numb to our wrongdoings and eventually accept our behavior as 'normal'.

In all honesty, this is an ongoing battle that we will have to fight until we reach perfection. In order to overcome such dilemmas and to rid ourselves of sin, suffering must play its part. This is a painful process. Yet, no matter how difficult it may be, drastic action must be taken to stop stubbornly repeating the same sin. Otherwise, this kind of stubbornness will always remain a stumbling block that stifles personal spiritual growth and hinders the progress of the church. In the worst-case scenario, it may cause others to fall and drive truth-seeking friends away from believing in Christ.

Isaiah vividly describes the refinement of the house of God; his description shows that Israel was purged quite radically. Since the severity of their sins was such that they could not be cleansed through mere warnings from the prophets, the children of Zion had to be delivered into the hands of their enemy, which is likened to passing through fire (Isa 4:3-5). This was the only way to create willingness in them to return to God in repentance and to transform their sinful nature.

Peter picks up the same theme as he

reminds the scattered believers about the benefits of suffering. His teaching clearly shows that it is always hard for us, in the flesh, to respond positively to God's word without fail. Yet, if Christ learned to obey the Father through His suffering (Heb 5:7-9), shouldn't we also prepare ourselves to suffer? In fact, if we want to stop sinning, our flesh has to suffer. We have to curb and put to death its desire, stopping it from enticing us (1 Pet 4:1). In this way, suffering helps us to do what our strength alone cannot do: it turns us away from sin.

Living the rest of our lives for the will of God is definitely impossible without the aid of suffering (1 Pet 4:2). Therefore, we have to arm ourselves with the mind to suffer—otherwise we will be fighting a losing battle, in danger of forfeiting even our spiritual lives. A notable example is Paul's confession of the wearing-away of his body, which served to renew his inner man (2 Cor 4:16).

Once we have equipped ourselves with this mindset, it will lead us to perfection.

## A FAITH-BUILDING PROCESS

To many of us, the realization of an eventual heavenly kingdom may be a far-fetched dream beyond our reach and concrete understanding. However, the saints were capable of seeing the heavenly city that God has prepared for them (Heb 11:14-16). The writer of Hebrews concludes that they were able to see afar because of their faith in God. For this reason, they called God their God, with whom they walked in faith.

Their lives on earth were characterized by continual suffering. These tribulations were intended to purify and strengthen their faith in the Lord. Recognizing the fact that they were merely sojourners and pilgrims in this world, they decided to live a life of wandering. Their faith can be likened to a window, which opened up to a view of their eventual home, away from this world of toil and sadness (Heb 11:13). The stronger their faith grew

through suffering, the clearer they were able to visualize their heavenly home, and the greater their urgency to gain access to this inheritance.

In 1 Peter 1:4, apostle Peter does not give any clues as to how the suffering saints can escape the brunt of pain in times of persecution. Instead he points them to the reality of an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which is reserved for them alone. For this reason, the believers of Peter's time rejoiced and, as a natural result of faith (2 Thess 1:4), exhibited a continual love for God in their suffering (1 Pet 1:8).

Suffering trains our faith and patience, deepening our yearning for the kingdom of God. This connection between faith and suffering is therefore crucial for our salvation.

However, danger is always real when our faith is superficial. Without genuine faith, God lifts His protection away from us, exposing us to the fearsome devices of the evil one. So, our pursuit in life should be to strive for the genuineness of faith. Instead of being wrapped up in pretences, polishing our faith in trials should be a matter of utmost importance, and each suffering moment should be taken as a chance to better ourselves. When we are purged by suffering (Rev 7:14), our faith is refined and becomes more precious than ever before, qualifying us for the crown of life (Jas 1:12).

## A TESTING PROCESS

Since God is Spirit, we may, at times, find it difficult to fathom Him fully. If, in addition, we do not have any real encounters with Him, we will easily start to think of God as only a form of knowledge.

*Suffering helps us to do what our strength alone cannot do: it turns us away from sin and increases our willingness to abide by the truth.*

This is especially so when life is smooth and relaxed. During those times, life becomes very much entangled with materialism and worldly entertainment. Such an existence creates a distance between God and us. We know about God but, in reality, do not give substance

*Suffering trains our faith and patience, deepening our yearning for the kingdom of God. This connection between faith and suffering is therefore crucial for our salvation.*

to that knowledge. If we remain in such a situation for a prolonged period of time, we will lose sight of God altogether.

We must be brought back to our senses and perceive God in a real sense through trials. The Exodus Generation, who wandered forty years in the wilderness, is a notable example. Their suffering was designed to help them know who the Lord God really was (Deut 29:4-6). It not only revealed to the people what God had provided for them in their daily lives, but also reminded them of His constant care. For forty years, their sandals and clothes did not wear out, and, although there were countless occasions where grave dangers arose in their lives, God never failed to aid them.

When we live a life of ease, we become undisciplined in keeping the word of God. Suffering, however, increases our willingness to abide by the truth. The Exodus Generation's wandering in the wilderness was intended to test their hearts and to find out if they would keep the commandments or not (Deut 8:2-3). Similarly, we do not truly know whether we can resolve to follow the Lord unless we are put to the test in tribulations. Such testing also helps us to understand ourselves deeper and provide a better idea of what we need to improve.

Although testing is never pleasant, the benefits it produces are tremendous. These benefits include establishing a healthy relationship with the Lord and remembering His providence and grace. Suffering will erase the desire to drift away from the Lord and follow idols, visible or invisible. We will realize that everything comes from the Lord, our provider. It will spark our resolve to honor God wherever we are (Deut 8:16-18). Without suffering, our talents and strength would prove too big an obstacle to overcome, hindering us from remaining faithful to God.

## BE READY TO SUFFER

Since it is beneficial for us to go through suffering, Peter tells us that we are to expect tribulations in our lives (1 Pet 4:17). If we suffer according to the will of God, we become partakers of Christ's sufferings. In fact, Jesus was exalted

through His sufferings. In like manner, when we suffer, we enter into the sufferings of Christ, through which we shall be exalted together with Him when He comes again.

Being able to suffer for Christ is commendable, but we may still find it hard to bear. Although the way forward may not be readily recognizable in times of suffering, we ought to be patient and believe that the Spirit of God rests upon us (1 Pet 4:14). This attitude will direct our hearts into the love and patience of Christ (2 Thess 3:5). We will focus on committing ourselves to Him in doing good (1 Pet 4:19). In this way, we will follow Christ's example when He was severely reviled (1 Pet 2:23) and, at the same time, free ourselves from the burden of anxiety.

*If we fall into various trials for the sake of Christ, we must count it as joy as we shall receive tremendous blessings. We will become vessels of God to magnify His power in these trials.*

If we fall into various trials for the sake of Christ, we must count it as joy as we shall receive tremendous blessings (Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 4:14). We will become vessels of God to magnify His power in these trials. Most importantly, we will be instruments of God's glory (1 Pet 4:14, 16), which is the ultimate aim of every Christian who loves the Lord. For this reason, we should always give thanks to God for being able to suffer for Him (1 Pet 4:16)—a glorious task that not everyone is privileged to undertake. ★



# The God Who Hides Himself

Adapted from a sermon by H.H. Ko—Heidelberg, Germany



*How long, LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? (Ps 89:46)*

*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? (Ps 13:1-2)*

The above words were part of David's prayers in times of distress. His prayer may seem familiar to many of us. In our sorrows, we often cry out to God in the same manner, and yet, we seem unable to see God. Similar to the psalmist, we may have been wondering why God is not helping us in our sorrow, or why He is hiding Himself. But is God really hiding Himself?

## INVISIBLE, YET PRESENT

Sometimes, while we are suffering, we may truly feel God has forsaken us. An inspirational Christian story tells us that a man once had a dream, in which he saw his whole life flash by. Many times throughout his life, he saw God's footprints in the sand, next to his own. But during the most difficult times in his life, there would always only be one set of footprints. For this reason, he asked the Lord, "I don't understand why, when I needed you most, you would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

Whenever we are in sorrow and grief, God is actually carrying us—we just do not know it. Having said that, why does God hide Himself while He carries us?

## TRUST AND OBEY

*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deut 29:29)*

Although we often cannot see God's presence in times of trials, we need to continually put our faith and trust in Him. God may not have revealed to us why or how long we have to suffer, but He has revealed to us what we need to know to follow His commandments. It is up to us to obey what we know, even if we may not always understand.

When God commanded Isaiah to prophesy that Babylon would destroy the kingdom of Israel and carry God's people away into captivity, he was puzzled. He could not understand why God would do such a thing to His own people. For this reason, Isaiah uttered a sigh from the bottom of his heart, "Truly You are God,

who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior!" (Isa 45:15).

Although he could not understand God's plan, Isaiah still went ahead to prophesy what God had commanded. Moreover, he acknowledged that God is the only Savior of Israel. In this way, he re-emphasized God's message: "I am the LORD, and there is no other" (Isa 45:18)—although you may not understand why I am doing what I'm doing, I am the Almighty, I know what is best and I want you to trust in Me.

With this message, God not only intends to show His sovereignty and omnipotence; more importantly, He wants to reassure us of His wisdom and power, so that we can trust in and obey Him.

## MADE BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TIME

In times of trial, we do not only seek for God's help but, very often, we also ask God for an answer: "Lord, why is this happening to me?" Many a time, we may not get answers from God, although we may have been praying very hard for understanding. During these moments, we must not be discouraged. Instead, we need to remember that God is sovereign—He is the King of kings and the Creator who reigns with absolute wisdom and authority. For this reason, He can choose not to answer us.

*During the toughest moments in our lives, let us remember and trust in God's great wisdom and deep love for us.*

*For so the LORD said to me, "I will take My rest, And I will look from My dwelling place Like clear heat in sunshine, Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." (Isa 18:4)*

Although it may seem as if God is not responding here, He is always watching us and working quietly in the background. During harvest time, good weather is essential. By providing sunshine and heat, God allows the reapers to bring in the harvest and to smoothly complete their work.

In fact, Solomon tells us that God makes all things beautiful in His time and for His reason.

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. (Eccl 3:11)*

So, although we may not be able to comprehend God's doings, and may not understand why we are suffering, we must continue to have faith in God. During the toughest moments in our lives, let us remember and trust in God's great wisdom and deep love for us. Let us hold on to God, for "we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28).

A couple at one of our churches in northern Taiwan lost their two children within a short period of time. Although they were deeply grieved, they continued to pray to God because they knew that God is the only one who can control life. So they brought all their pain and tears to the Lord in prayer, and soon afterwards God comforted them in a miraculous way. Although the couple had already undergone infertilization, the wife conceived again and eventually gave birth to twins. Indeed, as long as we love God and hold on to His principles, God will listen to our heartfelt prayers—He will make all things beautiful in His time.

## ACKNOWLEDGE GOD IN ALL OUR WAYS

Paul too understood very well that life and death are in God's hands. He thus acknowledged God in all his ways:

*But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills ... (1 Cor 4:19)*

*... But I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits. (1 Cor 16:7)*

When Paul said, "if the Lord wills", he was neither weak-willed nor did he desire to push away responsibility. Instead, his words show that he knew God very well. He understood that God's wisdom is far beyond his human comprehension and that God's plan may well be different from his own. Consequently he did not dare to ignore God when he made his plans.

Today, have we acknowledged God's sovereignty in our life? Do we acknowledge Him in all our ways and have we entrusted our entire life to Him?

*... You ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." (Jas 4:5)*

## CONCLUSION

Although God often seems to hide Himself from us in our times of suffering, afflictions are the only way for us to eventually find and see God.

*And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. (Isa 30:20)*

In times of suffering, we may grow weary in faith and feel discouraged. However, we must continue in unceasing prayers to God, whatever may befall. Instead of seeking an answer, we need to seek God's face.

*'And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My*

*Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD. (Ezek 39:29)*

When the Holy Spirit fills us, we will eventually find God. When His peace fills our hearts and we experience His abidance, we will finally see the Lord. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God will open our spiritual eyes, just as He opened Job's eyes after countless afflictions.

*Then Job answered the LORD and said: ... "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You". (Job 42:1, 5)*

After suffering so much affliction and pain, Job finally saw God.

He still did not understand why he went through all his sufferings. Yet, he saw and acknowledged his own insignificance as well the Lord's sovereignty and omnipotence. Eventually, "the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12).

Let us therefore acknowledge God's sovereignty and great wisdom. Let us commit ourselves into His almighty hand and trust Him unconditionally, for He surely knows what is best for us.

*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (Jer 29:13) ★*

*Although we often cannot see God's presence in times of trials, we must continue in unceasing prayers to God, whatever may befall. Instead of seeking an answer, we need to seek God's face.*

# Baptism for Salvation— Act of Faith or of Works?

Based on “The Doctrine of Baptism”,  
published by True Jesus Church Department of Literary Ministry

To baptize disciples of all nations is a direct command of our risen Lord Jesus (Mt 28:18–20). In addition, to be baptized is a calling of our Lord to all who believe in Him and the gospel that offers the promise of salvation (Mk 16:15–16). Wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, His baptism must follow. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Jesus must be baptized. Baptism is so integral to the proclamation of God’s kingdom and faith in Christ that it is inseparable from conversion.

Yet there are many who deny the necessity of baptism or its saving effect.

One chief objection to the belief in the necessity of baptism for salvation is that baptism is of works, and as such cannot be a condition for salvation. It is argued that assigning any saving effect to a rite such as baptism discredits and nullifies the finished work of Christ on the cross. If this understanding of baptism stands, then teaching salvation through baptism would be dangerously close to requiring circumcision for salvation, a position the apostle Paul vehemently rejects.

In fact, Paul was one of the most prominent defenders of salvation apart from works. He goes as far as declaring that any attempt to be justified by works is a total denial of God’s grace,

*becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Gal 5:3, 4)*

In view of the fundamental doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, how are we to understand the baptism?

## **BAPTISM IS GOD IN ACTION**

Those who deny the saving effects of baptism tend to speak of baptism primarily as something that man does. This, however, is not the perspective of the Scriptures. The passages that record New Testament baptism hardly mention the baptist (examples: Acts 2:3–41; 8:4–17; 8:26–40; 9:17–19; 16:13–15; 16:29–34; 19:1–7). Similarly, the act of being baptized on the part of the believer is never viewed as being responsible for the spiritual benefits that result in baptism. In baptism it is God who acts. The human actions are only a humble reception of the divine act. It is God who washes away our sins with the blood of Christ (Hebr 10:19–22; 9:14), buries us together with Christ into His death, raises us with Christ (Col 2:12; Rom 6:1–11), and brings us into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–13). While willing participation on behalf of the believer is necessary, it does not warrant any merit except for the fact that

*And I testify again to every man who*

*In baptism it is God who acts.  
The human actions are only a humble reception of the divine act.*

it is an act of obedience. The Scriptures never consider this act of obedience as the foundation of the saving effects in baptism, but always attribute them to the grace of God in Christ Jesus (Tit 3:4–7; Eph 2:4–9).

### BAPTISM IS GOD'S GRACE

To examine whether baptism is of works, we need to first consider the meaning of the term "works." By "works of the law" the Scriptures are speaking of attempting to achieve righteousness by observing and meeting the requirements of the law. The nature of this means to justification is that it seeks to earn righteousness before God rather than to receive it freely.

Herein lies the distinction between justification by works and justification by faith: the former claims man's merit, but the latter does not; the former denies the works of Christ, but the latter rests upon them. Thus, it would be wrong to view any and all forms of actions as "works of the law." To believe is an action, just as repentance and confessing the name of Christ are actions. But such actions are actions that respond to and receive the grace of God. They do not constitute attempts to be justified by works

*To believe is an action, just as repentance and confessing the name of Christ are actions. But such actions are actions that respond to and receive the grace of God. They do not constitute attempts to be justified by works.*

### BAPTISM IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Nowhere in the Scriptures can we find any reference to baptism being associated with the works of the law. On the contrary, the Scriptures present baptism in the context of grace and faith. Take the baptism passage in Colossians for example:

*In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,*

*by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.  
(Col 2:11–13)*

Even though baptism is at the heart of this passage, we see no indication whatsoever that baptism is of the works of the law. In fact, it is an instrument of God's grace. It is Christ who circumcises us, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. It is He who makes us alive together with Him. It is He who forgives all our trespasses. All of these works done by the hand of Christ take effect in us in baptism.

This passage further teaches us that our resurrection with Christ in baptism is through faith in the working of God. Faith in God's grace underlies the spiritual effect of baptism. Baptism is of faith, not of works.

This is further re-emphasized in Ephesians 2:1–13, a key passage on God's saving grace:

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.  
(Eph 2:4–9)*

Both the passage in Colossians and in Ephesians talks about our former death in sin and state of uncircumcision. Both speak of being made alive and raised up together with Christ. Both attribute the spiritual transformations to the work of God. While Ephesians 2:1–13 stresses that we have been saved by grace through faith, the parallel passage in Colossians

highlights baptism as the occasion for God's saving work. There is perfect harmony between these passages, and one supplements the other. Baptism is in no way opposed to salvation by grace through faith, but is actually an integral part of it.

**W**e've established that baptism is an action that responds to God's grace, and that it is God who works in baptism.

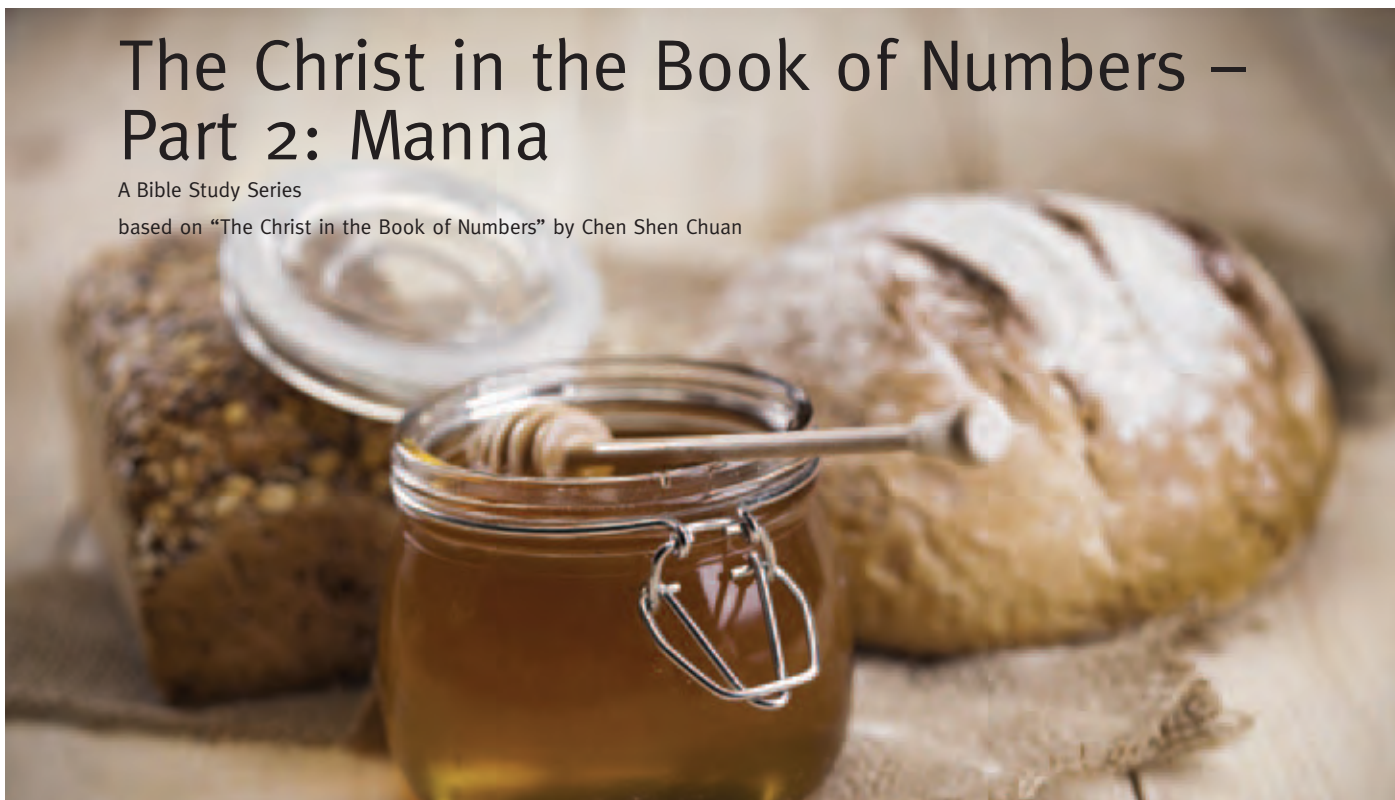
*Baptism is an instrument of God's grace. It is Christ who puts off our body of the sins of the flesh. It is He who makes us alive together with Him. It is He who forgives all our trespasses. All of these works done by the hand of Christ take effect in us in baptism. Faith in God's grace underlies the spiritual effect of baptism.*

Through baptism the blood of Christ washes away the sins of the believer (Acts 2:38; 22:16), the body of sin is put off (Rom 6:1–7; Col 2:11–12) and salvation is given (Mk 16:16; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21). In other words, as sinners, our conscience is defiled (Heb 9:9; 10:2,22; cf. Tit 1:15). However, when our hearts are "sprinkled from an evil conscience", we are able to draw near to God (Heb 10:22) and respond to God with a good conscience. This is exactly what God does through baptism: He purifies our conscience with the blood of Christ, so that we can have boldness in the day of judgment. It is in this sense that baptism saves us. It is for this reason that we need to be baptized to receive salvation. ★

# The Christ in the Book of Numbers – Part 2: Manna

A Bible Study Series

based on “The Christ in the Book of Numbers” by Chen Shen Chuan



*Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it. (Num 11:7–9)*

Despite having rescued millions of Israelites from the clutches of Pharaoh, Moses found himself facing a new and seemingly insurmountable challenge—that of providing for the people’s daily needs. Where, in the endless desert, would he find sufficient food and water for a multitude?

Certainly, when the Israelites entered the wilderness after they had left Egypt, and found that their provisions were exhausted, the state of their faith could not have been in starker contrast from when they had crossed the Red Sea—a time when they were singing, dancing and filled with thanksgiving. Now, there was nothing in their hearts except disbelief and dissatisfaction.

*Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in*

*the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

*Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.” (Ex 16:2–4)*

These biblical verses highlight the origin of manna. We learn that God rained it down from heaven, and the Israelites had bread to eat for the next forty years. The only times it stopped was on the weekly Sabbath, because God required His people to rest.

The Bible calls manna the “bread from heaven” (Ex 16:4), a food the Israelites depended solely on for their survival during the forty-year period in the arid, desolate desert. Alas, the Israelites did not realize how blessed they were and ended up despising it; such was their ingratitude. Nevertheless, God continued to send manna until Joshua, the second-generation leader, led the people into Canaan and across the River Jordan (Josh 5:12). From that juncture, the people began eating the local produce and manna from heaven ceased.

## 1 THE PREFIGURATION OF CHRIST

Although the period of the wilderness journey to the appearance of Jesus Christ spanned over 1400 years, the mystery of Christ was already hidden in the appearance of manna. During Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum, a group of people came and searched for Him by boat. When they had found Him, they asked, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled” (Jn 6:25–26).

Jesus understood their motives; He knew they were looking for Him not because they had witnessed His miracles, but because they had had their fill of the physical bread He had provided. He therefore took the opportunity to impart an important teaching—the need to labor for spiritual food that endures to everlasting life as opposed to the food that perishes (Jn 6:27).

At this point, the Jews asked Jesus for a sign, perhaps hoping for a repeat of the miracle of the five barley loaves (Jn 6:1–14). Hence, they tested Jesus, saying, “Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’ ” (Jn 6:31). In response, Jesus told them that the manna, which their fathers ate, was not the true bread from heaven but that “the bread of God

is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33). By saying this, Jesus associated Himself with the manna that sustained the Israelites in their wilderness journey some 1400 years ago.

In fact, Jesus directed these words not only to the Jews of that generation, but to all mankind. He wanted everyone to know that He is the bread of life (Jn 6:35), the giver of the truth.

### 1.1 Christ Has the Words of Life

Then Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (Jn 6:68)

As Christians, we are not exempt from the responsibilities and routines of life, but we can avoid the emptiness often experienced by the people of the world and live a victorious life. The Bible teaches us to do this by overcoming the temptations of Satan, which elder John defines as the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16).

Jesus sets out the way to live a victorious life, which is to rely on the word of God: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). Amos prophesied, saying, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord GOD, 'That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD'" (Amos 8:11). Just as our physical body needs food and water, our spiritual self needs the word of God, the manna from heaven, to survive: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (Jn 6:63).

When we "eat" the word of Christ each day, we will never hunger or thirst again, and our inner life will thrive as we continue our journey until we reach the land of rest.

*Just as our physical body needs food and water, our spiritual self needs the word of God, the manna from heaven, to survive.*

### 1.2 Christ Is the Bread of Life

In Capernaum, Jesus told the Jews, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51).

If we were to interpret these words literally, they would be unfathomable. Not surprisingly, the Jews debated amongst themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" (Jn 6:52). Unknown to them, Jesus was, in fact, referring to a sacrament He would soon institute—the Holy Communion.

From the Lord's words in Jn 6:51, 53–58, we understand that His body is the everlasting bread of life, which He is willing to share with those who believe in Him. He says His flesh is "food indeed" and His blood is "drink indeed", for whoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life, will be raised up on the last day and abides in Jesus just as He abides in him (Jn 6:54, 56).

The apostle Paul further tells us that whenever we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, we remember the Lord's death and anticipate His second coming. Since the bread and cup represent the body and blood of Christ, we need to examine ourselves before partaking, lest we eat and drink judgment upon ourselves (1 Cor 11:23–31).

Whoever eats the body of Jesus Christ and drinks His blood in a solemn manner will live forever, unlike the wilderness generation who ate the physical manna for forty years and passed away. Christ is the true spiritual bread that we need in our faith journey.

## 2 THE BREAD OF LIFE

As a result of God's providential care, none of the Israelites died of hunger in the wilderness. The manna that sustained them was physical, but it also prefigured bread that is spiritual.

### 2.1 The Bread That Descended from Heaven

God, who is the giver of life, sustains His creatures with the goodness of the earth. Yet, the manna He bestowed to the Israelites was different: it came down from heaven and settled on the ground with the dew—a phenomenon that defied the laws of nature. Manna was certainly a physical food, but it was not of this world.

*Christ is the true spiritual bread that we need in our faith journey.*

Similarly, Jesus Christ was not from the world: He descended from heaven and was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and not through human will or desire (Mt 1:18–20). Accordingly, He was free of sin, and the nature of His life was heavenly and spiritual—unlike man, who is born of woman and is under the bondage of sin (Job 14:1; Rom 5:12).

By sending manna from heaven, God wanted to show that Christ is the true manna—the bread from heaven—who will enable all nations to receive life. Therefore, with regard to the coming of Christ, Paul acknowledged that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh; He was not of the world (1 Tim 3:16).

On one occasion, when Jesus was discussing the events in the wilderness years with the Jews, He said, "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead" (Jn 6:49). His point was that man's life is limited; even the elect who ate the manna did not have any special dispensation over death. But now, people could take heart in knowing the true manna had arrived: Jesus had descended from heaven to impart the "words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). Jesus told His audience, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:35). He reiterated this point in John 6:48, "I am the bread of life", and assured His listeners that He was able to raise them up in the last day (Jn 6:40, 50).

Despite the truth Jesus shared, many Jews still rejected Him. Today, there are believers who fail to treasure His truth, even though it has the power to sustain their spiritual lives. They prefer, instead, to receive things of a secular nature, even though these can neither satisfy, nor bring about spiritual growth. In a way, such people are like the Israelites who deemed the manna tasteless and bland. Yet, had it not been for this heavenly bread, the chosen people would have perished in the wilderness long before the end of the forty years, and it would have been impossible for them to inherit Canaan.



*By sending manna from heaven, God wanted to show that Christ is the true manna—the bread from heaven—who will enable all nations to receive life.*

## 2.2 Prepared for the Elect

The Book of Genesis records how God revealed to Abram that his descendants would be “strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years” (Gen 15:12–14). On the same day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram and promised to give the land of Canaan to his descendants (Gen 15:18–21).

In order to keep His promise, God even arranged for manna to come down from heaven. It was part of His gracious plan and providential care—He truly is *Jehovah Jireh*, the God who provides (cf. Gen 22:14).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul recounts the history of Israel and cautions the believers not to be ignorant of the fact that their “fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink” (1 Cor 10:1–4). Here, Paul refers to manna as “spiritual food” as it prefigured Christ and His spiritual provision for the saints. Hence, Jesus says,

*“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and*

*that they may have it more abundantly.”*  
(Jn 10:9–10)

Jesus constitutes the true food that God has prepared to sustain our life.

## 2.3 Freely Given

God bestowed bread freely from heaven for His people through His great power. Yet, despite experiencing this gracious miracle daily, the Israelites were not only ungrateful for His providential care, they even began murmuring (Num 11:6). In doing so, they angered and grieved the heart of God (Num 11:10).

Such is man’s nature that we often fail to cherish the things, which are free in life. Worse, we may even despise them.

As Christians, we should realize that what we have comes from God, including our salvation (Mt 10:8). Like David, we should offer prayers of thanksgiving, recognizing that “all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You” (1 Chr 29:12–14).

Throughout his life, David had fought

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victoriously against Israel’s enemies, yet he understood that all things were from God. It was thus with an earnest attitude that he entreated God to accept the offerings made by himself and his people. The question is, do we have the same understanding as David?

## 2.4 Must Be Gathered

When God rained down manna, He expected the people to go out and gather it (Num 11:8; Ex 16:16, 21). It was not a difficult task (Num 11:8), and if they did it each day, they were assured of food to eat. Compared to the time when they were enslaved in Egypt and subject to harsh labor, it was a world apart.

Believers need the word of God to nourish their spiritual life. For this reason, the saints of old assembled together constantly, drawing near to God (Heb 10:25). This grace is available to those who are baptized into Christ and is the only way to find true fulfillment in our spiritual life, to be joyful in God (Lk 1:46–47) and to avoid a crisis of faith.

Although manna was freely given, the people needed to gather it each morning. The same principle applies to spiritual food: as believers, we must put in effort to gather it each day, collecting



as much as we each need by studying and listening to the word of God. There are no short cuts.

*Although manna was freely given, the people needed to gather it each morning. The same principle applies to spiritual food: as believers, we must put in effort to gather it each day, collecting as much as we each need by studying and listening to the word of God.*

**2.5 Crushed and Passed through Fire**

When God gave the Israelites manna to eat, He actually provided them with a versatile new food. It looked like coriander seed and could be ground on millstones, crushed in a mortar, cooked in pans, or made into cakes—much like grains of rice, wheat or beans. Since manna could be prepared in different ways, its taste must have been rich and varied. Yet the Israelites did not appreciate what the Lord had provided for them: “But now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!” (Num 11:6).

The Israelites’ reaction towards manna brings to mind the experience of Jesus Christ. In order to accomplish salvation and remove the emptiness in man’s heart, He had to endure many afflictions (Phil 2:6–8; 1 Pet 2:24). Much like manna, He submissively allowed Himself to be crushed, milled and passed through the fire. In giving His body for our sake, Jesus became the food that nourishes our spiritual lives.

Unfortunately, many people in His time could not accept Him and were unwilling to turn to Him. And to this day, there are still believers who fail to cherish the Lord’s grace.

**2.6 Exceedingly Sweet**

*And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.” (Num 21:5)*

In the Book of Numbers, manna is described as having “the taste of pastry prepared with oil” (Num 11:8), while the Book of Exodus says “the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (Ex 16:31). Therefore, the Israelites’ complaint of a “worthless” food was a serious distortion of the reality.

Man’s life depends on the word of God (Deut 8:3; Mt 4:4), and those who diligently seek His word will experience its wonderful taste.

King David says,

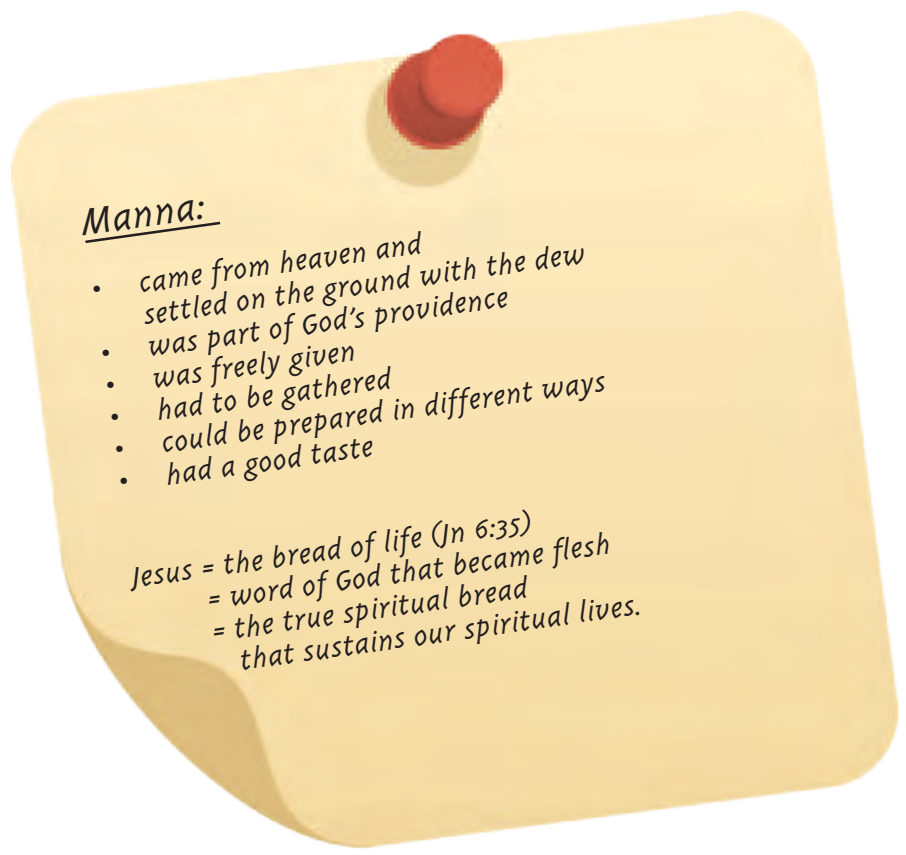
*The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (Ps 19:9–10)*

Another psalmist writes, “How sweet

*Man’s life depends on the word of God (Deut 8:3; Mt 4:4), and those who diligently seek His word will experience its wonderful taste.*

are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps 119:103).

**T**hrough His sufferings and His sacrifice on the cross for mankind, Jesus became the true manna, the word of eternal life. A Christian’s attitude towards material things is a good indicator of his attitude and reverence for the word of God. As faithful believers, we should not bargain with God about our daily bread, nor complain when it does not meet our expectations. Rather, we should accept and learn to appreciate His loving provision and His salvation grace. In our faith journey, we should pursue the truth through daily Bible reading and regular service attendance. And, instead of striving after the transient things of the world, we ought to focus on the hope that is everlasting. ★



# The Great Flood

Eng Guan Tay—Singapore



The world watched in horror as tsunami waves swept irresistibly across coastal towns in eastern Japan on March 11, 2011. The death toll was in the tens of thousands. The area inundated was about 470 square kilometers with the greatest height of the waves reaching ten meters.

Genesis 6-8 records the greatest natural disaster the world has ever known. In comparison to the Japan tsunami, the Great Flood inundated an area 300,000 times greater—all the dry land of the earth. The sea level rose to about a thousand times higher, so that the water even covered the tops of the highest mountains (cf. Gen 7:11-12, 17-20). The recent earthquake in Japan moved parts of this country by up to four meters. The Great Flood, however, tore open many parts of the earth's crust and probably shifted continents.

*And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. (Gen 7:21)*

We know that the events in the Bible were recorded as examples and warnings for us. In this way we are taught how to live our lives in a God-pleasing manner (1 Cor 10:6). Consequently, the greatest recorded natural disaster that ever struck our planet teaches us how to save

ourselves from eternal destruction.

## GLOBAL WARMING OR GLOBAL WARNING?

We often hear that natural disasters are on the increase due to our own carelessness about the environment. Pollution has led to global warming and subsequently to cataclysmic climate changes. For this reason, many zealously preach the message of safe environmental practices. *Green* and *nature* have become lifestyle choices that approach the devotion of religion among many good folks.

Loving and taking care of the environment and the earth that God has given to us is natural to God's children. After all, the Scriptures talk about sustainable agricultural practices, healthy living, and caring for animals.

But will these practices really save us from future disasters?

Genesis 9 tells us that God set a rainbow in the sky after the flood. This rainbow was the sign of the covenant between God, Noah and "every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen 9:15). If not for God's mercy, we would have perished long ago.

Yet, the Bible tells us that the earth's second and final great destruction is at hand when the sinful conditions of the antediluvian world repeat themselves:

*For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Pet 3:5-7)*

Today as in ancient times, the people of the world are slowly rejecting God. First they focus on things that are material, preferring objects and ideals that can be explained and felt in a physical way. This also explains why they are focused on saving the earth but not the world of human souls. Moving in the same direction, they dismiss the special relationship between God and man by denying God in one instance and in another, equating man with all of the other creation. In evolutionary biology, man is but a small branch of an enormous tree of life that sprang out from nowhere. By deleting God and dragging man down to the level of animals, they emphasize on following physical instincts and satisfaction (e.g., "homosexuality is natural"), term bestial behavior as normal and delete the morality that God gave to man: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of

his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5).

If we look at the economic, romantic and life events on earth that preceded the flood, we notice that they were surprisingly everyday:

*For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Mt 24:38-39)*

*The greatest recorded natural disaster that ever struck our planet teaches us how to save ourselves from eternal destruction.*

Similarly, just before the Lord comes again, there will be a period when everything on earth looks quite normal. There are wars and rumors of war, crime and terrorism, but in many places, people are busy with their daily routines. The world today with its strange juxtaposition of extreme fear and extreme pleasure chillingly reminds us of the days before Noah entered the ark. We should take this as a global warning of destruction and prepare a spiritual way of escape.

Just as Noah and his family entered the ark to escape destruction, we too must enter the spiritual ark to be saved from eternal death. But where is this spiritual ark?

**BEAUTIFUL PREFIGURATIONS OF THE TRUE CHURCH**

**The Saving Ark of the End Times**

A prefiguration in the Bible is a teaching embedded in an earlier Old Testament story that is to be understood spiritually in the New Testament. Noah's ark is a prefiguration of the saving body of Christ, which is His church: "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:22-23).

Just as there was only one ark, there's only one true church (Gen 6:14; Eph 4:4; Jn 10:16). This true church must faithfully follow God's words, just as Noah built the ark exactly according to

God's measurements (Gen 6:22; 1 Chr 28:12; Mt 7:21-23), and have the Lord's abidance. In fact, God did not just shut Noah and his family in the ark to leave them by themselves—He was in the ark Himself for He told Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household" (Gen 7:1).

Today, we enter the true church and saving ark through baptism:

*... when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... (1 Pet 3:20-21)*

It is interesting to note that Noah's family of eight souls was not saved "from water", but "through water". Indeed the teaching is profound and unlocks a totally different worldview. God did not only intend to save Noah and his family from the floodwaters but, more importantly, He used the floodwaters as a means to save them from the polluting evil of the world! God was cleansing the world. Today, He cleanses us through water baptism when our sins are washed away and we are born again. We are truly saved through water, i.e. water baptism!

Moreover, the above verses tell us that only a few, that is eight souls, were saved at the time of Noah. Although the earth was not so populated at that time, eight souls were still an awful minority. Today, there are also few who enter the true church, "because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mt 7:14).

*Today, we enter the true church and saving ark through baptism.*

**The Dove of the Holy Spirit with Us**

After 150 days of heavy rain, it began to clear up and the floodwaters started to recede. When the waters had decreased to a certain level, Noah sent out a dove "to see if the waters had receded from

*God did not only intend to save Noah and his family from the floodwaters but, more importantly, He used the floodwaters as a means to save them from the polluting evil of the world!*

the face of the ground" (Gen 8:8). Since the ground was still covered with water, the dove returned to Noah into the ark.

The dove prefigures the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:16). The first period of the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament was not one of indwelling. God worked within the framework of a physical chosen people, the Israelites. The Holy Spirit only dwelt temporarily in a few individuals. The Law was given as a temporary measure to tutor the people until Jesus Himself ushered in the era of faith (Gal 3:23-25).

When Noah sent out the dove for the second time, it returned with a fresh olive leaf in its mouth (Gen 8:10-11). This represents the Holy Spirit's second period of work during the apostolic era. Although the Lord Jesus established the church with the great downpour of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, heresies later entered the church and the Holy Spirit was withdrawn again.

*So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore. (Gen 8:12)*

The Holy Spirit given in the latter days has revived the true church and will be with us until Jesus comes again! The final stage of history saw the revival of the true church through the downpour of the Holy Spirit. This was evidenced by the speaking of tongues and the return to the clear and simple doctrines of the Bible. In this way, the Holy Spirit shows us and clearly confirms that the True Jesus Church is the ark of the end times.

**STAY IN THE ARK**

When the dove did not return to him, Noah removed the covering of the ark to see whether the land around him was dry. Although the ground was indeed dry, he did not leave the ark until God personally instructed him to do so.

We can imagine how much Noah must have been eager to go out and step

Today, we may have entered the ark of the last days, but are we still following God's lead?

on dry land after such a long time. But just as he had faithfully followed God's instructions to build the ark before the flood came, he continued to follow God's lead after his life had been saved.

Today, we may have entered the ark of the last days, but are we still following God's lead?

Before Noah sent out the dove, he actually sent a raven. But the raven "kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth" (Gen 8:7).

Ravens belong to the family of smaller birds of prey, which partly feed on dead animals and the young of other birds.<sup>1</sup> As such, the raven prefigures the devil and his unrelenting activity of devouring the souls of men on earth (Lev 11:13,15; Mt 13: 4, 1 Pet 5:8). The devil has been at work since the time of Adam and Eve, and will prowl and devour until the end.

For this reason, we need to watch and pray, so that we won't fall into the trap of Satan and be led away from the safe ark (Mt 26:41).

In fact, the precious Holy Spirit has been given to us in these last days to help us in this endeavor.

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (Jn 14:26)*

The Spirit of God will help us to willingly and humbly obey God's words and to remain in the ark of salvation until Jesus comes again to say, "Go out of the ark" (Gen 8:16).



Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (Rev 21:1)

*"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*

*"Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:7, 20) ★*

1 Stratton-Porter, Gene. "Raven", International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913, 5 May 2003 29 Jul 2011

# Call for Devotionals

*"I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways." (Ps 119:15)*

Most of us regularly read the Bible and ponder upon God's words and His works. However, not many of us may take time to actually pen down our thoughts. But if you do, you may actually be writing a devotional.

A devotional is a pithy article (300 to 350 words) inspired by biblical teachings. Has a verse recently caught your attention, giving you insight on God's love and a Christian's relationship with Him?

Write it down and share this spiritual nourishment!

If you wish to read recent and archived devotionals written by our church members, go to [www.tjc.org](http://www.tjc.org) and [members.tjc.org](http://members.tjc.org).

To submit your devotional, please indicate "Devotional" in the subject line and send it to [manna@tjc.org](mailto:manna@tjc.org).



## When They Say “Peace and Safety!”...

John Ko—Brisbane, Australia



*For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thess 5:3)*

Ever since the beginning of 2010, a series of major natural disasters has occurred around the world due to climatic abnormalities. Devastating earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and tornados in different parts of the world have taken hundreds of thousands of lives and stripped people of their possessions and homes.

### PEACE IN THE MIDST OF AUSTRALIA’S FLOOD

In the past, Australia and New Zealand were considered to be paradise on earth because these places were rarely struck by disasters. For this reason it was even more surprising that both countries were hit by natural disasters this year.

In January 2011, the worst flood in a hundred years hit Australia, flooding Queensland, including Brisbane and nearby cities. More than fifteen thousand houses were submerged by the floodwaters, over eighteen thousand houses were flooded and twenty-two people lost their lives. On February 22, 2011, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit Christchurch, New Zealand. Ten thousand houses and one thousand shops collapsed, and 181 people lost their lives.

All these disasters came suddenly—they were like terror that comes like a storm, and destruction that comes like a whirlwind, causing distress and anguish (cf. Prov 1:27).

I have been living in Brisbane, Australia for more than twenty years, and witnessed the century’s great flood. In January this year, there was continuous heavy rain in the northern part of Queensland as well as in the Toowoomba and Ipswich regions, which are west of Brisbane. Due to the heavy rain and water overflowing from a reservoir, the river level rose rapidly, up to a dangerous eighteen meters. The flooding on January 10, 2011, devastated Toowoomba and Ipswich; the citizens could only watch as the raging flood washed their vehicles and houses away. When the flood reached Brisbane at 4:00 am on January 13, 2011, the river level in Brisbane rose to 4.46 meters and all the houses in the lower regions of Brisbane were submerged by the floodwaters.

Thank God, the flood did not so seriously affect the area where I live, although the water stood knee-high, most basements were flooded and many high-rise buildings had no electricity and water. From my apartment on the 44th floor, which faces the Brisbane River, I saw how the raging flood swept over the private and public harbors, washing yachts and public ferries all the way out

*As I prayed, I did not panic and was not afraid, for I knew that God would protect us—He will not slumber nor sleep (Ps 121:4–8); He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Ps 46:1–3).*

to the ocean—it was really a terrifying sight.

When the flood came, Brisbane Church was hosting a short-term National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) and a working youth seminar on Mount Cootha, near Brisbane. Thank God, due to His protection, the raging flood did not affect the divine work. In addition, none of our church members' houses was flooded, and all the brothers and sisters had peace during this turbulent time.

Witnessing Australia's greatest flood of the century with my own eyes, made me reflect: What is man? We often hear that science is all-powerful and that nothing is impossible if we work hard. These statements truly reveal the ignorance of man. Although we are indeed able to achieve many things with our own hands and are even able to predict the coming of floods, we cannot do anything to stop nature's forces. When disaster strikes, we can only watch helplessly as nature's forces destroy our possessions. What is man? Man is so small and insignificant! There is nothing that we can boast about.

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,  
What is man that You are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that You visit him? (Ps 8:3–4)*

*Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; (Isa 40:15)*

### PEACE IN THE MIDST OF NEW ZEALAND'S EARTHQUAKE

On February 20, 2011, after the flood had receded from Brisbane, my wife, my mother-in-law and I traveled to Christchurch, New Zealand. We wanted to tour the region and visit my brother and aunt. According to our original plan, we were to tour mountains and seashores on February 22, and Christchurch city center on February 23, but we changed our mind after our arrival. So, we decided to visit a museum in the city center first. However, on the morning of February 22, my mother-in-law and my aunt decided to stay at home. Therefore only my brother, my wife and I went to the museum.

When we arrived at the museum, I was so captivated by the surrounding historical buildings that I took my camera and walked toward the city center. We had originally planned to visit the main tour attraction, the Christchurch Catholic Cathedral, and then have a meal at the site that had been hit by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake on September 4, 2010, to see the damage that had been done. However, after our visit to the cathedral, we decided to have lunch nearby first, before going to the earthquake-ravaged site.

After lunch, we walked slowly towards our destination. While strolling along a main street in the tourist area, the earth suddenly began to shake violently. I thought, "Is this an earthquake?"

Thank God, at that moment, we were standing right in the middle of the street, and so we were able to avoid the falling bricks. We saw the ground crack open, with mud gushing out; the walls and windows of the shops around us were breaking and the people around us were screaming in fear. At that time, I had only one thought: "Lord, have mercy on us". With this thought in mind, I kept praying



Christchurch Catholic Cathedral before and shortly after the earthquake on February 22, 2011

silently in my heart.

Thank God, as I prayed, I did not panic and was not afraid, for I knew that God would protect us—He will not slumber nor sleep (Ps 121:4–8); He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Ps 46:1–3).

I then took my camcorder and recorded this historical moment, still not aware of the earthquake's severity. It so happened that we were standing right in front of a sister's store, when we saw this sister with her baby in her arms, rushing out of the building, followed by her husband and her father-in-law. A coffee shop on the other side of the road was on the verge of collapsing, and some courageous individuals rushed into the coffee shop with chairs held above their heads to save others who were still trapped inside. Soon afterwards, two persons were carried out of the coffee shop and placed on the roadside. Attempts were made to resuscitate them, but it seemed like a futile exercise. Together with others in the city, we were evacuated to the field in front of the cathedral.

When we reached the field, it dawned on me that this earthquake was the most serious in decades. The cathedral that we had visited just an hour ago was devastated—its tower was broken, the bricks that had fallen from the walls piled up to about a person's height and cars parked beside the cathedral were crushed.

Had my mother-in-law and my aunt accompanied us that morning, we would have still been in the cathedral when the roof collapsed, because they would have walked at a slower pace due to their age. If we had taken our lunch at the earthquake-ravaged site, we would likely be trapped in the collapsed restaurant. Reflecting upon all these coincidences, I have to say that we would have been buried under the rubble, if the Lord had not protected us. But the Lord was not only looking after us: by the mercy of God, the earthquake did not harm any of our brothers and sisters in Christchurch, nor did it damage our local church

Car in front of Christchurch Catholic Cathedral buried under the bricks after the earthquake



building.

### TRUE PEACE IN THE LORD

Natural disasters are so terrifying, because they always come unexpectedly—when we realize that there's a disaster, it's already too late. As human beings, we are unable to have full control over our lives or to escape any natural disaster—we are not exempt from suffering. Yet, we can find peace in God to face our trials. For this reason, we need to acknowledge our own insignificance and learn to rely on God.

People often try to obtain peace through different methods of their own, but more often than not, they lose peace instead. The Bible teaches us that the True God is our refuge in times of dire distress. If we earnestly seek God, He will grant us true peace that transcends all human understanding. His peace is a complete peace of body, soul and spirit. If we have true peace, we will be able to face and overcome the difficulties in the flesh.

The True God, Jesus Christ, is the source of peace (Lk 1:76–79; Ps 29:11; Jn 14:27; 16:33) and the Everlasting Rock (Isa 26:3–4; Ps 56:13). If we know Jesus and listen to His commandments, we will have peace flowing like a river. When we meet with trials and tribulations,

we do not have to be anxious, “but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6–7).

Personally experiencing God's protection in the midst of these two natural disasters has once again proved to me that “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isa 26:3).

**I**n fact, all the natural disasters that have struck the earth in recent years, remind us that the end time has come:

*And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Mt 24:7–8)*

May we have the wisdom to recognize the signs of the end time (Mt 24:32–33) and be watchful and sober. May we treasure our life that God has given to us, be zealous for Him and prepare ourselves for the second coming of the Lord. Amen.

*For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.*

*(1 Thess 5:2,6) ★*

*As human beings, we are unable to have full control over our lives or to escape any natural disaster—we are not exempt from suffering. Yet, we can find peace in God to face our trials. For this reason, we need to acknowledge our own insignificance and learn to rely on God.*



# God's Way Is the Best Way

Jinq Horng Teo—Singapore



## RECEIVING GOD INTO MY LIFE

Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus I bear testimony.

I was born in 1990 into a family in Sabah that worshipped ancestors. In 2006, when I was in high school, a schoolmate invited me to his charismatic church for one Alpha Course, which is a series of introductory sessions on Christianity. After a few weeks of listening to the message, I felt that I should become a Christian because I was attracted to the message of love that this religion preached. But there were so many different sets of teachings out there.... I felt that a church should follow what the Bible says, so I decided to read the Bible from cover to cover before choosing a church to attend.

Later, in November 2006, my parents suggested that I go to church with my relatives, who happen to be members of the True Jesus Church. At first, I was shocked by the mode of prayer, but after some time I got used to it and even went to pray for the Holy Spirit in front of the pulpit during Friday night services. I also learned that truth is only found in the True Jesus Church, so I decided to attend only this church. During a prayer session in a spiritual meeting in spring 2008, I was praying for the Holy Spirit with particular earnestness. Suddenly my body started vibrating. I felt as if someone else was moving me, because the movement

was very rhythmic and I would never go off balance. I had no doubt that the Holy Spirit was touching me. Even so, I had not yet received the Holy Spirit, as I was not speaking in tongues.

In August 2008, I went to Singapore to further my studies. Soon after that, I really wanted to be baptized because I became more and more aware of the fact that God loved me and was waiting for me to accept His salvation grace. I wanted to be baptized in November that year but my father did not agree to it, as he wanted me to wait until I reached the age of twenty-one.

One night in January 2009, during my evening prayer, I felt my tongue rolling. I immediately knew that I had received the Holy Spirit and felt very thankful to God. A few nights later, I had a dream, in which I saw a man who was tall and bright. I could not see His face, but I knew anyway that it was the Lord. He then stretched out His hands and hugged me. I immediately felt a warm sensation throughout my body.

Through these incidents, I truly knew that God loved me. I asked my cousin to talk to my father about my baptism but, again, my father wanted me to wait for some more time. Despite his answer, I felt that I could no longer delay, so I was baptized in May 2009 in Singapore. My mother especially came to Singapore to

witness my baptism. She also told me to evangelize to my father, siblings and relatives. When I asked her, "What about you?" she merely replied, "Never mind about me."

## LEARNING TO TRUST AND RELY ON GOD

By the grace of God, I joined the church choir in September 2009. In December 2009, the church in Singapore held an evangelistic meeting, during which the choir was scheduled to present a few hymns. Shortly before the presentation that evening, I accidentally choked on a fish bone during dinner. I tried to pray and then remove the bone by myself, but failed. I didn't want to see a doctor, because if I did, I may not have gotten back to church on time to sing. So I told the brothers who were sitting at the same table with me, and one of them suggested that everyone at that table should pray together in silence. After our prayer, I struggled for a few minutes—at first the bone seemed to have disappeared, but when I doubted, it immediately came back. Eventually I told myself to submit to God in faith. After that the fish bone just disappeared.

Although this incident may seem to be quite a small matter, it taught me to have faith in God.

Between January and April 2010, I had

*I really wanted to be baptized because I became more and more aware of the fact that God loved me and was waiting for me to accept His salvation grace.*

various illnesses. First of all, I had bouts of sore throat, which lasted for about two to three months. After seeing the doctor, I was given an antibiotic by the name of Amoxicillin. Taking that medication really helped, but later on I realized that I was allergic to it, as it caused rashes throughout my body. I then had to take antihistamines as well. Between the bouts of soreness, I had an unexplained loss of voice, flu, and pain in my gums caused by impacted wisdom teeth. Strangely, all these pains came one by one, never occurring at the same time. I did not have sore throat when I lost my voice, and I had flu only after I regained my voice. Only after all these did I have my wisdom teeth removed.

During this period of time, even the brethren around me felt that something was wrong with me. One day a brother asked me, "What have you done? You seem to have a lot of trouble." I didn't know the answer either. I started to think that God was chastising me and thanked God for that, although I didn't know what I was guilty of.

One day, I could no longer bear the emotional burden that my constant illnesses gave me, so I prayed to God in tears. After that prayer, I casually flipped open my Bible and arrived at Psalm seventy-three. The following verse was particularly comforting: "My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps 73: 26).

I told myself that God would surely be able to remove my sufferings, since He had removed the fish bone the year before. At the same time, however, I felt that God wanted me to learn how to endure pain and receive strength from Him while suffering. On that day, I truly realized that God is my refuge and strength; He is the One I can rely upon at all times. I have since learned to endure all sufferings with a joyful heart.

### GRACE AND COMFORT IN TRIALS

In June 2010, I went back to Sabah to rest. When I first arrived, I asked God in my daily prayers to allow me to rest well, but whenever I put forth this request, my spiritual tongue would not be fluent. So

I asked God, "What is the purpose of my return?" After pondering over this question for a while, I remembered that I needed to preach to my family, although I had been praying daily for their salvation. So I picked my mother to preach to, telling her about differences between various religions and denominations, as she seemed to be particularly interested in that. However, after some time, I realized that her heart was still hardened towards the truth, as she kept asking me the same questions without really listening to or accepting my answers. I then stopped preaching; instead, I only continued to pray for my whole family's salvation.

During that same period, I happened to look into the mirror while bathing, and saw a lump of the size of a table tennis ball on my neck. I went for an autopsy, which reported a benign tumor, but my family decided to have it removed anyway. When this decision was made, I asked God if I could avoid surgery. But at the same time, I also asked God to do whatever was necessary.



My baptism in May 2009

On August 04, 2010, I had the first of two surgeries, both of which were done in Singapore. On August 20, my mother and I went for a review with the surgeon. I felt happy that day, thinking that God had prepared me to endure a surgery, and that the suffering was finally over. Unexpectedly, however, the surgeon told us that I had papillary thyroid carcinoma.

We were extremely downcast, especially my mom, who could not even speak properly upon hearing the news. It was then that she started to learn how to pray. Miraculously, after a few days of prayer, my mother and I felt comforted. Two weeks later, my mother was moved by the Holy Spirit and started to vibrate in prayers; less than another two weeks later, she started praying in tongues.

As for myself, I was dumbstruck when I first knew that I had cancer. I had seen acquaintances suffering from cancer at this age, but when it happened to me, I really had a hard time accepting it. So when a local preacher knew of my condition, he encouraged me with Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." I put this verse in my heart, hoping for something good to come out of my illness. When my mother received the Holy Spirit, I believed that all my sufferings were for that purpose, and that I would be healed once God's will had been executed.

On September 29, 2010, I underwent a second surgery to remove the rest of my thyroid. Before that, I still asked God if I could do without surgery, but I also asked for His will to be done. The surgery was successful, but was followed by a lot of problems throughout the following two months. First of all, I had unusually high blood pressure after the surgery, and had to be put in a high-dependency ward for one night. After two more nights of hospital stay, I was discharged.

A few days later, I was readmitted for a serious wound infection, which required intravenous administration of antibiotics. The doctor had wanted to use Amoxicillin for this purpose, but when I told him that I am allergic to it, he used another antibiotic instead. During this time, I also lost my voice. When I was again discharged after two days, I had to carry a machine with me to remove excess pus within my body for almost two weeks. During this period, I also had to frequent the hospital for wound management because the wound had reopened and could not be re-stitched.

When the wound finally healed, the

*"My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps 73: 26).*

*The surgeon told us that I had papillary thyroid carcinoma. We were extremely downcast, especially my mom, who could not even speak properly upon hearing the news. It was then that she started to learn how to pray.*

doctor saw another small growth in my nasal cavity, so he plucked it out with forceps and sent it for biopsy. Thank God, the biopsy returned negative, but due to the way in which the growth had been removed, I bled profusely that night, and was readmitted yet again into hospital. End of November 2010, I was hospitalized for the last time, as I had to be isolated for a few days for a dose of radioactive iodine treatment.

Thank God, I generally felt peaceful throughout my illness. However, sometimes I wondered if I would really survive the ordeal and would be given more time to further prepare myself for heaven, as I didn't feel ready to meet the Lord. One day these doubts and fears became so strong that I almost broke down. It so happened that I looked at a card that some brethren had handmade for me. One of the verses for encouragement read, "A bruised reed He will not break..." (Isa 42:3a). Thank God, these words really gave me comfort and hope.

In fact, the slightest bit of concern matters to the weak and sick. Hymns, cards, a simple gift or even a short text message can go a long way in motivating them to keep believing in God's power.

### **GOD'S WAY IS THE BEST WAY**

Throughout almost the entire duration of my treatment, my mother stayed with me in Singapore to take care of me. Whenever there was a service and whenever I wasn't hospitalized, I would take her to church to study the Bible. My mother used to tell me not to be too engrossed in religion. But when I was first diagnosed with a benign tumor, she started to believe in God's power to protect me because I am a Christian. Later on, when she learned that I had cancer, she proactively asked me how

she should pray to God, saying that she would pray for me. Once she started to pray, she felt a sense of peace in her heart and truly began to believe that God exists. Finally, when she received the Holy Spirit, she was touched by God's love. Thank God, my mother was baptized just before my last admission to the hospital in November 2010.

*The slightest bit of concern matters to the weak and sick. Hymns, cards, a simple gift or even a short text message can go a long way in motivating them to keep believing in God's power.*

In early 2011, I resumed my studies in Singapore. A friend told me that he had already seen a lump in my neck around March or April 2010. Initially I thought, "Why didn't you tell me earlier..." but later on, I understood that God's time had not yet come. If I had discovered my illness at that time, I would not have been prepared to accept it; so God didn't let me know until I was ready. This was indeed God's plan.

In July 2011, I went for another checkup. The results showed that all cancer cells had been eliminated. Now, I only have to consistently take medicine and do periodic checkups.

I truly thank God for guiding me and preparing me for these trials. First, He allowed me to understand that all things are possible with Him. Then, He taught me how to take pain, preparing me for the increasing pain and suffering. He also allowed me to know what I'm allergic to,

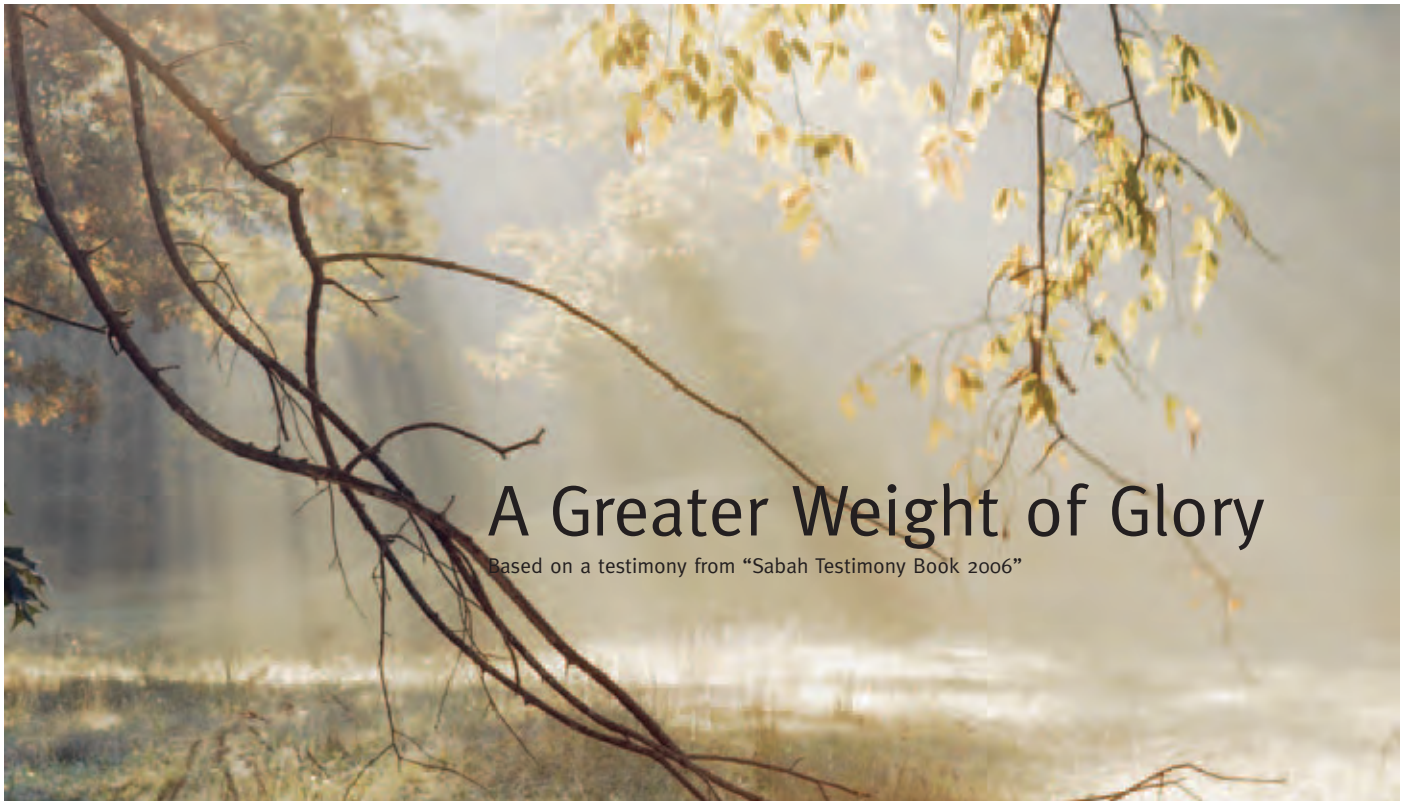
so as to reduce my suffering after surgery. Most importantly, however, He brought my mother into His fold.

In conclusion, all the sufferings that I went through have shown me that God's way is the best way. Although things may not look easy or desirable at first sight, all things will turn out well if we submit to God and let Him decide what is best for us. He will also comfort and guide us throughout the process, and allow us to witness His beautiful will unfolding through our sufferings. May all glory be given unto the Lord. ★

*Although things may not look easy or desirable at first sight, all things will turn out well if we submit to God and let Him decide what is best for us. He will also comfort and guide us throughout the process, and allow us to witness His beautiful will unfolding through our sufferings.*



Wound after my second surgery



## A Greater Weight of Glory

Based on a testimony from "Sabah Testimony Book 2006"

### A FIERY TRIAL

Brother Leong Zhao Siong was around thirty years of age and belonged to the Kota Kinabalu church in Sabah. Not long after his baptism, relatives and friends sent him and his newly wedded wife off, as they traveled to Canada for their honeymoon. Sadly, this was a trip of no return.

Brother Leong met with a fatal car accident in Canada. The driver of the car that he was in lost control of the vehicle while driving in the winter snow. The car flung to the opposite side of the road, swirled and crashed head on with an oncoming car. Death was immediate. His wife was also seriously injured.

The long distance telephone call from Canada was like a clap of thunder to his mother. She could not accept the fact; it was too sudden. She nearly fainted.

When church brethren visited the family to offer condolences and comfort to the family, brother Leong's ashes had just arrived from Canada. The Leong family had only one son. His early death came so suddenly that everyone could understand why brother Leong's mother wept so endlessly and sorrowfully. But unexpectedly, the end of man is the beginning of God's grace....

*"...And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev 7:17)*

### THE COMFORT OF HYMNS

Confronted with such great pain and sorrow, even the brothers and sisters in Christ who visited the bereaved family could not control their tears. Words were not sufficient to comfort them. In the end, the visitors sang three hymns with the family: *"Think and Reflect"*, *"Heaven Is My Home"* and *"In the Sweet By and By"*. All these hymns were related to the believers' hope of the heavenly home. Amazingly, the mourning family's heart felt more at peace after they had sung those hymns. This shows that hymns truly comfort the broken-hearted. Hymns are similar to prayers—they help us to express what is in our inmost heart and to tell our sorrows to the Lord. Hymn singing can also help us to comprehend the will and the love of God, and lift any heavy weight or pressure from our hearts. Therefore, whenever we are in sorrow or affliction, let us remember to sing hymns of praise to God.

On the night that the Lord Jesus was betrayed, His heart was very sorrowful—even to the point of death. So, He did two things. First, after eating the Passover dinner with His disciples, He sang hymns with them. Certain old manuscripts say that they sang all the way to the Mount of Olives. Second, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison and faced

such an adverse situation, they did not forget to pray and to sing hymns in praise of God. They were thus able to face their afflictions bravely. This was a most moving event. Therefore even the earth shook and the prison doors burst open.

*"...I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." (Isa 48:10)*

### THE CHANGE IN BROTHER LEONG'S FATHER

Even more unexpected was the decision of brother Leong's father to accept baptism into the Lord. Some might have expected that he would reject the faith in his grief. That would have been a natural human reaction. Yet, he wanted to be baptized. Later, when asked on the reason for his decision, he simply replied, "Three hymns." These three hymns had touched his heart deeply. He had received inexpressible inspiration and unconscious comfort from them. By God's grace, his spiritual eyes were opened so that he could see the true meaning of life and make a great change to his philosophy of life. In the past, he had only sought fame and profits in this world and had deeply disliked the true church. Consequently, he had never wanted to accept the gospel. However, when his son's life was taken away, he had to face the fact that life is too fragile. Many questions kept floating into his mind, e.g., "What is the

*The end of man is the beginning of God's grace....*

true meaning of man's life in the world?", "What ought a man pursue in this life?"

All these questions eventually made him realize that Jesus is the most precious treasure in the world and the only hope and reliance of man in this temporary life.

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.... (Ps 84:5-6).*

God truly turned the valley of tears into a place of springs for brother Leong's family. He used this great affliction to bring his father, and also his grandmother, to believe in Christ. In addition, the Lord revived the faith of brother Leong's mother. In the past she had not been attending church services regularly due to her husband's unbelief. But after her son's death, she and her whole family grew in fervency. They began to attend church services regularly and to join in the divine work. The great grace and love of the Lord is really beyond the expectation of men.

*"Who comforts us in all our troubles...."*  
(2 Cor 1:4)

### PERSONAL COMFORT FROM GOD THROUGH VISIONS

Brother Leong's sudden death caused many tears to fall and many hearts to bleed, not only among his physical but also among his spiritual family members. But Jesus lovingly wiped away all tears....

During a visit to the bereaved family, a sister saw a glorious light in prayer. Her heart had been heavy with sadness, but when she saw this vision, she was filled with joy. When she shared this vision with the Leong family, they received great comfort and assurance that the Lord was with them.

Later, brother Leong's mother also saw a vision during a prayer that deeply comforted her. In her vision, she was taken to a very bright place. Although it was very bright, the light that she saw was a gentle one. She was then lifted up into a clear sky, passed through a forest of green trees and came to a very beautiful place. When she saw this beautiful scene, her heart immediately rejoiced, and the dark mist that had wrapped up her heart

vanished completely. She seemed to have been lifted up from a painful abyss into a very joyful world. She felt as if she had entered into heaven and her heart was filled with an inexpressible serenity, joy and comfort, which she had never experienced before. Therefore, she could not help but to pray loudly in praise of the Lord Jesus. When she saw the same vision a second time during that prayer, she was so happy that she even broke into high spiritual song and did not want to stop praying. A week later, God allowed her to see another vision. This time she saw many doors in heaven from which glorious light shone forth.

The Lord Jesus said,  
*Do not let your hearts be troubled ... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also may be where I am. (Jn 14:1-3)*

*On the surface, it seems as if God were quite unfair and cruel by allowing His children to suffer. However, God's intention is good. In fact, He will not allow His children to suffer in vain—there is a purpose.*

### THE LORD'S INTENTION IS GOOD

Brother Leong's mother used to have very little knowledge of the word of God, so she could not find an answer to the events in her life. The Lord, however, helped her to understand that the pain of physical separation from her beloved son had eventually achieved a greater purpose—the salvation of her whole family. These events were to show her that her home is not in this world but in heaven.

We are but sojourners in this world; therefore do not yearn for the affections

*He will walk through the valley of the shadow of death together with us; He will comfort and encourage us, give us grace and eventually, allow us to comprehend His will.*

and the things of this world. All things in the world will pass away. So, we ought to hope in that which is eternal, the more beautiful place in heaven, built and governed by God and prepared for those who love Him. One day, we will return to that place which is wonderful beyond compare. On that day, when we are united in joyful fellowship with the Lord in our heavenly home, we will finally understand and say: "O Lord! All Your intentions are good, for they have accomplished today's salvation for us."

### GREAT JOY UPON COMPREHENDING GOD'S WILL

Many a time, God gives us the opportunity to accompany our brothers and sisters in Christ through their physical, emotional and spiritual pain and affliction. We ourselves may also have tasted such afflictions. On the surface, it seems as if God were quite unfair and cruel by allowing His children to suffer. However, God's intention is good. In fact, He will not allow His children to suffer in vain—there is a purpose.

Moreover, He will walk through the valley of the shadow of death together with us; He will comfort and encourage us, give us grace and eventually, allow us to comprehend His will.

*And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers.*  
(Isa 30:20)

*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2 Cor 4:17)*

Yes, the answer lies here, "achieving for us" an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.... ★

# TRUTH RESEARCH IN THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

## The International Assembly's Truth Research Committee: 2010 and 2011 Resolutions

### BACKGROUND

*The International Assembly's Truth Research Committee (TRC) comprises elders, deacons and preachers of the True Jesus Church, as nominated by the general assemblies of various countries as well as the International Assembly (IA) of the True Jesus Church. This committee was established to study and affirm the truth of the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in so doing, build up the common faith of the believers.*

*The TRC meetings are held annually, and its resolutions are endorsed at the World Delegates Conference<sup>1</sup> (WDC).*

*The WDC held in Taiwan from March 27 to 28, 2011 has endorsed the following TRC resolutions. By publishing these resolutions in MANNA, it is our hope that our readers can have a clearer understanding of the matters discussed by this committee, and that the TRC resolutions can serve as guiding principles in their life of faith.*

### 2010 TRC RESOLUTIONS

#### 1: Biblical Theological Research—Discussion on Millennialism

##### Resolution:

To integrate the conclusion in the 5th, 6th, and 7th points. The amendment of the resolutions is as follows:

5. The purpose for God to bind Satan for a thousand years is "to keep him from deceiving the nations"; "deceiving the nations" refers to the Great Tribulation and great battle leading to the end of the world<sup>2</sup>.

6. The thousand years in which Satan is bound and the spiritual millennial kingdom coincide with the same period when the True Jesus Church reigns with Christ for a thousand years<sup>3</sup>, starting from the advent of the True Church in the end time.

7. The following great events will occur at the end of the 1000 years<sup>4</sup>:

(1) Satan will be released and the greatest persecution and battle will occur.

(2) Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and then the great final judgment will begin.

#### 2: Research on the Book of Romans.

##### Resolution:

The following is the resolution regarding God's omniscience and the issue concerning whether Satan is self-existent.

Other issues will be discussed upon submission of research papers.

God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and the only self-existent true God, apart from Him, there is no other self-existence.

God's omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence are absolute, therefore even before the creation, He already knew all of man's choices and eventualities.

The above common understanding is passed by the IA TRC. Differing views must not be discussed at any occasion other than the Truth Research Meeting. (Isa 41:4; 45:5,18; 48:3,8; Jer 32:17,27; Gen 15:13–16; Deut 31:16; Ps 139; Lk 22:31–34; Jn 1:18–19)

#### 3: To re-discuss a previous resolution: "Biblical truth is once for all delivered, but gradually becomes evident"

##### Resolution:

1. To amend 2005 Resolution to: "The Truth of Salvation is once for all delivered to the saints; it will not change, and it is only through the Holy Spirit that man is guided into all truth". (Jude 3, Jn 16:12–13)

2. The truth that God wants to give us is entirely given in the Bible, and it does not change. The church's understanding of truth is through the Holy Spirit's revelation. (1 Cor 2:10)

#### 4: Building up the body of Christ by fulfilling respective ministries

##### Resolution:

The church must build up the body of Christ by fulfilling our respective ministries, in accordance with the following seven principles:

1. Sound policy for ministry of preachers
2. Establish policy of church governance by elders and deacons (as agreed in previous TRC)
3. Sound organization for various church ministries: match gift to function (organizational implementation)
4. Follow the principle of self-sufficiency, self-sustenance and self-propagation in the establishment and management of local churches.
5. The organization of general assemblies or coordination boards should not go beyond the teachings of the Bible and governance should be based on the spiritual principle of theodemocracy.
6. The truth of the Bible should be implemented in the church, the role of the general assemblies is like that of Paul in Antioch, the International Assembly should function like the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, leading the global church in unity of truth and uniformity of organization, thus achieving complete oneness in the Lord.
7. Every general assembly should promptly draw up proper organizational by-laws and management principles in accordance to biblical truth. The International Assembly shall be responsible for setting up churches and coordination boards in places without general assemblies.

WDC Resolution: The seven principles have been passed. TRC members to come up with a brief definition for the meaning of “spiritual principle of theodemocracy”

#### 5: Should preachers be ordained as elders?

##### Resolution:

Preachers who fulfill the requirements of an overseer can be ordained as elders (to be decided according to the needs of the respective GA)

#### 6: The prerequisite for the formation of a choir and for its members in the view of the Bible

##### Resolution:

1. A choir serves, exalts, gives thanks and praises God.
2. Choir members shall possess the following spiritual prerequisites:
  - (1) Holy living, in order to have God's abidance (2 Chr 20:21; Ps 29:2)
  - (2) Pure motive for joining the choir (1 Cor 10:31)—singing with grace from the heart (Col 3:16)
  - (3) Since choir presentation is a form of holy work, choir members must in principle be members of TJC. Exceptional cases can be decided upon by the local church council.

#### 7: To standardize the English version of the Bible

##### Resolution:

1. For articles and publications: New King James Version required
2. On the pulpit: New King James Version strongly recommended
3. For personal study, avoid the following:
  - (1) The Living Bible/ New Living Translation
  - (2) Good News Bible/ Today's English Version
  - (3) New International Version
  - (4) The Message
  - (5) New English Bible

### 2011 TRC RESOLUTIONS

#### 1: When performing footwashing, the administering minister girds himself with a towel, then pours water to wash the feet of the newly baptized. The execution of and view on “girding” differs among the GAs around the world.

##### Resolution:

Regarding ‘having a part with Christ’ in the footwashing sacrament: The efficacy of this occurs when the feet are washed in the name of Jesus. The minister should emulate the servant image of Jesus during the footwashing sacrament. As for the act of girding the waist with a towel, this can be adapted according to local conditions.

#### 2: Can a member remarry and carry on the ministry work if he/she has divorced before believing in Christ?

##### Resolution:

1. Prior to baptism, one must carefully review one's marital status. After baptism, one must continue in pursuit of being a

- new creation (1 Cor 5:17, Eph 4:20–24)
2. Remarriage permissible
3. If one fulfills the required qualifications for divine office, this one can be ordained (1 Tim 3:2, 8)

#### 3: Is it proper for a minister who is divorced to keep carrying on his/her ministry?

##### Resolution:

Ministers who are divorced are unsuitable to continue in divine office (1 Tim 3:5, 8), but exceptional cases can be raised to either the GA or IA to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. ★

1 WDC consists of delegates from churches around the world and meets every other year.

2 Editor's remark: The focus of the Great Tribulation and great battle is spiritual, although the means may be physical—religious persecution of true Christians, false teachings and godless trends.

3 Editor's remark: A thousand years refers to a set time, rather than an actual number.

4 Cf. footnote 3



# IA Training Department and Youth Ministry

Jonathan Chou—Hillsborough, New Jersey, USA



## THE BEGINNING

According to the Book of Revelation, a mighty angel will appear from the “land of the rising of the sun, bringing with him the seal of the living God” before the final tribulation. He will seal the foreheads of all the servants of God (Rev 7:1–8).

This prophecy was fulfilled when God established the True Jesus Church in China through the Holy Spirit, which is the latter rain as prophesied in the Scriptures. The church’s purpose is to preach the true gospel, to gather God’s chosen people and to complete the kingdom of God in preparation for the Lord’s second coming. Since the church’s establishment in 1917 the true gospel has thus been preached to all continents. Today True Jesus Church services are held in more than seventy countries.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, early church ministers not only propagated the gospel, but also contributed significantly to the structure of the church.

During a Church Delegates Meeting in 1926 the church decided:

- 1) To establish general assemblies in order to unify the ministry of evangelism
- 2) To establish theological seminaries in order to cultivate future ministers
- 3) To begin publication of evangelistic material

These decisions have become the corner stones of our church’s development.

In 1967, the first World Delegates Meeting was held in order to coordinate the ministry of churches around the world. During the meeting, a unified doctrine was laid out and a secretarial department was established to facilitate global church correspondence. During the second World Delegates Meeting in 1975, the International Assembly (IA) was established to solely advance world evangelism.

## THE PRESENT

Today the IA consists of the World Mission, Training, Literary Ministry, General Affairs, and Financial Affairs department, each of which is headed by corresponding directors.

### IA Training Department

The Training Department’s role is to plan, execute, and assist in each country’s workers’ training. In order to build up a solid and consistent training curriculum and training guidelines, the Training Department plans basic beliefs’ classes, various divine work training and workers’ seminars as well as full-time ministers’ cultivation seminars and workshops. The task of executing these trainings is then given to General Assemblies (GA)/ Coordination Boards (CB) and IA directed

churches according to the respective area of administration. The aim is to systemically assist in members’ spiritual growth, cultivate suitable workers and as a result, promote overall church growth.

Currently, the Training Department’s key objectives include:

1. Train workers for world evangelism: Recruit multilingual youths who are gifted to serve in various areas, e.g., evangelism, literary ministry, internet ministry. Send them to our church’s theological seminary to prepare them for work in pioneering regions and in other specific settings. Recruit current full-time ministers from around the world to provide language training and to participate in world evangelism.
2. Build an online library for training materials, collect resources from various GAs/ CBs and promote sharing of training materials.
3. Send speakers to assist the training work in various theological seminaries and youth theological seminars around the world.
4. Establish a formal training curriculum for ministers’ cultivation seminars and workshops.
5. Assist in matters related to the Truth Research Committee.
6. Assist in matters related to the





Youth Ministry Committee.  
7. Coordinate IA Symposiums.

## Global Youth Ministry

Youths are an important force and resource for the work of the church. As Moses numbered the people, he recruited everyone aged twenty years or above, who was able to fight, and formed an army of 600,000 men. As for the tribe of Levi, those between the age of twenty and fifty were assigned to work in the tabernacle. When David fled from Saul, he gathered those who approached him and led them to war. Later, these people became the warriors who established David's kingdom.

In 1950, the True Jesus Church began to conduct youth (student) spiritual convocations and Religious Education (RE) classes. In 1961, a proper RE system was established, and has since been implemented throughout the churches worldwide. This has allowed our children

global youth servitude. They are also to assist each GA/ CB to build up their local youth ministry and to provide channels that will facilitate global servitude.

The actual work, however, is done on a local level. Each GA/ CB's youth ministry committee has the task to build up their local youths' faith and to provide training to them in various areas of church work.

Training our youths does not only provide us with workers for our local churches; in fact, there are also many things on a national and global level that youths can do. Youths can assist their respective GA in, e.g., missionary work in pioneering areas, pastoral work, youth or children's evangelism as well as remote area youth and members outreach through Internet services and counseling.

Other types of holy work that youths can do and that can have a great impact include, for example, compiling seminar materials, contributing articles to the literary ministry, translation, creating

This type of training not only helps to cultivate local church workers, but also raises future workers for pioneering areas around the world and helps youths to gradually become very effective church workers.

## LIFT UP YOUR EYES

Youths have been and will always be a major driving force in the church.

They are RE teachers, key workers in various areas of divine work, soldiers of Christ and warriors in the kingdom of God. They will be the future pillars of the church to whom we shall pass the baton of holy work. The church needs to value, cultivate and train them as well as involve them actively in church work. At the same time, the church needs to help them to establish a correct attitude towards and motivation for serving the Lord.

Let us lift up our eyes! The field is ready for us to harvest. God has also provided many suitable workers. With joy I have seen many youths growing up to become church workers.

I pray that the youths in our church can equip themselves to become valuable vessels of God. Firmly root yourselves in the truth, gain a deep understanding of our church beliefs, and hold firm to the

*Youths have been and will always be a major driving force in the church. They are RE teachers, key workers in various areas of divine work, soldiers of Christ and warriors in the kingdom of God. They will be the future pillars of the church to whom we shall pass the baton of holy work.*

to receive comprehensive and consistent religious education as well as to establish their personal faith. In addition, the RE system has become a key factor for the church's continuous growth.

In 1981, the IA established the International Youth Fellowship (IYF) to encourage fellowship and communication among youths from around the world. Over the years, the IYF conducted several youth theological seminar courses. Subsequently, GAs and CBs around the world established their own national youth fellowships and started to hold their own theological seminars.

During the World Delegates Conference in 2010, the International Youth Fellowship was replaced with the Youth Ministry Committee (YMC). The latter's aims are not only to encourage communication and fellowship between youths within the church, but also to stir up their zeal and actively train them in various areas of divine work, so that they can be good soldiers of the gospel.

Basically, IA Youth Ministry Committee members are responsible for planning, counseling and consulting in the area of

*The church needs to value, cultivate and train them as well as involve them actively in church work. At the same time, the church needs to help them to establish a correct attitude towards and motivation for serving the Lord.*

information material, Internet follow-up.

For this reason, each local church should encourage the establishment of youth fellowships and ministry teams, train their youths in areas of holy work which they are interested in, provide guidance to them, etc.

The US General Assembly (USGA), for example, encourages youths to attend the National Youth Servitude Training, which is held twice a year. USGA also recruits National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) graduates to participate in a pioneer missionary volunteer program for two weeks each year over a period of two years. Once they have completed theoretical training, the participants are required to lead services, give sermons, lead Bible studies, go on visitations, lead family services and do other hands-on holy work at their local churches.

complete gospel. Also, keep yourselves pure and holy, flee from the lusts of the world, exercise spiritual discipline, be willing to suffer—and God will be with you to complete the important work that He has entrusted to you. ★



# Taking Root in the Word

Adapted sermon

by Chin Aun Quek—Singapore

## TESTING OUR ROOTS IN THE STORM

There was once a large tree that fell in a storm, much to the surprise of the locals. When they dug up the roots, they noticed that they did not extend very far into the earth. Indeed, it was discovered that the environment in which the tree had grown was very accommodating; its soil was abundant in nutrients and water, and locals would generously throw fertilizers around the tree. The roots of the tree therefore had no need to strive in search of nutrients or water for themselves. There hadn't been any past storms in the area, so when a terrible tempest arose, all the large and small trees that had short roots fell to the ground.

Is our faith cultivated in a similarly protected environment? If disaster unexpectedly brewed in our lives, could our faith withstand the test of a storm? Or would we realize, then, how shallow our roots really go?

In Jesus' parable of the seeds, some of the seed fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away (Mk 4:5–6).

Growing our roots has to start from a young age. Without strong and deep roots, we will wither away when the

sun comes up, no matter how sturdy or beautiful we may appear to be on the outside. Perhaps at present we are thankful for our belief in God, for church and for pleasant circumstances. Yet even though we might be living in times of peace, we have to understand that hard times will inevitably come our way.

Why do people forsake their faith during such times? Often, it is because they have rooted themselves with a mistaken view of the church. Some see the church as a mere social club, a welfare organization or even a place for therapy; they enjoy the sacred music, friendships and serenity. When such members no longer find the pleasures for which they come, and when they meet with temptations, it is only natural that they become disappointed and uprooted.

## STRENGTHENING OUR ROOTS

How does a truly rooted faith come into being? Does it germinate through prayer? The disciples once asked the Lord to add to their faith, and we too can certainly ask for faith in prayer. Nonetheless, faith does not stem from prayer alone. Perhaps God worked a miracle for us because of our prayer, which we take as a reflection of our faith. Yet, at the same time, many who once personally experienced miracles and signs are also those who rebelled against God's teachings. In the

end, they fell in the face of calamity and temptation. Why was their faith not securely rooted?

Paul tells us: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17).

He also says to the Colossians:

*He has reconciled you in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.... (Col 1:21–23)*

In fact, it is the word of God that keeps us grounded in faith. God's word is spirit and life, a living hope. With this living hope, we can have the strength to face all kinds of temptations and setbacks, which is why the church so often emphasizes the speaking of the word. Sometimes we overlook the importance of listening to the word. We cease to pay our undivided attention to sermons and we find ourselves anticipating the arrival of the conclusion. But let us remember that soaking in the word is crucial for our faith to take root. We must humbly search into the word of Christ through sermons, fellowship and our own personal Bible reading. When we come across words that prick our consciences, let us not feel



*If disaster unexpectedly brewed in our lives, could our faith withstand the test of a storm? Or would we realize, then, how shallow our roots really go?*

irritated or, worse still, gradually quench the working of the Holy Spirit, but allow the Holy Spirit to work in us through the word of God.

Once we have soaked in the word of God through the Holy Spirit's help, we need to take root in it.

This process needs to be weaved into our daily lives. Take decision-making, for example. We face education, career and relationship crossroads, as well as day-to-day behavioral choices. If we neglect the word as our guide, we grapple for what we feel we need based on our emotions or our worldly desires. Many Christians wish to know the will of God for them in big decisions, but we must first apply His word starting from the small, everyday choices.

To those around us, do we speak words of peace or of enmity? Do we go out of our way to help others, or are we in a rush to finish our daily tasks? Are we actively involved in God's work every day, or only when there is time to spare? If we make the conscious decision to consult the Bible for practical reminders and act accordingly with the help of the Holy Spirit, it is far easier to please God when it comes to making the bigger decisions in our lives. As the word of God takes root in us and we strive to make it common practice, we naturally make God-centered choices in the big things. While others worry over whether they made the right choice, we will have the passion to glorify God and be a blessing to others, whatever our situation. We will be at peace, knowing that God's word is truly a lamp to our feet and a light to our path—on a daily basis.

Once we start practicing God's word, we will experience His presence, guidance and love. In this way, the word of God enables us to take root, build up and abound in faith (Col 2:6–7).

## TAKING ROOT TOGETHER

Though we may have attended church for a long time, we need to reflect on whether we have sought to be nourished directly by the word during church gatherings. Some youths enjoy activities during youth conventions

merely because they are 'fun', taking pleasure in the lively stimuli. When these activities are in motion, you may have noticed that participants are particularly enthusiastic. But after the event, does this vitality and energy dissipate over time? A musical ensemble or the mere memories of a fellowship cannot replace deep exploration into the Bible. These activities may physiologically stimulate our senses, but have our lives truly been edified with the rich word of God? When we are faced with temptations in life, persecutions and death, we need a faith that is not established simply by activities, but by meditating on and practicing Christ's teachings.

*Growing our roots has to start from a young age. Without strong and deep roots, we will wither away when the sun comes up, no matter how sturdy or beautiful we may appear to be on the outside.*

Thus, when we gather together, be it on a regular Sabbath day or during a spiritual convocation, the goal at the forefront of our minds should be to remind one another with Biblical teachings. We must nurture a culture of frequently discussing Scripture and longing to gain deeper insight in God's words.

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. (Heb 10:25–26)*

*Many Christians wish to know the will of God for them in big decisions, but we must first apply His word starting from the small, everyday choices.*

The author of Hebrews points out that if we do not gather together with members of the church and exhort one another with the word of God, this actually increases the chances of sinning willfully. When our hearts are not set on God's word, we begin to lose sight of God's will for us and how He wishes us to behave on a daily basis. Our fellowships need to be centered on the word, with the help of spiritually aware brothers and sisters. It is certainly not enough to just attend Sabbath worship. Especially as youths and those young in the faith, we need regular godly fellowship to be all the more sure of where we are planted.

In a certain campus fellowship, the process of growing and taking root in God's word reaped benefits beyond the youths' imagination. Comprising students from various locations and backgrounds, many of the weekly activities were largely geared towards entertainment, in hopes of attracting all members and keeping the group together. As a result, some of these fellowships were not necessarily based on God's word, but resembled mere social gatherings, based on plenty of eating and going out. The leaders of the fellowship realized that the group needed to refocus on God's word, prayer and discussing one another's personal walks with God. Since many of the youths stayed over in church over the weekend, they started to pray together each Friday and Saturday evening, sharing their daily struggles, joys and encouragements from the Bible. As a result, they experienced God in very tangible ways; God poured down His Holy Spirit, gave some of them uplifting visions and rekindled relationships with Him and each other. Moreover, they became bonded through faith and intimate enough to draw on the word of God as mirrors for each other's behavior, attitudes and speech. Enthused with God's word, they reminded each other of areas for improvement, building one another up in character and in faith.

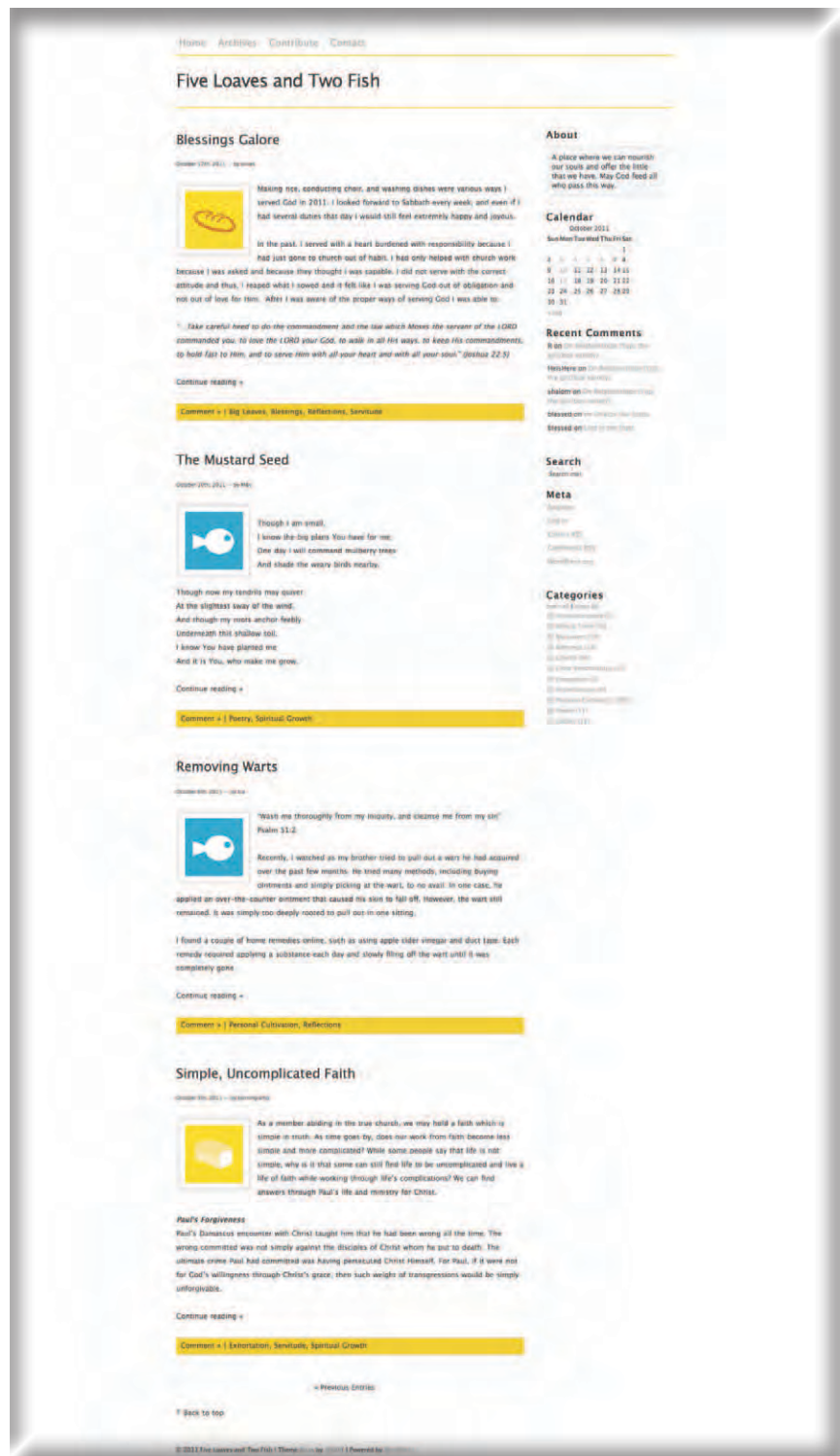
## PETER'S EXAMPLE

Everyone has a unique story of their journey to meeting Christ. Everyone has a different motivation. Do we remember Peter's? When his brother, Andrew, heard from John the Baptist that Jesus Christ had come, he found his brother and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1:40-41). Peter was drawn to Christ because he had been waiting and seeking for the Savior. His faith was not rooted in healing, in miracles or because he had his stomach filled, but rather in the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah and in the words of Jesus. Peter undoubtedly recognized that Jesus' words are the source of life:

*Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Jn 6:67-69)*

*When our hearts are not set on God's word, we begin to lose sight of God's will for us and how He wishes us to behave on a daily basis. Our fellowships need to be centered on the word, with the help of spiritually aware brothers and sisters.*

What are our motivations for following Christ? Do we believe because of our family, or because the Lord healed us? Regardless of our initial reasons, we must progress to personally rooting our faith in the word of life, both individually and as a church. In this way, when those whom we love depart from us, when pains and hardships come upon us, we will naturally remain and find strength in Christ who, from the beginning, was the Word. ★



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# Joseph in Egypt

Philip Shee—Dubai, United Arab Emirates

History has no shortage of inspirational stories of people who overcame adversities to rise to power and of people who overcame odds to transform from rags to riches. While these stories are often quoted in leadership or business forums to inspire listeners towards pursuing success, they may not be directly relevant for Christians as faith is often not an element or part of the equation of success. For Christians, the Bible itself is a well of inspirational stories that we can draw from to spur us in our life's journey. The story of Joseph in Egypt is one from which Christians can trace his rise from slave to steward, from prisoner to governor. What was his secret of success? How did he cope with the ebb of his life? How did he handle success?

## JOSEPH'S SECRET OF SUCCESS— GOD'S GRACE IN HIS LIFE

Joseph's life in Egypt started as slave in the house of Potiphar, but he soon gained the trust and favor of his master. Hence he very quickly became the overseer of Potiphar's house and was given charge over all that that he had. While Joseph was undoubtedly a hardworking and responsible worker, his success was driven primarily by one formula:

*The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of*

*his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house and all that he had he put under this authority.*  
(Gen 39:2-4)

This same formula saw Joseph through his entire time in Egypt. When he landed in prison in a twist of events, "the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen 39:21).

The keeper of the prison trusted Joseph and gave him charge over the prisoners and "the keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper" (Gen 39:23). It became even clearer that the Lord was with Joseph when He guided him to accurately interpret the dreams of the butler, the baker and, more importantly, the Pharaoh. The latter event catapulted Joseph to the position of governor over the land of Egypt, second in rank only after the Pharaoh himself. This was an incredible achievement as he was only thirty years old at that time (Gen 41:40-46).

Many people starting their career in

junior positions within an organization would probably harbor the hope of rising through the ranks into senior positions in the shortest possible time. To realize this dream, some may go many extra miles beyond hard work and good work ethics to enhance their chances of success. This may involve excessively stretching themselves in endless pursuit of upgrading courses, indulgence in additional social activities after work with colleagues and superiors, which are often spent in pubs, or weekends on golf courses in hope of rubbing shoulders with movers and shakers. While these methods may indeed be the secret of success for some, they will inevitably distract Christians in their faith and gradually turn them away from God. On the other hand, Joseph in Egypt offers Christians an alternative solution and points to the real source of success, which is God Himself.

## JOSEPH'S VIRTUES—TENACITY AND UNCOMPROMISING ADHERENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

God had a reason to remain with Joseph and to bless him throughout his life—Joseph had many virtues that we can learn from. If we were to experience similar trials as Joseph did, we would probably end up as cynics questioning God's love and justice. Joseph, however, maintained



*Joseph in Egypt offers Christians an alternative solution and points to the real source of success, which is God Himself.*

his integrity and uncompromising adherence to God's commandments, although he had yet to understand why God had allowed him to be sold to Egypt. When tempted by Potiphar's wife, he firmly rejected her advances with the remark, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). His tenacity was further displayed as the temptation continued: "So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her" (Gen 39:10). Joseph's determination to preserve his holiness was remarkable, as he could have easily made use of the situation. He could have played along with Potiphar's wife

### **JOSEPH'S FAITH—IN ADVERSITY AND IN SUCCESS**

As we trace Joseph's encounters in life, we cannot but admire him for his steadfast faith in God. A bystander in his time observing his life would probably struggle to make any sense of it. For a start, he did not understand what he had done to deserve slavery in Egypt. And just as God seemed to intervene and lift him up from slavery to stewardship in Potiphar's house, he was framed by his mistress and thrown into prison. A glimmer of hope then surfaced when he accurately interpreted the butler's dream, but even this little hope was dashed when the butler forgot about Joseph for two whole years after his reinstatement.

If we went through similar experiences, would our faith be shattered? Would we still believe that God is in control? Would we rely on Him to overcome our difficulties? Would we continue to give glory to Him? Throughout his adversities, Joseph did not murmur.

sudden achievement of success may overwhelm them to the extent that they start to trust themselves more than they trust God. Others may abuse their position to seek vengeance against those who have wronged them previously. Joseph, however, maintained his faith as before, putting God at the center of his life, attributing the key events in his life to God.

When two sons were born to Joseph, he named the firstborn Manasseh, "for God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house" (Gen 41:51), and the second son Ephraim, "for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (Gen 41:52). God was clearly still in the heart and mind of Joseph even in such moments of success.

When his brothers came to buy grain in Egypt, Joseph's interaction with them again showed God to be at the center of his life. Joseph clearly stated that he feared God (Gen 42:18). When he finally revealed his identity to his brothers, he was quick to comfort them that it was

*We may sometimes face scenarios in our career that put us in similar dilemmas, where sticking to Christian principles may be unfavorable to us, while yielding to temptations may very well provide a springboard for immediate benefits.*

behind his back and gained her favor, thereby further consolidating his status in Potiphar's house. Ironically, his choice to hold fast to what was right landed him in prison instead, as Potiphar's wife framed him in her wrath.

We may sometimes face scenarios in our career that put us in similar dilemmas, where sticking to Christian principles may be unfavorable to us, while yielding to temptations may very well provide a springboard for immediate benefits. For example, dealing with integrity as opposed to cutting corners in business may sometimes yield us less profit. Telling our boss what he needs to hear as opposed to what he wants to hear may leave a negative impression with our boss. Rejecting the invitation of our boss or colleagues to party through the night may leave us excluded from the inner circle in the office. When faced with these crossroads, we can draw inspiration from Joseph to hold fast to our Christian principles.

On the contrary, he continued to trust and glorify God every step of the way. When tempted by Potiphar's wife, the overarching factor that prevented Joseph from crossing the line was his fear of God (Gen 39:9). When presented with the butler's dream, Joseph's response was, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (Gen 40:8). And when brought before the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, his response was, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Gen 41:16). Once he had heard Pharaoh's dream, Joseph explained to him that the interpretation was not due to his own ability, but that "God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do" (Gen 41:25). Joseph overcame each challenge he encountered by putting God at the center of his life. He consistently attributed success and glory to God alone.

After interpreting Pharaoh's dream, Joseph's life finally turned the corner as he regained his freedom and was made governor of the land. For some, such

God and not them who really sent him to Egypt. He recognized that God had done this to preserve and deliver them from the famine in the land (Gen 45:5–8). Upon Jacob's death, his brothers were again concerned that Joseph would take revenge against them. However, he did not abuse his position or success to seek revenge. On the contrary, he responded,

*"Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (Gen 50:19–20)*

*Joseph overcame each challenge he encountered by putting God at the center of his life. He consistently attributed success and glory to God alone.*



Joseph did not waver in his faith, neither in adversity nor in success. Even at the very end of his life, his faith was clearly seen as he told his brethren, that God would surely bring them out of the land of Egypt and back to the Promised Land (Gen 50:24). In addition, he took an oath from the children of Israel to carry his bones out of Egypt when they departed.

*God was with Joseph because he faithfully held on to His words and principles, put Him into the center of his life and always attributed his success to God with a humble and thankful heart.*

were very clearly manifested in him. Potiphar saw that “the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand” (Gen 39:3). When Joseph was put into prison in a twist of events, he gained the favor of the prison keeper because he witnessed that “the Lord was with him and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper” (Gen 39:23). To Pharaoh, Joseph was only a foreign prisoner. Yet, Pharaoh could see clearly that God’s glory and power were manifested in Joseph (Gen 41:37–42).

God was with Joseph because he faithfully held on to His words and principles, put Him into the center of his life and always attributed his success to God with a humble and thankful heart.

For this reason, Joseph’s life in Egypt provides us with a wonderful example of how to be both a successful employee and a successful Christian. ★

### GOD’S GLORY—MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Although Joseph had to face many setbacks in his life, God’s work and glory

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## Within the Ark

Sharon Chang—Brisbane, Australia

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. (Gen 7:11–12)*

The ark rocked furiously at every sweep of the gigantic waves. The deafening roar of thunder accompanying the fearsome storm. Incessant rain pelting the roofs and the windows echoing through the gopherwood vessel. Huge boulders swept by the raging currents. Uprooted trees, perhaps even mighty oaks, crashing against each other ... yet not quite drowning out the terrified screams of drowning humanity....

Have you ever wondered what was going through Noah's mind?

### IMAGINE NOAH'S JOY...

Perhaps his mind was not even on the external tumult because inside the ark, there was another symphony of nature resounding ... the sounds of "seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also seven each of birds of the air, male and female" (Gen 7:2–3).

But amidst the turbulence, I reckon Noah would have been at peace. Despite

the cacophony, Noah would have felt so very blessed ...

- ... because his beloved wife was with him within the ark.

There were probably times when Noah got restless from being cooped up for so long or became frustrated with managing all those animals. But the one closest to him would understand; she would help him manage the family. Importantly, because they both worshipped the same God, she would comfort and remind him that their heavenly Father was in charge and knew what He was doing. She would tell him that they were so blessed to be safe. And his faith would be restored. (cf. Eccl 4:9,10)

- ... because his sons were within the ark.

Noah would have been devastated if he himself were in the ark but knew that the three young men in their prime, whom he and Mrs. Noah had spent so much effort to bring up, were out there in that catastrophic flood. Though he was snug and safe, his mind would have been in turmoil imagining his sons struggling, gasping for breath, and dying, dying ... slowly, agonizingly.... But now, he could see them walking round, helping to feed the animals, doing minor repairs and keeping the ark clean. He would be proud, thinking, "Good, they are doing

their part to thank the Lord God who saved us." (cf. Jer 35:18,19)

- ... because his daughters-in-law were within the ark.

Had his daughters-in-law refused to go in, his sons would have been so torn—to stay with their faithless wives or to follow their godly parents into the ark? Then, after the flood, with the entire human race destroyed, what would his sons do to establish their families? From where would come godly offspring to revere and honor the Creator who had delivered them? No, Noah had no worries on that score. Undoubtedly, Noah's daughters-in-law would also have had their own tough decisions to make. Their own families must have been among the unbelieving multitude who mocked Noah as they built their huge ark amidst dry, good weather. But like Ruth, who came generations after them, these women made the right choice to enter the ark. (cf. Ruth 1:16,14–22)

- ... because they could gather everyday

to thank God for calling them, preserving them, and continuing to sustain them. Even living so close to all sorts of animals, with no 'fresh air' since the Lord God "shut him in" (Gen 7:16), they were in good spirits and health. In fact, since they were all in the ark, any





*A loving earthly family provides irreplaceable warmth and emotional fulfillment. But a loving earthly family in the Lord can additionally supply spiritual ballast—intercession in times of difficulty, mutual encouragement and motivation to reach the eternal heavenly home.*

time, anyone of them felt that they had a good testimony to share, they could just gather together to remember the Almighty God's grace. And such frequent gathering together would be a great opportunity for Noah to really pass on his solid faith to his 'boys'. He would tell them again the story they all loved from young—about their great grandfather Enoch who never died but was just taken up to heaven suddenly. (cf. Heb 10:25)

**• ... because they could serve the Lord together.**

Noah loved serving his God but it was hard work, first building the ark, and now, running a 'floating zoo'. But when the people you love and who love you work alongside you, somehow the hours fly by.

*Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. (Gen 6:14–15)*

God's instructions were specific and plans good—but still it would take energy, time and dedication to make it a reality. It was a good thing that Noah had his family to help him. In turn, Noah would have also derived joy seeing each son (or daughter-in-law) put his (and her) individual talent to good use. Perhaps one started off not being very good at his or her allocated task; but as the days went by, with Noah's encouragement, he or she improved. With familial love as their guiding principle, they could expect fewer quarrels about who should do more, or who was shirking or who should be made 'Captain of the Ark' and so on. All did their best because they were going to be on the same boat! (cf. Mt 18:19–20)

**• ... because they could quickly resolve differences.**

Just as we sometimes accidentally bite our tongue or lips, even the closest of siblings or the mildest or most loving parents and children have conflicts. Often these blow over. But occasionally, some get blown out of proportion. Hurtful words are said. Cold wars begin. Noah's family was not perfect. Little squabbles would have arisen from time to time; perhaps even a serious bust-up or two. But the reality was that no-one could throw a huge tantrum and threaten to move out after these quarrels. Running from the storm within would literally land one up in the storm outside! As wise patriarch, Noah would then have got the different parties to calmly sit down, work things out AND forgive each other. "Look," he'd say, "we have all types of ANIMALS peacefully coexisting. It'd be embarrassing if we HUMANS couldn't."

*The Lord Jesus Himself had to overcome his siblings' disbelief slowly through His unceasing love and ultimate sacrifice. So He knows exactly what we have to go through and, if we cast our burden of bringing our unbelieving families onto Him, He can do marvelous things for us.*

And they would reconcile. Had they not, the atmosphere in the ark would have been terrible and no-one knew when they would be getting out. After all, God just told them the rains would last forty days and nights. He did not tell them how long it would take the water to subside. The wonderful thing about being of the same faith was that they could kneel down together, raise their faces towards that solitary window and ask the heavenly Father to take away the cold hard knot of anger and reignite the spark of family love. (cf. Col 3:12–21)

*We should also imitate Him by being a shining example of Christian virtues within our families.*

**• ... because they could ALL look forward to a new world.**

It had been almost a year from the day that God had shut them in (Gen 7:11) to when they finally emerged (Gen 8:13). In that time, there would definitely have been days when things just became really difficult—uncooperative animals, unhappy family members and a particularly rocky boat. Perhaps, like children, Ham, Shem or Japheth had fretted, "How much longer? When will we get there, Dad?" Perhaps one of the spouses murmured in private, "Is your father really sure that there will be a better tomorrow for us?"

During such moments of doubt, mutual encouragement to focus on the Lord's providence would have been critical. Being of one faith, the stronger would remind the weaker to focus on how every word of God had been fulfilled thus far. Those who had mocked and jeered them as they built the ark were no more. Those who had caroused and sinned while the Noah family practiced self-control had been swept away. Brought up to worship one Lord, they would remind each other of the stories of the beautiful garden of Eden. God had created vastness from emptiness once. He was going to do it again. And they—blessed above all families—had been chosen to be the first family in this new world.

Then it happened! The ark finally docked at Mount Ararat. But patience was still needed. It would be another forty days before the waters sufficiently subsided.

"Not long now, not long now..." you can almost hear Noah reassuring them as he released his weekly bird, "God has already brought us so far. Trust Him. It'll be worth it." (cf. Heb 11; 12:1–3, 12–14)

And finally the day came—the long-awaited sound of His voice and the words:

*Then God spoke to Noah, saying, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you."*



*When our brethren bring their non-believing family members to church, we should go out of our way to make them feel at home.*

*So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark. (Gen 8:15–16, 18)*

The Noah family must have oohed and aahed as they emerged—How bright! How fresh the air! How beautiful the new world! And when God painted the first rainbow ... they would have been stunned into silence, clutching each other in excitement. The pleasure of a beautiful sunset or a special event would be much reduced if there were no-one to share it with. For the Noah family, the pleasure was 7-fold!

### LESSONS FROM WITHIN THE ARK

There are many lessons to be drawn from the flood at Noah's time. But a critical one is the great comfort and joy that can be derived from sharing with one's family one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit and one hope. A loving earthly family provides irreplaceable warmth and emotional fulfillment. But a loving earthly family in the Lord can additionally supply spiritual ballast—intercession in times of difficulty, mutual encouragement and motivation to reach the eternal heavenly home.

At this point, some of us do not yet have our entire family within the ark. Some of our families may still vehemently oppose our faith; some others are tolerant but do not want us to evangelize to them. It is natural to be discouraged if we are rejected (or even persecuted) whenever we try to share the gospel. But we cannot afford to give up. We must remind ourselves that those not in the ark have zero chance of survival! Puny humans were no match for the gigantic waves in Noah's time; they are no match for the tsunami of sin and wickedness in our world today. So we have to tirelessly try to bring them in. Cling on to the biblical promise that our loving Father does not want anyone to perish, and continually intercede for them. Abraham had no qualms respectfully bargaining with God because Lot and his family meant so much to him. Surely, our families mean

just as much, if not more!

While continuing our efforts, let us not focus on immediate results. The Lord Jesus Himself had to overcome his siblings' disbelief slowly through His unceasing love and ultimate sacrifice. So He knows exactly what we have to go through and, if we cast our burden of bringing our unbelieving families onto Him, He can do marvelous things for us.

However, we should also imitate Him by being a shining example of Christian virtues within our families. Human beings are wont to compare. It will be much more difficult to convince our family of God's love if our atheist or Buddhist relative behaves so much better than us—be it in word or deed. It may be stressful feeling that we cannot even relax and 'be ourselves' at home but, if we submit to Him, the Holy Spirit can truly transform us into the flavorful salt of the earth.

*The implicit warning is that affluence may breed complacency, and if not managed, deteriorates into wastefulness. The same holds true for the precious asset of our faith. We may be the fourth or fifth generation of True Jesus Church believers in our families but we shall be the last generation if we do not make sure that our children believe that being in the ark is better than being outside.*

This is also where church members—the larger family in Christ—can play a part. When our brethren bring their non-believing family members to church, we should go out of our way to make them feel at home. They may not be very friendly towards us given their preconceived notions of Christians and the True Jesus Church. Again, the Lord Jesus understands. When He first approached the Samaritan woman, her response was somewhat sarcastic. But He persisted in drawing her out of her shell. So when we too persevere in this work of supporting our sole-believer brethren, the Lord will help us in this task.

For those who do have their families in the ark—never, never take such grace for granted. Ancient sages believed that family wealth would not last beyond three generations—the first generation earns the wealth, the second grows it, the third spends it all! It may not literally be

three generations but the implicit warning is that affluence may breed complacency, and if not managed, deteriorates into wastefulness. The same holds true for the precious asset of our faith. We may be the fourth or fifth generation of True Jesus Church believers in our families but we shall be the last generation if we do not make sure that our children believe that being in the ark is better than being outside.

Some members are puzzled why their teenage children are disengaging from church although they have gone through the full Religious Education system. There are many factors leading to this outcome. But the most common one is the parents' own manifestation of faith at home. What is our behavior signaling to our children? Do we tell them it is fine to skip Sabbath service to study during examination periods? Have we been too busy to keep an eye on the company they keep, the websites they visit and even the language they use? Remember the warnings from the stories of Eli's and Aaron's sons.

If our whole family enjoys the Lord's grace, thank God constantly for preserving our faith so far. But labor diligently so that our faith and the faith of our fathers will truly become the faith of our children and their children. It is not just the duty of the religious education teachers to grow our children's faith. Like Noah, we all have to make the effort to keep everyone within the ark.

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. (Phil 4:6) ★*

*Like Noah, we all have to make the effort to keep everyone within the ark.*



# Knowing Our Time

ANON—West Malaysia

**E**conomic turmoil in Europe; devastating earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan, a massive tsunami, sweeping away everything and anything in its path; the disaster-stricken Fukushima-Daiichi plant, a nuclear catastrophe in the making, more gripping and terrifying than before, as radiation seeps into tap water, livestock, vegetables and even the soil and sea waters off Japan—the world anxiously wonders what else to expect as the catastrophe unfolds.

Chaos in Africa and the Middle East, a growing threat of retaliation and terror strikes against the USA and other Western nations—wars and rumors of war abound.

Russia and China—renewed forces, *new* economic powers. When will these nations collide with the Western world? We live in a world with an acute shortage of oil and other natural resources. How much longer until nations rise up against nations to control the dwindling resources, especially oil, in the Middle East? How much longer until a global war, the final battle by the great rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, is unleashed?

It seems almost that the other great issues facing the world have since been put aside, forgotten for now. What about climate change, a dying planet, the melting ice caps, droughts, famines, pestilences, new diseases and unsustainable population increase? Forgotten for now, in the face of new and more pressing matters; **man** has **no** answer to these problems.

These are the signs of the current times, the end times, when the hearts of men grow even harder and colder to the calling of the Lord, and the wrath of God against this wicked and perverse generation is at hand. This is the time when the end of days, the **apocalypse**, draws ever closer. The horses and their riders in the book of Revelations are ready to be unleashed, a multi-faceted

color of white, red, black and pale horses (Rev 6).

Yet, what have we done to equip ourselves for the day of reckoning? Which treasures have we laid up in heaven and how many good deeds have we undertaken that will follow us to God's righteous judgment? How many souls have we added to God's fold, how have we served the Lord, dare we meet our Master?

We are the chosen ones and the time is at hand to heed the call of our Lord to stand up, bold and brave as Christian soldiers. Have we hoisted the banner of the Lord as we march and press on in our spiritual endeavor to save souls and, ultimately, to save ourselves and our loved ones? Or are we too caught up with our own matters and worries, forgetting the time that is at hand and the call for us to arise as bold Christian soldiers?

Just as it was in the days of Noah, people were eating and drinking, marrying and given into marriage, right up to the day when Noah entered the ark. These were matters of pleasure, matters of the flesh, matters of the heart. In short, matters of the world. These matters had **no** place in the spiritual kingdom, which the Lord was to establish. These were impertinent and inconsequential. The flood came and the flood destroyed them all (Lk 17: 26–27).

Let us reflect to amend our wrongful ways and steps. We who have been given this passage into the ark of the last days, the True Jesus Church: do we still have valid passage to this ark or have we traded our boarding pass for the matters of the world?

Just as it was in the days of Lot, people were eating and drinking, buying, selling, planting and building, right up to the day Lot left Sodom, when fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all (Lk 17: 28–29). These too are materialistic

things, matters of desire and of vanity. These are matters of the world and have **no** part with our spiritual salvation, but concern those who die an eternal death.

Are these, sadly **not**, the matters of many of us today? How can these worldly matters help us on the day the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus, returns with His righteous judgment? Where is our heart and our focus set in these end times? Have we indeed turned a deaf ear to these warnings, cold to the Lord's teachings and love, and stubbornly refusing to amend our wicked ways as we determine to live in the perishing world of man?

**Remember Lot's wife** (Lk 17:32). Her ways were still set in Sodom and her eyes lingered only on its fallen beauty, even as she fled its destruction.

Let us therefore resolve to change our focus to matters that are spiritual and of the Lord.

We must lose our life in the world, so that we can gain and preserve our life and destiny, which the Lord has intended for us in heaven. Book our passage and that of those whom we love in the ark of the last days, The True Jesus Church. There is simply no other way.

The world must die, and so must our lives in the world, in exchange for a life spiritual, everlasting and incorruptible. We die so that we can live. Truly! Truly.

[Voice of a female newscaster in the background]

*"...nuclear experts plan for the next generation nuclear power plants, which will avoid the mistakes of Fukushima-Daiichi. In other related news, countries are now asking whether foodstuff purchased from Japan including seafood and other Japanese food products can be certified to be free from radiation exposure..."* ★

# Just a Moment

Sharon Chang—Brisbane, Australia

*It was just a moment  
That she closed her eyes  
In prayer  
Head bowed  
Hand clasped  
Into the water  
Up out of the water*

*In just a moment  
Her sins were washed away.*

*It was just a moment  
After three years  
The culmination  
Of exploration  
And determination  
To find  
The Source of All Creation  
The Giver of Salvation.*

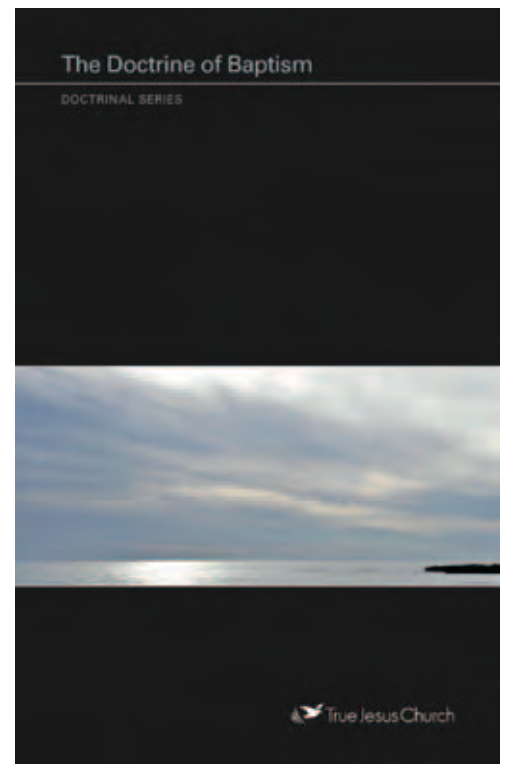
*A finite moment  
For infinite life*

*It was for this that  
Jesus came  
To teach, to preach  
To heal, to save  
Though the culmination  
For our salvation—  
His infinite moments of agony  
Eloi eloi lama sabacthani  
My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

*It was because of us that  
Jesus bled  
From head, from hands  
From back, from side, from feet  
He minded not a bit  
He begrudged us not a single moment  
Because excruciating  
Finite pain  
Was borne with exquisite  
Infinite love.*

*In just a moment  
She stepped ashore  
A child of God  
Rejoicing  
At her cleansing  
A reminder to all of us who witnessed  
The Unending Unchanging Unrestrained  
Infinite love of God.*

# New Publication Available in Hard Copy and Online



## The Doctrine of Baptism (English Version)

“The Doctrine of Baptism” was published by the US General Assembly. It is a comprehensive study of the doctrine of baptism, designed to convey our belief to truth seekers and equip our members to share the faith. The book presents a systematic biblical study of the doctrine of baptism, coupled with a detailed commentary on every passage in the New Testament that pertains to baptism, and testimonies related to baptism in the True Jesus Church. It consists of the following sections:

- Chapter 1: The Foreshadowers of Baptism in the Old Testament
- Chapter 2: John the Baptist
- Chapter 3: The Baptism of Jesus
- Chapter 4: Jesus’ Administration of Baptism
- Chapter 5: New Testament Baptism
- Chapter 6: Baptisms Recorded in Acts
- Chapter 7: New Testament Teachings on Baptism.
- Chapter 8: Baptism, Grace, and Faith
- Chapter 9: Household Baptism.
- Exegetical Studies
- Personal Testimonies

Price: US\$7 per hard copy / FREE DOWNLOAD available at <http://ia.tjc.org/elibrary/>.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding subscription or the book itself, please contact the IA office in the United States (email: [ia@tjc.org](mailto:ia@tjc.org) / tel: 1.714.533.8889).

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?

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#### **SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

Please email electronic files of articles (Microsoft Word) to [manna@tjc.org](mailto:manna@tjc.org).

Please direct any questions to [manna@tjc.org](mailto:manna@tjc.org) or Fax: +1-562-402-3190

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

# CALL FOR ARTICLES

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## *Author Guidelines and Editorial Calendar*

### **Issue #67:**

#### **Topic: The Bible**

**Articles due: February 15, 2012**

The Bible is the foundation of our faith, and members can continue to learn much from the Scriptures. Within it lie many answers and solutions to life issues we face on a daily basis. God further tells us we will be blessed simply by reading His words. How then do we approach and incorporate Bible study and reading into our lives? How does personal Bible study differ from group Bible study, and what are some tools and resources that would help facilitate our learning?

*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 in its latest edition.

# True Jesus Church

## Articles of Faith

### Jesus the True God

Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh, died on the cross for the redemption of sinners, resurrected on the third day and ascended to heaven. He is the only Savior of mankind, the Creator of the heavens and earth, and the only true God.

### Holy Bible

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is inspired by God, the only scriptural truth, and the standard for Christian living.

### Church

The True Jesus Church, established by our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit during the time of the "latter rain," is the restored true church of the apostolic time.

### Baptism

Water baptism is the sacrament for the remission of sins for regeneration. The baptism must take place in natural living water, such as the river, sea, or spring. The Baptist, who already has had received baptism of water and the Holy Spirit, conducts the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the person receiving the baptism must be completely immersed in water with head bowed and face downward.

### Holy Spirit

Receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, is the guarantee of our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

### Footwashing

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 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 can have eternal life and be raised on the Last Day. This sacrament shall be held as often as possible. Only one unleavened bread and grape juice shall 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 salvation and with the hope of eternal rest in the life to come.

### Salvation

Salvation is given by the grace of God through faith. Believers must rely on the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness, to honor God, and to love humanity.

### Last Day

The Lord's Second Coming will take place on the last day when He descends from heaven to judge the world: 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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