



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

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## Missionary Work

EDITORIAL

# The Great Commission

By Derren Liang

*“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ... For we are God’s fellow workers.” (1 Cor 3:6,9)*

Like Paul, we are God’s fellow workers for He has entrusted us with the great commission to preach the gospel to the world. In order to work with God as effective evangelists, we must first be fully remolded spiritually (1 Thess 1:5). What does this mean?

### Walking and Working with God

Firstly, the foundation for fulfilling the Lord’s great commission is to know, imitate and follow Him. Jesus’ disciples hailed from widely-varying backgrounds. The Lord spent three years training and remolding them. He used the Old Testament to teach His disciples about Himself (Lk 24:44); and asked them to deny themselves, bear the cross, and follow Him. In return, He promised they would receive a hundredfold in this life and eternal life in the age to come (Mk 10:30). Indeed, after Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples put the teachings and their knowledge of Jesus to good use. They preached the gospel everywhere. In return, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the good news of salvation through accompanying miracles.

During his conversion, Paul asked two questions: “Who are you, Lord?” and “What shall I do, Lord?” These questions reflected his intense desire to know Jesus and his conviction to follow Him. Paul served faithfully, even giving up his life to complete the ministry that God had entrusted to him. As God’s fellow worker, he fulfilled the Lord’s great commission, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in three missionary trips.

### Working with Brethren

Secondly, effective evangelism hinges on close teamwork at various levels. Paul famously wrote - “I planted, Apollos watered” – reminding us that there must be collaboration between workers with different gifts (1 Cor 3:5). Next, workers with different cultural backgrounds must collaborate to share the gospel in different communities (Gal 2:8). This is clearly God’s will since He who worked effectively in Peter as the apostle to the circumcised also worked effectively in Paul toward the Gentiles. Last but not least, workers of different generations – e.g. Paul and Timothy –

must collaborate. This ensures that the pattern of sound words is passed on (2 Tim 1:13).

### Work of the Holy Spirit

As with all other work, we may encounter hiccups and hindrances while evangelizing. At such times, we must not lose heart. Instead, critically remember that evangelism is the work of the Holy Spirit. By the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel can smash through racial and geographical boundaries (Acts 10, 16). We just need to work with the Lord by rendering our support through prayer and participation.

### The World and Work Await Us

*“He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk 16:16).*

Today, there are still many places in this world that have not yet received the complete gospel of salvation. Christians are called to love and serve. Fulfilling the great commission is the most fundamental way to love others. The gospel helps man to solve his greatest problem—death; and brings the greatest blessing to the world—eternal life. Moreover, through the gospel, the kingdom of God has come with righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17). When we proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, God will heal the brokenhearted, liberate the captives, and give sight to the blind (Lk 4:18).

In short, evangelism brings God’s grace to others, makes the church grow, and enables us to live a dynamic and meaningful life. The writers of this issue’s theme section share about the blessings, joy and grace as well as the pains and obstacles encountered while preaching the gospel and pastoring the flock in various pioneering areas around the world. They also share what motivated them to join missionary work and how it has helped them to grow in faith. Last but not least, they give us a glimpse into the church’s situation in various pioneering regions and point to the need for more volunteers in the mission field.

The Lord is waiting in the field to work with us to grow the seeds of His gospel. Are we ready to plant and water?

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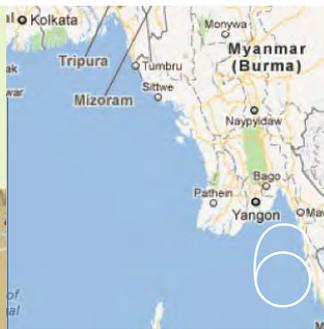
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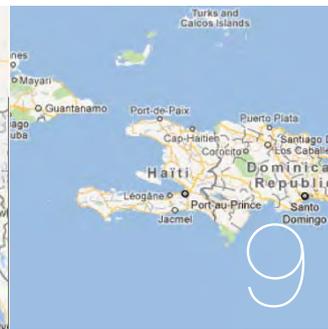
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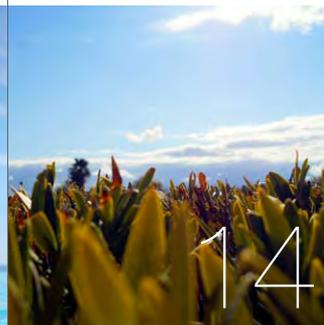
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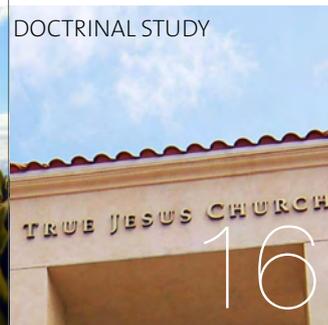
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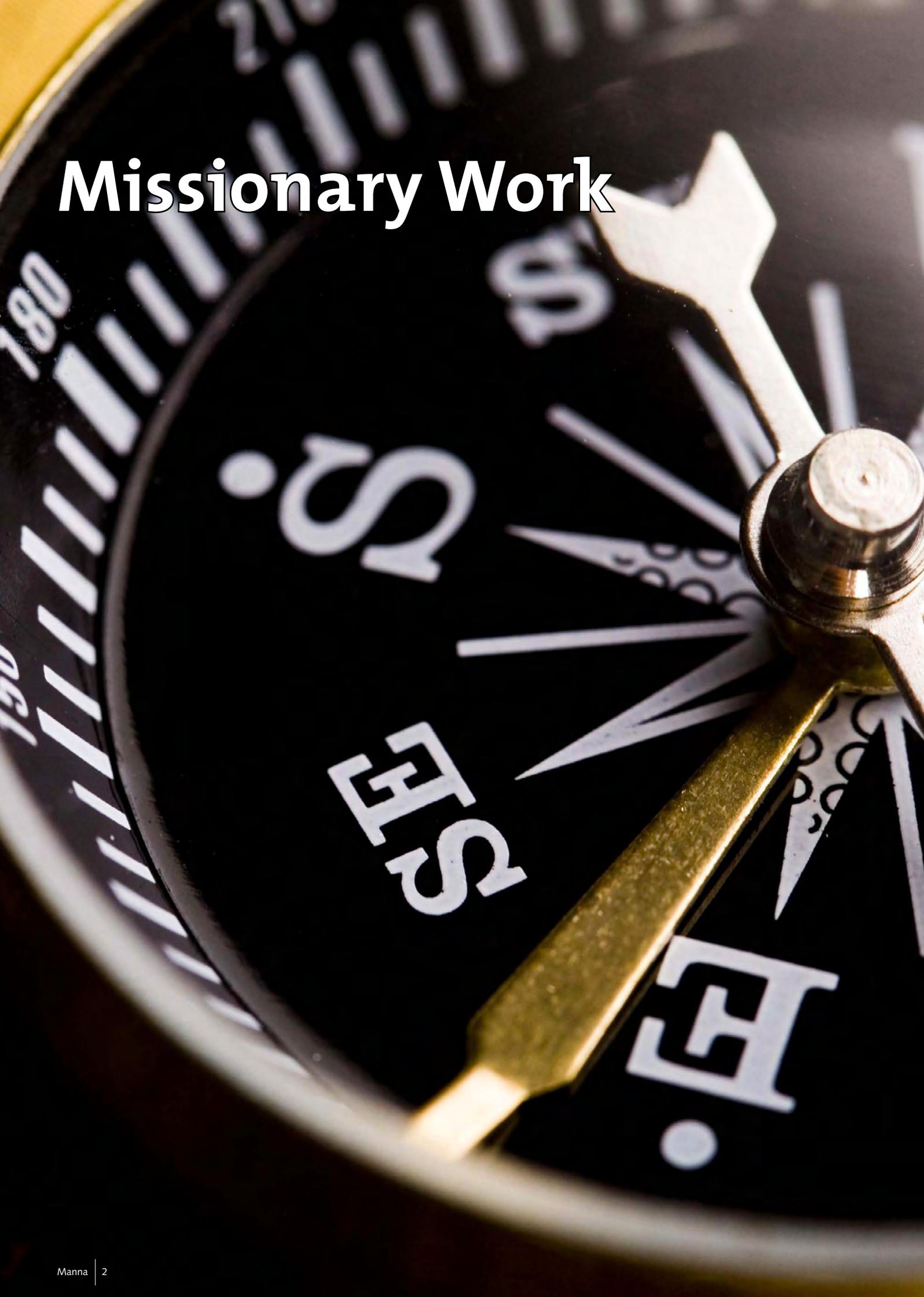
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# Missionary Work



# The Heart of Africa

Daniel Young—Elizabeth, New Jersey, USA



"Welcome to Zambia—the heart of Africa!" exclaimed a brother as he energetically shook my hand. Little did I know how much that phrase would mean to me over the next four weeks. I had come to Zambia for missionary work. I came to preach and teach, but I feel that I learned more from the Zambians than they did from me. Time and again, I was touched by their heart of worship and humbled by the lessons God had in store for me.

In June 2010, Preacher Jung, Preacher Choong and I spent a month in Zambia training workers and preaching to other churches. Zambia is a pioneer mission field as True Jesus Church (TJC) has only been there since 2008. The country itself is landlocked within Africa, hence the moniker "heart of Africa." During our time there, we visited four towns, traveling from Kitwe to Solwezi and back.

## CHIMWEMWE—HEART OF LEARNING

The first town we visited was Chimwemwe, which means "joy." It was there during a two-week Bible seminar that many of us experienced the true joy of learning the word of God.

There was not a moment wasted during the seminar. The day began at 6:00 am with an hour of prayer. Classes began soon after and lasted until 5:00

pm. After another prayer and a light dinner, the brothers would ask for more biblical teachings, jotting notes at every opportunity. When I was physically exhausted, they would still be working on their assignments, comparing notes and scribbling down questions for the next day. I was impressed at their diligence, but that was just the beginning.

In the days to come, I witnessed what Jeremiah experienced: "Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer 15:16). There were times I could feel the joy as soon as I entered into the room, seeing their faces light up with excitement as the preacher explained a passage to them. On several occasions, I saw one or two of them leap out of their chairs in astonishment!

Their hearts had been set ablaze by the word of God. There was one sister who did not have a Bible, so as we taught, she simply memorized all the verses used to prove our doctrines. It was as the Bible describes in Proverbs 7:1–3, "My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you... Write them on the tablet of your heart."

Their passion was contagious and extended beyond the classes. I never thought it was possible to talk about the Bible for two entire weeks. Even at National Youth Theological Seminars, we chat about school, work, and summer

## THEME

Wearing her best clothes, a sister jumps across a large ditch in the path



plans. Yet for those two weeks, every break and mealtime conversation revolved around the Bible.

### CHAMBOLI—HEART OF PREACHING

During the second week, I had the opportunity to preach and go on pastoral visits in Chamboli. The members led me around the town and throughout the neighboring regions, sometimes walking more than an hour just to reach a member's home. I remember traversing shabby rope bridges and crossing ravines to reach the next destination.

Although walking miles and miles to reach one individual seems inefficient, the members compensated by preaching to every person along the way. It was in Chamboli that I learned to be unashamed and unbiased when preaching.

One of the sisters would stop every person we met on the way and ask if they would like to hear about the truth. She would ask the children playing in the dirt, adults on their way to work, and even a group of youths smoking on the side of the road. Amazingly, it was those youths who showed the most interest.

I learned not to judge others based on their appearances and to preach the truth freely to all.

### SOLWEZI—HEART OF PERSEVERANCE

The third town we visited was in a very poor, rural region. Solwezi was the only place where we stayed in a motel, simply because none of the members could afford to host Preacher Jung and me. While the other churches we visited had roughly seventy to one hundred members, Solwezi had only seven adults and eight children.

Remarkably, there was a church building at this place for a congregation of three families. When I asked how they could afford the building, I discovered that it was actually donated by a brother. He originally planned to use the building as a general store for his business, but after converting to the True Jesus Church, he decided to dedicate it to the church.

The members met every single Sabbath for worship in spite of their few numbers and distance from our other churches. When they sang hymns, their voices would fill the entire room. It was a stark contrast to some situations in the United States where praise sessions sound like whispers in the wind despite the large congregation.

The members there had service every week even without having a preacher. The same two brothers led Sabbath services—including praise sessions, Bible studies and sermons—throughout the year. After witnessing their dedication to serving, I realized how silly I was to complain to God about being assigned “so much holy work” back at home.

When I later came across Psalms 57:7,

*One of the sisters would stop every person we met on the way and ask if they would like to hear about the truth.*

the verse brought back memories of the commitment I saw in the members in Solwezi.

*“My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise.”*

### SAINT DOROTHY—HEART OF WORSHIP

At the next town, we were greeted by the sound of hymn singing long before arriving at the church. Saint Dorothy was a few hours from Solwezi by bus, and the sun had already set by the time we arrived. Expecting most of the members to have returned home already, I was surprised to hear the sound of hymns from half a mile away while walking to church. I would later find out that they had been waiting seven hours for us to arrive and had been singing hymns to pass the time.

The church at Saint Dorothy was built by a brother who used to be a pastor of another denomination. When he heard that TJC missionaries were coming, he informed the surrounding areas. The news spread like wildfire, and the people came en masse.

Over the next two days, I was continually amazed at the members' determination to worship God. I learned of two young brothers who shared a bike and spent thirteen hours traveling to church. To join us for those three days, many youths had traveled long distances



Inside the donated chapel



Congregation photo in front of the building

by themselves because their parents needed to work. It struck me how much they were willing to sacrifice in order to attend services, when in the U.S., the parents often need to push their children to attend church events.

It was clear that God saw their heart of worship and blessed them. As it says in Psalm 84:5, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage." One of the two brothers mentioned above received the Holy Spirit on the first night of the event; the other brother had already received it and had been encouraging his younger brother. Both of them went home exceedingly joyful!

**HEART TO HEART**

Over the course of a month in Zambia, the heart of Africa, I had witnessed the members' heart of worship. I realized my many shortcomings and determined to learn from their heart of worship.

I resolved to take advantage of the fact that I have a Bible and cultivate my love for

The youths at St. Dorothy, ready and eager to learn



the word of God. I needed to overcome my own fears and prejudices and imitate their zeal in preaching. I told myself to stop complaining about holy work and rise up to the challenge, knowing now that tough times call for more action rather than a defeatist mentality. Lastly, I made sure that I would treasure every opportunity to worship God.

Living in industrialized countries such as the United States, we may grow

complacent and take our blessings for granted. We have no lack when it comes to church services, Bibles, Manna articles, or online devotionals. God has given us everything we need to seek and to worship Him.

Perhaps the only thing we lack is the heart. ★

*I learned of two young brothers who shared a bike and spent thirteen hours traveling to church. It struck me how much they were willing to sacrifice in order to attend services, when in the U.S., the parents often need to push their children to attend church events.*

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The Bible is the foundation of our faith, and members are called to learn from the Scriptures. Which is the more precious and reliable to the souls we live on a daily basis?

Our Father calls us we will be blessed abundantly by reading His words.

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How does personal Bible study differ from group Bible study, and what are some tools and resources that would help facilitate our learning?

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Dealing with Calamities

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.

# Overseas Missionary Trip Journal— Myanmar (2010) and Philippines (2011)

Derence Voo—Singapore



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*By God's grace, brother Derence Voo had the opportunity to participate in various overseas missionary trips in the past two years. Since 2010, he has been regularly teaching Religious Education (RE) classes at Batam, Indonesia. End of 2010, he visited Myanmar (formerly Burma) together with six choir members from Singapore, riding on a missionary trip of the Myanmar Mission Committee (MMC). Mid 2011, he had the opportunity to join the Voluntary Missionary Team (VMT) from Sabah to serve in Manila, Philippines. Following are some of his reflections on these trips for mutual encouragement.*

## MYANMAR

In August 2010, Preacher Timothy from Myanmar visited Singapore and invited local church members to visit the churches in Myanmar. Seven choir members, including myself, took up his invitation and decided to visit two places in Myanmar in December 2010.

Before the trip, we spent two months preparing ourselves; we learned the phonetics of the native language Mizo and some basic phrases so we could carry out basic conversations with our brethren there. More importantly, we wanted to be able to sing simple hymns in this language. Hence, we practiced almost every evening until late into the night. Yet nobody was murmuring, which was

heart-warming to see. I was particularly touched by two new choir members who were also willing to strive, learn and grow together with us.

December 2010 finally came, and we embarked on our missionary trip. In total, we spent ten days in Myanmar. During our trip, we visited churches at two locations and learned many precious lessons.

## Yangon

In Yangon, one of the largest cities in the South of Myanmar, we saw many brethren who love the Lord, despite their difficult lives. Among them was an elderly brother in his seventies. One of his sons contracted Polio and his daughter-in-law's leg was amputated due to a misdiagnosis. His whole family of ten depends totally on this elderly brother's income. Every day he cycles two to three kilometers to his students' houses to tutor English. Although his life is difficult, he told me, "There isn't much furniture in my house; it's just a simple house, but as long as I have Jesus Christ, that's enough for me."

I had heard many similar testimonies before but when I saw these believers with my own eyes, I was really touched. In spite of their tough life, they preserve their faith. This has encouraged me to be contented and to draw near to God, even

when my work gets very busy.

## Kalay

Besides Yangon, we also visited Kalay in the northern part of Myanmar. The infrastructure of this town is even less developed compared to Yangon, although the people are generally richer.

During a spiritual convocation that we attended at Sanmyo church in Kalay, I saw how believers offered vegetables, cows and pigs for consumption. Brethren who came from other rural churches brought their own mattresses and stayed overnight at church. Their spirit in attending the spiritual convocation really amazed me.

Apart from attending the spiritual convocation, we also visited some local church members' houses. During one of these visits, I met an elderly sister who left a deep impression on me. In a time of crisis, when many members in Sanmyo joined other denominations, she had encouraged the brethren with the following words: "If the bottle does not contain wine, it doesn't matter whether or not the word "wine" was written on the bottle, because it's still an empty bottle. Likewise, if the church has lost the truth, then that church is not a church."

Back then, only five families remained faithful. Undeterred by such setback, these faithful brethren congregated at

*“If the bottle does not contain wine, it doesn’t matter whether or not the word “wine” was written on the bottle, because it’s still an empty bottle. Likewise, if the church has lost the truth, then that church is not a church.”*

a member's house for family services. Thank God, they have kept their faith until today; now the MMC has given them another piece of land to build a new place of worship. From their testimony, we can see God's care for His church, despite internal conflicts and other difficulties.

Next on our missionary agenda was conducting evangelistic services, at Pr. Timothy's hometown church in Natkyikong. At another village, we even preached at the premises of a Presbyterian church! We also held an evangelistic service at the house of an observer from another denomination near Sanmyo. He invited some of his church council members to attend the service. After the service, one church council member told us that the sermon had really touched him; he could experience that the sermon was filled with hope and life.

### Thoughts on Myanmar

Our churches in Myanmar need workers to help with various types of church work, such as evangelism, pastoral work, religious education, sacred music etc. God willing, the choir members will go to Myanmar again to assist in the work. Through this trip we have grown spiritually, and have learned to be content with what we have. More importantly, we realized how many blessings we have received from the Lord, which has inspired us to serve the Lord more.

### MANILA, PHILIPPINES

In the past, I had heard much about the love of Sabah General Assembly's VMT for God's work in the Philippines. I was told that many working youths take leave every year to help with the work in the Philippines. They had also formed a VMT choir to assist hymnal evangelistic services in that area. For this reason, I was eagerly looking forward to my July 2011 trip to Manila.

However, when I realized that there were only four workers joining this trip, I was quite disappointed. I learned that the Manila church had taken over most of the holy work such as religious education, hymnal evangelistic service

etc. For this reason, the VMT's focus has shifted towards training local members in the area of planning and execution. In other words, Manila church has grown up. Thank God!

During this missionary trip, we visited church members, assisted in the Children's and Youths' Day program and held a hymnal evangelistic service. On Children's Day, the kids were very

*Our churches in Myanmar need workers to help with various types of church work, such as evangelism, pastoral work, religious education, sacred music etc.*

happy. After hymn singing and prayer, all fifty to sixty children sat down quietly to listen to Bible stories. Among them were nursery class students who are too young to understand the stories, yet all of them sat there quietly and obediently; listening intently. No one was running around. It was such a joy to teach them.

During weekdays we visited members, among whom there are many faithful families. I remember a family who lives far away from church. Every Sabbath, they would take a taxi to church. The monthly taxi fare would use up almost half of their income yet, by faith, they are willing to spend this amount of money to

keep the Sabbath.

There is another family, whose members, from old to young, serve the Lord. The older members are the church ministers and the younger ones follow the adults to serve in church. I like this family's spirit in serving the Lord, as it is a very good example of a family altar.

Another member who touches me is an elderly sister who has been serving the Lord faithfully and fervently ever since she was baptized. Despite her age, she is still very keen to learn the word of God. We spent one whole morning with her to clarify her queries on the Bible. If only more of us shared this thirst for the precious word of God!

During this trip, I also achieved a breakthrough, which is to interpret sermons from Chinese into English. Normally, I do not interpret into English but the usual interpreters were not available. Therefore I had to step in. In terms of interpreting, I could be described as the servant who has only received five hundred talents—not even one thousand talents. Yet, by God's grace, I was able to help with this work. Later on a preacher encouraged me with the following verse, which indeed rang true for me:

*“For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2 Cor 8:12).*

### Thoughts on Manila

Although Manila church was established more than twenty years ago and local church members have gradually taken over much of the holy work, many areas of church work are still in their infancy.



Group photo taken with Kalay members

*We don't need to be very gifted in order to serve in the missionary field. Our overseas brethren may not need tangible assistance; just a pastoral visit, could already be a form of encouragement to them. What they need is our love and care.*

For this reason, we need to pray for them, and ask that God will raise more local workers to pastor the church.

This missionary trip has shown me the beauty of serving God wholeheartedly, away from the pressures of the secular world, where work demands have often hindered me from offering the best to my Lord. I have learned that we will experience God's presence and guidance, when we focus fully in our service to God.

**SERVICE OF LOVE**

Visiting churches abroad, especially in pioneering areas, is also a great opportunity to hear many precious testimonies from our brethren, which will encourage us in our faith. We don't need to be very gifted in order to serve in the missionary field. Our overseas brethren may not need tangible assistance; just a pastoral visit, could already be a form of

encouragement to them. What they need is our love and care.

I hope that this sharing will encourage more youths to serve and to participate willingly in the overseas missionary ministry. Our busy work schedule often does not allow us to leave work for too long; therefore, I would encourage working brethren who would like to participate in missionary trips to prioritize and to plan their annual leave as early as possible. May the love of God compel us continually to serve the Lord in this area.

May all glory, honor and praises be given to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ★

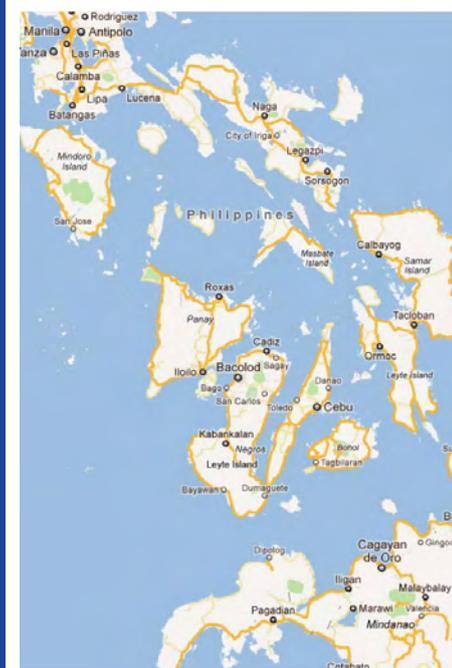


Group photo with Manila church choir



Family service with Deaconess Anna's family (Manila)

**MILESTONES OF THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH @ THE PHILIPPINES**



**1983:**

- o The first seed of the true church was planted in Bacolod City in the Central Philippines. Brother Ernesto Torres, formerly a pastor of the United Pentecostal Church, received two issues of *Words of Life* from the True Jesus Church International Assembly.
- o First church was established in Bacolod City.

**1990:**

- o The Holy Spirit began to work in Manila, capital of the Philippines. A local group of devout Christians had been gathering frequently to fast and to study the Bible. When they heard of the True Jesus Church doctrines they were greatly moved. Eventually, forty-three were baptized.

**1995:**

- o International Assembly appointed the General Assembly of Sabah to take care of the work in the Philippines.
- o The Philippines Mission Committee was formed and started to work towards developing the local churches into independent, self-sustaining and evangelistic churches.

**2004:**

- o The first five deacons and three deaconesses were ordained.
- o Theological seminary officially started its classes.
- o The first national short-term students' theological course was conducted.



# Growing Through Servitude— My Dominican Republic Trip

Grady Low—Elizabeth, New Jersey, USA

I had the opportunity to accompany Pr. Raymond Chou on a pastoral trip to the Dominican Republic from June 24th to July 4th, 2010. I was there to provide Spanish translation for the members, in particular at the San Pedro Church where the congregation is almost exclusively Spanish speaking. Through this trip I learned a lot about my servitude, my God, and my self.

## DECIDING TO SERVE IN SPANISH MINISTRY

Just a few years ago, I never expected that I would be doing anything in church except attending Sabbath services; neither did I ever think of joining any overseas missionary trip.

However, my attitude started to change during the 2008 National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) when I realized what my faith meant to me. As participants, we were asked to ponder whether we understood the debt that we owe God, and what we were going to do with our life. I recalled how many times in my life I had experienced God's love and how I have the hope of salvation through the blood of Jesus. I realized that as a Christian, I needed to serve God to repay the debt.

For this reason, I invested much time in prayer during the seminar, trying to understand how I could serve God.

Since I attended some classes on the Spanish ministry during NYTS and have studied Spanish as a second language in high school, I decided to sign up for the 2009 Ministry Volunteer Program (MVP) and its Spanish ministry project. Soon after MVP, I was asked to serve in the Dominican Republic.

## DEALING WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS

However, despite my enrolment in the MVP, I underwent periods of fears and uncertainties. For this reason, I didn't immediately agree to serve in the Dominican Republic. Instead, I attended the 2009 College Youth Convocation (CYC), where I meditated on how I might prepare myself to be useful for the Master (2 Tim 2: 20–21).

During CYC I learned that I would be useful to God, despite my limited Spanish skills, as long as I kept myself clean and holy, always striving to be close to God.

From the Book of Joshua, I learned that I needed to overcome my fears of serving God and should simply “be strong and courageous”. God led Joshua and in the same way, I knew that God was leading me—all I had to do was trust in His strength. Through all the classes and prayers I truly felt God assuring me of His guidance.

Immediately after CYC I attended the

Western Hemisphere Africa Voluntary Missionary Workers' Training Seminar 2010 in London to learn more in-depth about God and servitude. It was inspiring to see brothers and sisters at the seminar full of zeal and fervor to serve. This motivated me not only to serve God, but also to emphasize more on daily cultivation. By then, I knew without doubt that I wanted to volunteer for the Dominican Republic trip in June 2010 with Pr. Raymond Chou.

## PREPARING FOR THE TRIP

For the next six months, I prepared myself spiritually and physically for the trip: I prayed a lot and asked God for help, and I also invested time and effort to improve my Spanish skills.

With the help of brothers and sisters at Rutgers University Campus Fellowship we organized a few interpretation fellowships, where we practiced interpreting by using sermon recordings from our church in Argentina that were in Chinese and translated to Spanish. I was also a part of a Spanish Bible Study team that conducted weekly Bible study sessions in Spanish through webcam. We would practice speaking, listening, and learning new vocabulary in Spanish. This was not only spiritually edifying but it also improved my Spanish skills.

I also tried to read at least one chapter

Group picture with RE students and Bro. Floro's wife



of the Bible in Spanish every day and often looked up rules of Spanish grammar. I was determined to prepare myself thoroughly to serve God dutifully.

Yet despite my determination to serve God, I still struggled with many doubts and fears.

I thank God for the many brothers and sisters who offered encouragement and support. From testimonies about how they had been in similar situations before to a simple "I'll pray for you," everything helped me to prepare myself to serve God in the Dominican Republic.

### DURING THE TRIP

During my time in the Dominican Republic I had to interpret for nightly classes, Sabbath services, and Bible studies during visits. I also had to prepare three religious education (RE) lessons that were each roughly an hour long. Pr. Raymond wanted to emphasize that I was not only going there to interpret, but that I was there to serve.

Although life during the trip wasn't strenuous for me, I still had to overcome some difficulties: not all of the food agreed with me, there was no working audiovisual system (which meant I needed to shout a lot whenever I interpreted), there was no warm water, and there were occasional water and electricity outages, which meant skipping showers and using flashlights for Bible study.

Moreover, my poor command of Spanish meant that at times I could not communicate effectively with the local brethren. However, I could see the love and care that the members had for each other, and how earnestly they were trying to bring back lost sheep or convince others of the necessity of salvation. All this encouraged me to learn from them and to better prepare myself for future

visits.

Aside from these duties, I had a lot of quiet time free of distractions that allowed me to really reflect on my faith, pray and read the Bible. It was quite an experience to wake up and know that for the next several hours I would be able to draw closer to God.

### A HEART TO SERVE AND SUBMIT

I realized early on that my Spanish skills meant that I would not be able to do well on my own; the question was whether or not God would supplement. From my experiences on the trip, one Bible verse in particular rang true for me: "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have" (2 Cor 8:12).

*As long as we have a willing heart to serve and to submit to God, our service will be fruitful.*

God will provide—it's as simple as that. Going into the trip I had constant doubts and fears that God would not help me because I fell short of God's glory in so many ways. Yet His grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9).

I learned that, once we have done the necessary preparation to serve God, we need to entrust the rest to God. He manifests His strength by providing for us when we are lacking, so we should not worry so much about our abilities. As long as we have a willing heart to serve and to submit to God, our service will be fruitful.

### THE LOVE OF GOD KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

Without a doubt, out of everything that

I experienced, the brothers and sisters in the Dominican Republic left the deepest impression on me. I dislike traveling, and sightseeing typically doesn't appeal to me. But every time I visit another True Jesus Church, I absolutely love how we are all part of the same body of Christ. The love of God knows no boundaries.

The members I met have set wonderful examples for me. Seeing their effort and sacrifice reminded me of how much more I need to improve in showing love to others:

Brother Rafael always came to church an hour earlier to clean the church. Although he's advanced in age, he always swept and mopped the floor, swept the backyard, and made sure that everything was presentable for Sabbath service.

Brother Borges had a problem with his eyes and therefore couldn't read very well. Yet he still had a great desire to learn and read the Bible.

Brother Floro went around his neighborhood and preached about how good it is to believe in Jesus and how his life was so much better after believing in Jesus. He even traveled one and a half hours to pick us up at the airport. He had to wait two hours for our delayed flight, yet he still took us back to church and set everything up for us.

Brother Huang showed an immense amount of hospitality: we stayed at his house in Santo Domingo where we spent the last four days of our trip. He provided so much food for the two of us and made our stay very pleasant.

I was simply stunned by what all the members were willing to do, just so that Pr. Raymond and I would be a little bit more comfortable.

### COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Many of the members there have so little, yet they thank God for it. They sing of their blessings, pray hard, and study the Bible diligently.



Hymn singing before service

The favorite hymn of the members in the Dominican Republic is "Count Your Blessings." We sang this hymn multiple times each Sabbath, and every time I would be touched by how passionately they sang the refrain (translated literally from the Spanish version): "Blessings, how many you have already! Blessings, God will send you more! Blessings, it will surprise when you see what God has done for you!"

After service, a few members would go up to the front of the chapel and share how they received God's grace. They would share about how God made the bus ride a little bit smoother, how God made their finger hurt a little less, and how happy and blessed they are to have found the true church.

*I was unexpectedly blessed by learning so much from the brothers and sisters in the Dominican Republic. They taught me how to always be ready to thank God and share God's grace with others, and to never take the love of God for granted.*

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*(1 Thess 5:16-18)*

I liked these verses in elementary school because they were really short and easy to remember. But during my trip, I really saw how the members in the Dominican Republic lived out these verses. They were constantly joyful, they enjoyed prayer, and in everything they gave thanks.

I was unexpectedly blessed by learning so much from the brothers and sisters in the Dominican Republic. They taught me how to always be ready to thank God and share God's grace with others, and to never take the love of God for granted.

Although I had been so terrified of everything going wrong during the trip, God granted me peace in my heart and converted my ineptitude into a testimony of His power.

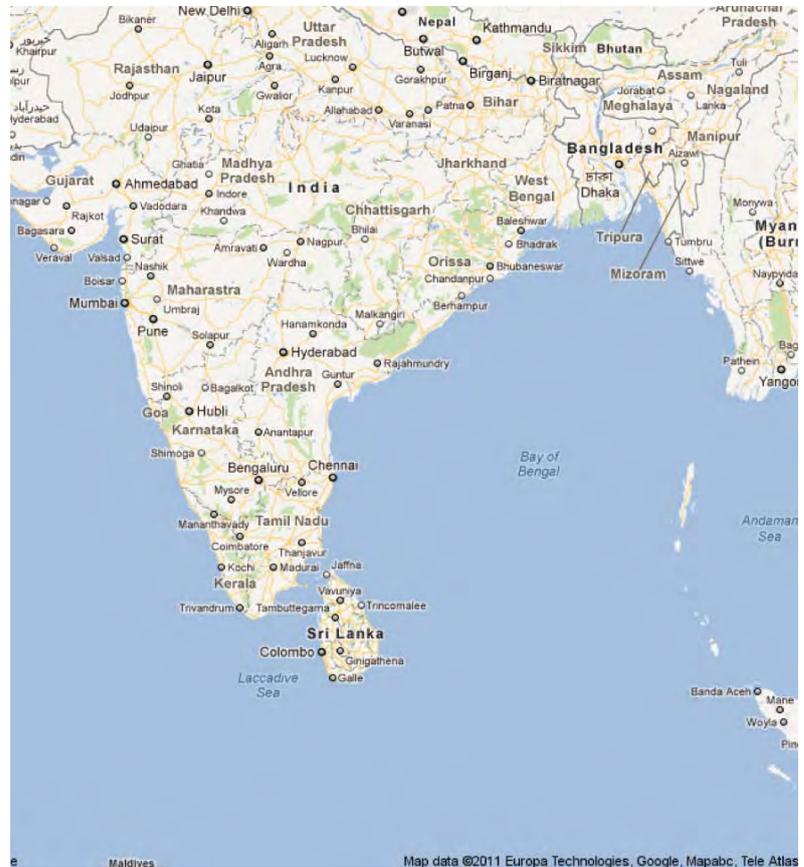
I thank God for the chance to go to the Dominican Republic. From preparing myself to everything that touched me during the trip, it was a truly blessed and memorable experience. ★

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN INDIA

*Prior to 1999, most of the Indian churches did not have any Religious Education (RE) classes. Only two bigger churches held Bible classes for children on an impromptu basis. Thank God for His guidance, today we have a RE system established in every church in India.*

*However, we are facing a shortage of RE teachers. Many of the teachers are working in factories and offices, as the country is moving towards industrialization and its economy has made strides in recent years. The church in India has only a total membership of about 1,300 and as such, there are not many youths who can help out with RE work. This is a setback that needs our constant prayers.*

*By the grace of God, IA set up the Eastern Hemisphere Volunteer Mission Training Program in 2002. Today we have a team of seven volunteers helping with India mission work—they assist the local children and youth ministry as well as gospel outreach missions. Yet we need more volunteers to help with Bible camps, youth seminars, youth spiritual convocations, youth training and RE teacher training programs. We hope that the Lord will inspire more volunteers to assist in this ministry. Has anyone heard the Lord's call, "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep"?*





# Spiritual Experiences in the Philippines

Lemuel Leong—Sabah, Malaysia

*It is the experience of the True Jesus Church in many places that, as the church grows, Satan will use every wile to hinder and destroy the work of the church. Between 2005 and 2008, a series of spiritual battles took place in the True Jesus Church of the Philippines. Preacher Lemuel Leong from Sabah recounts a personal experience of one of these, which took place in July 2005.*

## **BATTLE BEGINS: HERESY**

My fellow preacher and I were on a pastoral trip to Manila, the capital of the Philippines located in Northern Philippines when we received very disturbing news. Influenced by churches of other denominations, one of the Filipino church workers of our church in Samar Island in the Eastern Philippines had started teaching the believers that the name of God was the Hebrew Yehoshua. He expressly forbade the use of Jesus as he claimed that all translations of God's name were ineffective.

We were extremely concerned about this heresy and the deep unease it was causing the members, so we made a last-minute change to our original pastoral visit plan to include a detour to Samar. We also asked God to personally guide us in addressing this heresy effectively.

Our first stop, Laoang church, was in the north of Samar Island, located on a small island just across the northeastern

tip of the main island. As we were waiting to cross the strait to Laoang, both of us suddenly felt an urge to visit newly-baptized Sister A. Since she lived in a nearby village, we thought she would be able to shed some light on the events in Samar Island.

## **BATTLE INTENSIFIES: DEMON-POSSESSION**

Sister A had once been a pastor in another church. We knew her to be diligent in studying the Bible as well as zealous in serving God and receiving guests. But on that occasion, when we arrived at her house, we found her uncharacteristically burdened, gloomy and extremely weary. Entering her house, we saw a young lady—Sister A's daughter—pinned to the ground by three men; screaming, struggling and glaring balefully at us. This had been going on for about a month, leaving the family extremely distressed and exhausted.

## **Devil's Foothold #1: Leaving the Fold of God**

We knelt down to pray and cast out the evil spirit in Jesus' name. But why did the devil possess this young believer? Realizing that it was critical for us to get to the root of the problem, I stopped the prayer and questioned the family. Sister A confessed that she had lost faith and had

left the church with great disappointment because the believers had been forced to use the name Yehoshua instead of Jesus. On the first Sabbath after she stopped attending church, the evil spirit began to disturb her daughter.

So this was the breach that had allowed Satan's invasion! Leaving the church—God's fold—is tantamount to leaving the scope of God's grace. We then become highly vulnerable to the devil's wiles and fiery arrows. So we admonished the sister to defend the truth courageously instead of leaving the church in times of crisis. We then encouraged her to repent in prayer.

## **Devil's Foothold #2: Sorcery**

During the second prayer, both my co-worker and I inexplicably opened our eyes at the same time. To our astonishment, we saw the father of the possessed girl surreptitiously take some unknown objects from her and pass them to his wife. Immediately, I stopped the prayer again to find out what they were trying to hide. It turned out to be amulets that the non-believer father had obtained to try to cure his daughter. Sister A was aware of his actions but had—in her despair—consented to such use of sorcery.

So we sternly told the family that light has no communion with darkness, Christ has no accord with Belial and that believers must keep themselves holy.

Consequently, we burnt all these charms in Jesus' name.

### Devil's Foothold #3: Impurity

After our third prayer, we inquired about the identity of the man who had been standing next to the possessed lady all the time. Sister A introduced him as her son-in-law; she added that the couple had yet to register their marriage but it was evident that they were already cohabiting. We had found yet another loophole for the devil to enter because such impurity before marriage constituted disrespect towards God and His commandments. We exhorted this family with biblical principles on marriage and asked them to repent. We also instructed the young couple to register their marriage as soon as possible.

*Defend the truth courageously instead of leaving the church in times of crisis.*

### BATTLE WON

The fourth prayer was an earnest prayer of repentance by the whole family. We entreated the heavenly Father to set the possessed girl free from her bondage to the evil spirit. Amazingly, after this prayer, she got up from the ground where she had been writhing on; she cleaned herself and was even able to go into the kitchen to prepare a light meal for us.

God's compassion is truly great, especially when we humbly turn back to Him. Very importantly, the entire incident allowed the unbelieving father in this family to experience God for himself. He personally witnessed how the demon was cast out through the wondrous power of Jesus' name. Hence, when we went back to visit the family the next day, he requested to be baptized into the true church. So we decided to conduct baptism on the following Sabbath day.

### Satan's Final Attempts

However, Satan is a patient and persistent foe. On the Sabbath morning of the baptism, just as Sister A and family were setting off for church, the evil spirit started to work again. But the family persevered. And it was an amazing effort: a group of people carried the possessed girl all the way through the paddy fields, took the trishaw to the jetty, took the ferry to the other shore and finally sent her to church

on another trishaw.

When they finally arrived at the church, the whole congregation interceded for the possessed sister with one accord. Subsequently, a group of believers went to the baptismal site, while another group remained in church to pray earnestly for the sister, relying on the Holy Spirit to fight this battle.

Our God is a faithful God. He soon personally stepped in. As the believers prayed, the possessed sister saw a vision of a river. The river water was foul and fetid; an evil spirit dressed completely in black and covered with maggots stood on the other bank beckoning her to join him. Then, a man in a shining white garment called out to her to stop her from following the evil spirit. He also informed her that there were still charms in their

*The Bible tells us that, "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28). In fact, God often turns Satan's attacks into a testimony of His power and glory.*

family home, which had to be destroyed before she could be completely healed.

The sister's family quickly returned home and followed the directions of the man dressed in white. Another amulet was found and brought back to church to be burnt by the preachers. Consequently, the sister was completely freed.

Still Satan did not give up. Days later, the evil spirit returned to try to convince the family that he would leave them if they offered a chicken to him. My co-worker encouraged them to resist the devil with steadfast faith, as well as to watch and pray (1 Pet 5:9). Moreover, he told them emphatically not to fear the devil's threats and never to compromise with him.

Thank God, the series of spiritual battles finally came to a close after these events.

### ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

In retrospect, it is clear that church growth in the Philippines had drawn Satan's attention, and inevitably, his attacks. Unfortunately, some of the members were hurt and a considerable number were even taken captive by the

evil one and lost.

The Bible tells us that, "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28). In fact, God often turns Satan's attacks into a testimony of His power and glory. The Holy Spirit led us to this family to show them His timely care and concern. He then restored their faith and also strengthened the faith of the whole congregation on Samar Island.

At the same time, the events were an effective refutation of the heresy regarding the name of Jesus. The fact that we had cast out the evil spirit in Jesus' name proved to the factious worker that there is power in the name Jesus. There is no added power from using the Hebrew rendition! After all, Revelation 14:6 tells us that the everlasting gospel will be preached to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. It stands to reason then that God would definitely allow nations all over the world to call on His name and worship Him in their local language.

In addition, although the vigorous spiritual battles were disquieting experiences, there is much to be thankful to God for.

First, His wondrous guidance and protection: the Holy Spirit guided and protected our workers through this, and many other, trials.

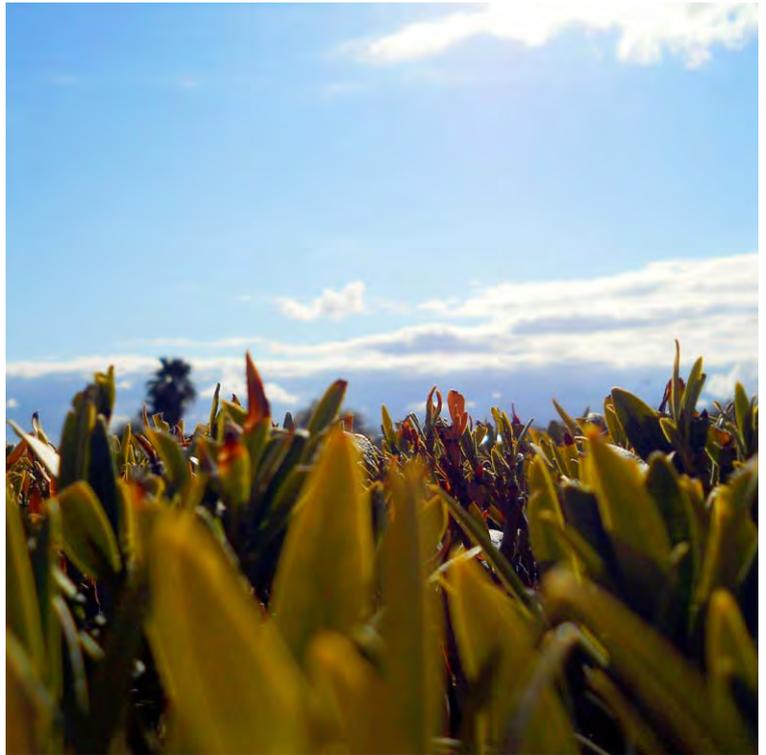
Second, the members themselves gained precious spiritual experiences and received warnings to enhance their faith.

In all, "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Ps 23:3-4).

May the Lord, our God, continue to guide and build up His flock in the Philippines, and may all glory, honor and praise be given to Him. Amen! ★

# The Joy and Grace of Serving the Lord

Grace F.L. Ho—Malaysia



*“The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows ...”<sup>1</sup>*

Serving the Lord certainly grows sweeter as years go by, although we may meet with difficulties along the way. In fact, these hardships help us to see the Lord’s guiding hand and strengthen our trust in Him. Therefore, whenever we are weak and unsure of the next step, we need to rely on the Lord—we will be awe-stricken at how the Lord solves our problems and leads us on. Such is the unspeakable joy that I have experienced in serving the Lord, especially since I joined the missionary work in India.

By the guidance and mercy of God, I have been helping with Youth and Children Ministry in southern India since 1999. In recent years, I also joined in the gospel outreach work in Chennai city (Tamil Nadu, South India), and in Darjeeling (Calcutta area, in the north-eastern part of West Bengal).

## WORKING FOR AND WITH GOD

My greatest fear in serving the Lord is to work against God’s will. I have a phobia about working by my own inclination. Doing so would be disastrous as it would be a waste of time, effort, human resources and money; nobody would be edified and God could not be glorified. There is, however, a deep satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> Hymns of Praise No. 414

and comfort when you know God is with you in your work. In fact this is all that matters. We are sent to do His work, not ours.

In 2001, I was tasked to plan and execute all Religious Education and Youth programs in India. While planning for the first Intermediate Youth Bible Camp in 2002, I was unsure whether our plans were suitable. Thank God, the Lord knew my concerns and allayed my fears. During the Bible camp, a young sister saw a vision of several shepherds with a flock of sheep and lambs in a jungle. Among the shepherds was a man in a radiant white robe whose face she could not see. Yet, she knew that He was Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord, we were strengthened with the knowledge that the Chief Shepherd was with us in our mission.

## IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Preparing for a mission trip usually calls for many hours and days of knee work. We need to pray to understand what God wants us to do and to ask for His guidance. I would usually ask some close church friends at home and abroad to pray for the work we are sent to do whenever we embark on a missionary trip. Quite often, when I see God’s blessings and guidance in the midst of our assignment, I can only sigh with thankfulness for the prayers of these concerned brothers and sisters. My

joy is complete when, upon returning, I can share with them on how the Lord has worked through their intercessions.

## LEARNING TO WORK WITH OTHERS

Serving the Lord is indeed full of challenges. We know that a servant of God should have certain qualities such as faithfulness, sincerity, integrity, honesty, gentleness, kindness, patience, understanding etc. This is fairly easy to achieve when we are not faced with opposition or divergent opinions. However, when we encounter difficult and self-centered people, living up to those qualities turns into a challenge. During these times, human relations become a thorn in our flesh. Nevertheless, we need to be faithful to our work, do the necessary and yet not hurt our co-workers. As I carefully tread this delicate path, I learn to trust God for wisdom to do the right thing.

In one particular case a co-worker wanted to change a program that had already been pre-arranged. Remembering Paul’s exhortation to serve God and not man, I eventually decided to abide by the given plan. Looking back, I truly thank God that He guided me without affecting the working relationship with others and the Lord’s work was not hampered. As we serve we learn the intricate skills of working along with others. This is a

Religious Education lesson in Bangalore church



bonus grace for me.

The intricacies of getting things done among people with a different cultural background and work attitude can sometimes be very trying and tiring too. Although I have been in India so many times, I still find it difficult to understand their culture and mindset. Once, an Indian minister of our church told me frankly that it takes an Indian to understand the Indian mind.

Thank God, over the years I have learned to work with our beloved spiritual family in India despite the cultural differences. As missionary workers, we need to understand that we are sent to help; for this reason we are expected to show greater patience and love, and to correct with gentleness and humility when necessary (2 Tim 2:24–26).

### LIKE-MINDED CO-WORKERS

Working with a team of like-minded co-workers is a crucial factor in the joy of serving the Lord. It is a blessing that we have a team of dedicated, optimistic and passionately mission-oriented workers for the India missionary work. We share the same goal and passion for the Lord's flock. Along the way, there may perhaps be an argument or two as we confer, discuss and plan, but we know why we are there. Every worker knows his mission and his call to serve the Lord's young flock.

At the end of each mission trip, I always have this feeling: thank God we had each other to complete His work! As we part for home after every mission, we hug and shake hands, thanking God for another completed assignment. We are filled with the joy of having shared the fruit of labor. Such is the joy and spirit of comrades-in-Christ!

### OVERCOMING PHYSICAL CHALLENGES

Serving in India is not without physical difficulties. The long tedious journey, the back-breaking terrain up mountains, the dust, the grime and the polluted air of choking carbon dioxide in the unending traffic jams in a chaotic city are some of the physical discomforts we have to compromise with.

Sometimes, we may still be traveling in the middle of the night, reaching our destination well after midnight. By the time we climb into bed it may already be 2 am or later. Yet, we have to be up by 6 am the next morning to pray for strength and guidance in our work. Tiring indeed and I often wonder how I "survived" given my frail physique. But as I reminisce, my heart overflows with praise and thanksgiving for God's abundant grace.

*Personally, I feel untold joy and inner peace to know that the time, money and effort spent will never go to waste, despite difficulties and hardships.*

Once, after coming home from a mission trip, a minister in my local church approached me and held both my hands in his. As he praised God for bringing me home in good health, tears welled up in his eyes. I was touched beyond words. Thank God, over the years and with each missionary trip I have become healthier. This is a fact that local church members and my friends attest to. Indeed, I am humbled by God's grace and mercy for me, an unworthy maid in His service.



Meal time for the Bible Camp students at Dymock church, Kerala

### SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

A life of service to the Lord would have its source of inspiration to start with. As for me, my first inspiration came from God's love, which has so very often touched me to tears and has motivated me to serve Him.

I began to be interested in missionary work in my late teens, when I read about various Christian missionaries. In addition, I received much spiritual inspiration from our church's elders when I was assisting in theological seminars in Singapore in the seventies and eighties. These full-time ministers made an indelible impact on me with their dedication, humility, love and wisdom. In addition, I could see how much beauty and meaning serving the Lord brought into their lives.

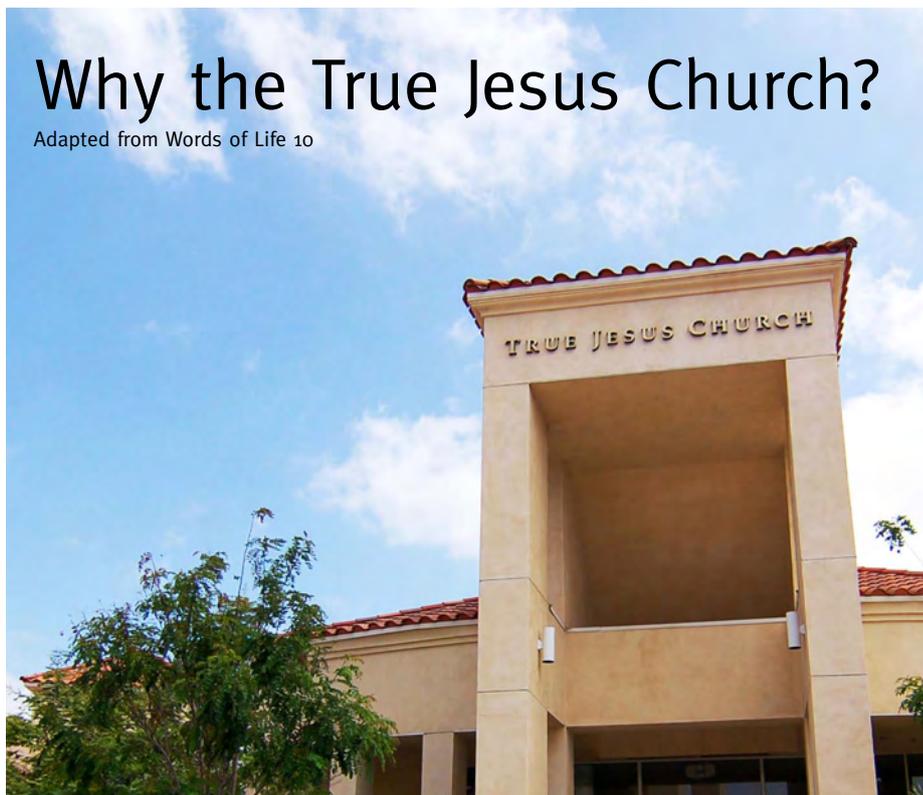
### UNTOLD JOY

Indeed, serving the Lord deepens and broadens our perspective of life. Personally, I feel untold joy and inner peace to know that the time, money and effort spent will never go to waste, despite difficulties and hardships. We can rest assured that serving the Lord will bring an unfading and imperishable reward from the Master on the day we meet Him, along with the joy and grace we receive now on earth.

So dear readers-in-Christ, do you sometimes feel a void in your life although you attend church, pray and read the Bible? That's because the Lord has a task for you. He's waiting to give you the joy and grace of serving Him! ★

# Why the True Jesus Church?

Adapted from Words of Life 10



The name True Jesus Church nearly always causes uneasiness in people who come across it. They reason, "Are there such things as true and false churches? If they are true, we must be false". This is something which they cannot tolerate as they deem it to be sheer arrogance.

Not long after the Lord Jesus was born, His parents brought Him to Jerusalem where He was presented to the Lord as prescribed in the Law, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD" (Lk 2:23). A man called Simeon, inspired by the Holy Spirit said, "Behold, this child is set up for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Lk 2:34).

Similarly, the appearing of the True Jesus Church in the world has caused many in Christendom to fall. They have despised her and looked upon her with contempt. But she has caused many to rise too. For some were humble enough to make an in-depth study and came to know her as the true church, despite the fact that the name of the True Jesus Church is still rejected by the majority.

Since misgivings revolve around the name of the church, it is necessary to explain the scriptural impetus for calling ourselves the True Jesus Church.

## I. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The word "church" is the English form of the Greek word "ekklesia" which

means an assembly of people. In the biblical context it refers to the people whom God gathers out of the world to be consecrated to Him (Acts 20:28; Rev 5:9-10). The church is thus different from an ordinary secular organization since it is a people holy to God chosen out of all the peoples on earth.

Although the term "church" was not specifically used in the Old Testament, God separated the Israelites from other races. God's election of Israel in the Old Testament is a pre-figuration of the church in the period of the New Testament. By his own precious blood, the Lord Jesus has redeemed a multitude of believers, a holy nation, separated from the people of the world to become children of God (1 Pet 2:9-10). It follows then, that the church is a congregation and not a building.

We examine next why God builds the church on earth. Since Adam and Eve disobeyed the commandment of God, they were driven out of paradise. While they did not have total communion with God, they existed under the clutches of Satan, living a sinful life and heading toward destruction.

God in His mercy would not allow such an end to be the lot of the very creatures that He had carefully molded in His image. He intervened. He chose Abraham as the father of an elect out of many races and

promised him that every family on the earth would be blessed on account of him (Gen 12:3). From Abraham's seed, God chose the descendants of Jacob to be His chosen nation, the Israelites. But the Israelites sinned against God, were punished by Him, and a remnant returned to Judea.

In His time, God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world. Those whose sins are cleansed by the precious blood of Christ would receive the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of their heavenly possession. Such are blessed people who form the body of Christ and the household of God, and are citizens of the heavenly kingdom. They are to glorify God and to preach salvation to the people while on earth. The church henceforth would be from all who would be children of Abraham through baptism in Jesus' name (Gal 3:27–29).

## II. WHY MUST THE CHURCH BEAR THE NAME OF JESUS?

We have already established that the church is a congregation of chosen people redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. This fact provides the focal point as we examine the reason why the church must bear the name of Jesus.

### 1. The church is the body of Jesus and should bear His name

One of the expressions which best describes the peculiar nature and distinctness of the elect assembly is found in the Bible: "The church ... is His (Jesus') body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:22–23). A body is a mass of integrated members joined to the head. The Bible testifies, "He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). Therefore the chosen people, being His body, must be identified with His name.

Moreover it is written, *After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things. Known to God from eternity are all His works.*

(Acts 15:16–18)

Obviously it is the will of God for His chosen people to come under His name. The name of Jesus is God's own name (Jn 17:11,26). Thus, the church is called Jesus(') Church (the church of God).

### 2. "Jesus" is the precious name by which men are saved from their sins

When the angel of God announced to Joseph that his fiancée Mary had conceived through the Holy Spirit, he added, "she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21).

As we can see from the book of Acts, the apostles clearly understood that the name "Jesus" saves people from sins. Hence they conducted baptism in this name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). Peter, their usual spokesman, exerted, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Obviously it is the will of God for His chosen people to come under His name. The name of Jesus is God's own name (Jn 17:11,26). Thus, the church is called Jesus(') Church (the church of God).

In this connection, the word "Christ" needs further explanation. Christ is not a person's name but a Greek word translated from the Hebrew "Messiah" meaning "the anointed". It is a title and not a personal name. Since Jesus is the name of the only Savior, and the church is a congregation saved from sin, she should bear the name of Jesus as indication that she is saved by the same.

### 3. God will only bless the church which bears His name

The Lord said to Moses, *An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you.*

(Ex 20:24)

The Lord God also told Moses that whenever he wanted to ask God of anything or make sacrifices, he must go to the place where the name of the Lord dwells (Deut 12:5,11). The church that is blessed, and whose offerings God accepts is the church that bears the name of God (Jesus). Paul says, "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:21).

### 4. The church is the bride of Jesus and must bear the name of Jesus

Paul compared the intimate relationship between Jesus and the church to that between husband and wife.

*For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.*

(Eph 5:23–25)

*'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

(Eph 5:31)

Usually, when a woman marries a man, she adopts her husband's surname. For instance, if June gets married to Mr. Brown, she would be known as Mrs. Brown. This coincides with the biblical teaching that the wife belongs to her husband. The church is the bride of Jesus Christ and belongs to Him. The Lord refers to her during His earthly ministry as "My church". Shouldn't she bear the name of Jesus?

## III. WHY DO WE USE THE WORD "TRUE"?

It may be acceptable if a church calls herself by the name of Jesus, but why True Jesus Church? Would it not suffice to simply call it Jesus' Church or Church of Jesus?

### 1. The word "true" signifies the nature of God

The Bible repeatedly stresses that God is true (Jn 3:33; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3; Jer 10:10).

If the name of the church is prefixed by the word "true" we uphold God and at the same time proclaim that we "know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true ... the true God and eternal life" (1 Jn 5:20). We express our identity as the church of God, a name widely used in the apostolic period (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32). Incidentally, it also conforms to the teaching that God is the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3).

### 2. The significance of the word "true" in relation to Jesus

Jesus Himself said, "I am ... the truth" (Jn

14:6); “I am the true vine” (Jn 15:1). The Bible also calls Him the “true light” (Jn 1:9). The need to differentiate the true from the false existed even then because our Lord Himself warned of “false christs” (Mt 24:24), and Paul discovered the preaching of “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4). So, is it an unwarranted and altogether foreign practice to place the word “true” before Jesus; i.e. “True Jesus”?

### 3. The significance of the word “true” in relation to the church

By placing the word “true” before the church it carries the meaning of true church. Such a denotation is necessary because false prophets have existed since the apostolic days and are even more active in this end-time. They would show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Mt 24:23–26). A careful comparison between the apostolic church and churches in our time would reveal that thousands have deviated from the gospel preached by the apostles. What qualifies a church to be true? The true church must meet the following criteria:

#### a. She must have the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. The church as Christ’s body should be in-dwelt by God’s Spirit. Any church devoid of the Spirit does not belong to Christ. The Scriptures also teach that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance of the heavenly kingdom (Eph 1:14). Can a church without the Holy Spirit, uncertain of salvation, be called the true church of God?

#### b. She must be accompanied by signs and miracles.

The presence of signs and miracles in the church testifies that she is commissioned by God. The church set up by God must be accompanied by signs and wonders to confirm the message preached (Mk 16:20; Acts 14:3; Heb 2:4). A church without miracles does not have the confirming witness of God. She might be only a human organization preaching precepts of men instead of a true church.

#### c. She must conform to the teachings of the Bible.

The church must be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets

with Christ Jesus as the corner stone (Eph 2:19–20). Man’s preaching must never supersede the teachings of Christ (2 Jn 9–11; 1 Cor 4:6).

Nevertheless, the word of God has suffered atrocious adulteration according to man’s own fancies. Baptism by immersion (Mt 3:16; Jn 3:23; Acts 8:38–39) has been substituted with sprinkling and pouring. To many, tongue speaking is forced into the past by a deliberate misinterpretation of the Scriptures. Actual occurrences of tongues are deemed to be gibberish and products of heightened ecstasy. Some are so blindly convicted of their censure that they are emboldened to call it barbaric or even demoniac. The distinct audible (tongue speaking) and visual (bodily vibration) manifestation (Acts 2:33; 10:44–46; 19:6–7) has unfortunately been either ignored or twisted.

*God is true.  
If the name of the church is prefixed by the word “true” we uphold God and at the same time proclaim that we “know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true ... the true God and eternal life” (1 Jn 5:20).*

It has been a popular belief that one is in-dwelt by the Spirit silently and immediately at conversion. However, in this end time, the deception is strong as tongue speaking is a common phenomenon in many churches—even in the traditional Roman Catholic and Anglican churches! Here, we need to stress that as the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth (Jn 14:17; 16:13), we must discern whether a church that has the Spirit also teaches according to the truth from the Bible.

Some place tradition and church authority over the word of God by maintaining that they have every right to transfer the solemnity of the Sabbath rest from Saturday to Sunday, which they call “Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). They even introduced a pagan festival by christening it “Christmas”. They fail to wonder why the Bible should be silent about the birth-date of Christ if it were God’s will for us to celebrate Christmas.

In this present age of confusion and falsehood, when false christs and

false prophets are prevalent, God has established His true church as a beacon of truth to guide the hitherto misled ones into the true grace of God and to stand fast in it (1 Pet 5:12).

### CONCLUSION

The Lord mentioned “My church” in Mt 16:18. The apostles used the terms “the church of God” (Acts 20:28) and “the churches of Christ” (Rom 16:16; 1 Thess 2:14). Such a prized possession of God has to be stamped with His divine name, i.e. True Jesus Church.

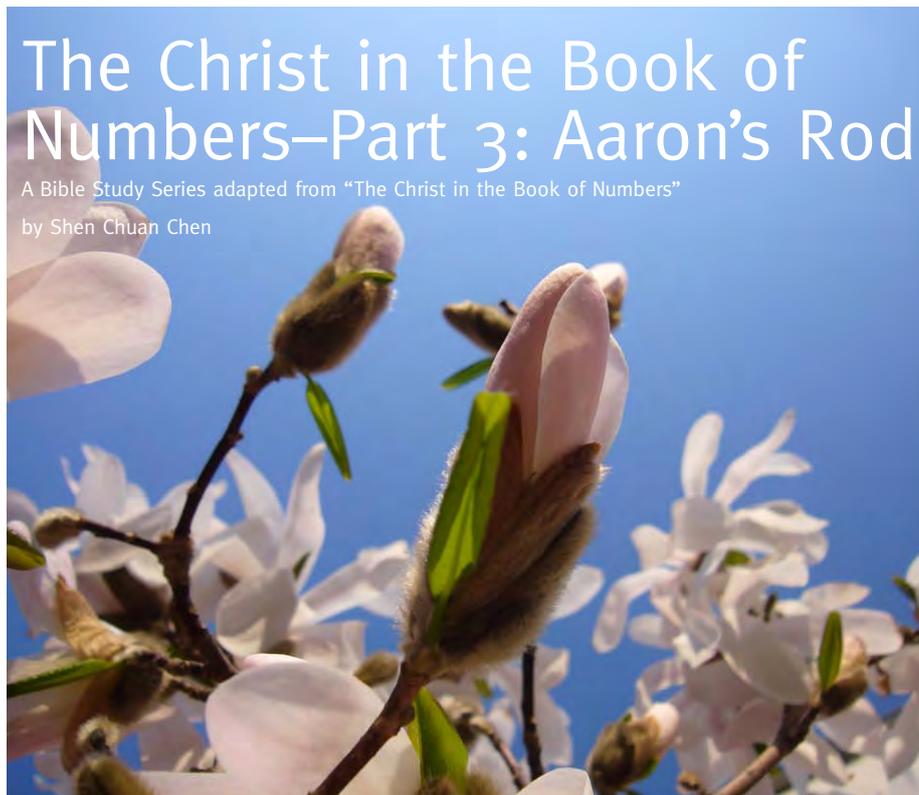
This name not only manifests Jesus’ truthfulness, it also portrays the relationship between God, Christ and the church. The church is the body of Christ and Christ is her head (Eph 1:23; Col 1:18). God is in turn the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). Hence, the sequence True Jesus Church.

Moreover, since Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches (Jn 15:1,5), it is not inappropriate for the church that is attached to Christ to be known as the True Jesus Church. Did not John also say, “Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in Him (Jesus) and in you, ...”?

The name of Jesus placed in between “True” (God) and “Church” also signifies the mediatory function of Jesus between God and men (1 Tim 2:5). In addition, it indicates that the church belongs to Christ and Christ to God (1 Cor 3:23).

The truth of this name has been hidden from the wise and understanding and revealed to the innocent (Mt 11:25–26). As such, it has caused many to fall and to rise. It is thus hoped that the faithful would be enlightened and united with us as one flock under one shepherd (Acts 16:15; Eph 4:13; Jn 10:16). Then we will be able to bear much fruit as from the one true vine to glorify God.

*“To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:21). ★*



## INTRODUCTION

After the Israelites sinned by making a golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses rallied God's faithful to his side, and the sons of Levi duly responded (Ex 32:26). As a result, the tribe was later consecrated to the Lord, in place of the firstborn of the Israelites (Num 8:16, 18). They were given the responsibility to assist the sons of Aaron to serve in the tabernacle (Num 3:6–13; 8:14–15, 19, 22–26). This grace was a reward for their loyalty. It was unfortunate, then, that members of this tribe later led the people to sin against God.

After the Amalekites and Canaanites had driven the Israelites back to Hormah (Num 14:45), a group emerged to challenge the authority of Moses and Aaron. It comprised Korah, the son of Izhar and the great-grandson of Levi; Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, from the tribe of Reuben; and 250 leaders of the congregation (Num 16:1–2).

The rebellion gave rise to one of the most painful and arduous tests for Moses and Aaron in the course of their forty-year leadership. It was an explosive conflict, with Korah and his supporters forming the majority. As such, it was a situation that only God could resolve and showed that the true authority belonged not to Moses or Aaron, or to anyone else for

that matter, but to the Lord Himself. As it transpired, God exercised that authority to deal with Korah and his company in a most severe manner (Num 16:31–33).

After this incident, God made Aaron's rod come to life: it sprouted, budded, blossomed and yielded ripe almonds overnight. This confirmed the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and halted the rebellion and the people's murmurings (Num 17: 1–11).

### 1 PREFIGURATION OF CHRIST

The Book of Exodus portrays the rod as a symbol of power and authority. For example, we learn of God enabling Moses to turn his rod into a snake, to prove to the Israelites that he had been chosen by God to lead them (Ex 4:1–8); Aaron transforming his rod into a snake before Pharaoh and his magicians, to show that God had sent them (Ex 7:8–11); Pharaoh and his magicians' counter-attempting to demonstrate their power with their enchanted rods (Ex 7: 11–13); Aaron using his rod to bring about the plagues of blood, frogs and lice on Egypt (Ex 7:19–20; 8:5–6, 16–17 ); Moses lifting his rod to part the Red Sea (Ex 14:16, 21).

During Korah's rebellion, God made use of Aaron's rod to manifest His power. The outcome was not only the cessation of the conflict, but also visual proof to the Israelites that God had given His authority

to Aaron. This action re-affirmed Aaron's status as high priest.

However, what was not evident to the people at the time was that the rod also revealed important truths about the coming Messiah. Like Aaron's rod, Jesus Christ would resurrect; He would have the power of life (Heb 8:1) and be acknowledged as the most honorable, glorious and everlasting High Priest (Heb 7:20–25).

### 2 AARON'S ROD

#### 2.1 Resurrection

According to the law of nature, all living things have a beginning and an end. However, this was not the case with Aaron's rod, for God gave it a new lease of life. This miracle hinted at the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Even though death came to the world because of the actions of the first man, Adam, resurrection would come about on account of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:17–22). Hence, when Jesus was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn 11:25).

#### 2.2 Affirmation of Priesthood

They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the

congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Num 16:3)

The Levites had been given the privilege of ministering before God in the tabernacle, yet they were not satisfied. Instead, they were jealous of Moses and Aaron and sought to usurp their leadership. In doing so, they also rejected Aaron as high priest.

A biblical proverb says, "A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones" (Prov 14:30). Jealousy is often invoked in those who are capable and upright. It is a destructive force and is often the Achilles' heel of many in authority. We learn, for example, how jealousy made King Saul lose his glory, (cf. 1 Sam), and prompted the chief priests to nail Jesus to the cross (Mk 15:10). Where jealousy exists, Satan will work further to corrupt the heart of man.

In the wilderness journey, Korah and the other rebels would have witnessed the miracles performed by the two leaders—evidence that God had appointed the latter to their roles. Yet jealousy made them disregard Moses and Aaron and put aside their reverence for God and their own holy status in order to stir up dissension among the people. In the end, God executed judgment by opening the earth to swallow up Korah and his company. He also sent a plague that killed 14,700 Israelites (Num 16:49). Such was the outcome of their jealous ambition.

Immediately after Korah's rebellion, God performed a miracle: He made Aaron's rod come to life. This miracle gave the stiff-necked congregation another opportunity to reflect on their behavior. In truth, God did not need to do this, for He had personally appointed Aaron to his office and had already confirmed his calling through many miraculous signs. Yet He chose to perform one more miracle to re-affirm the status of His servant and to let the people know that they owed him due honor.

Aaron's plight could mirror the experience of our Lord Jesus. Despite coming to the world as the Messiah,

*As Christians, we should trust in the leadership and guidance of this everlasting High Priest with a submissive and humble heart.*

the Jews did not give Him any glory or honor, and many failed to believe in Him. Nevertheless, the Lord resurrected from the dead and manifested His status as the everlasting High Priest (Heb 7:23–25).

### 2.3 Chosen Man of God

The Bible records that "the rod of Aaron was among their rods" (Num 17:6). In this way, God wanted to show to the Israelites that Moses did not manipulate the rods, but that the ensuing result would be God's own decision. When the rods were retrieved the next day, all of them were in their original state except Aaron's rod. The latter had miraculously budded, flowered and borne fruit overnight.

What happened to the rod reflected to some extent what Aaron had experienced. Like his rod, Aaron had been indistinguishable from any other person before God chose him for service: he had no obvious merits and no special status. But when he received his calling, the Lord empowered him to overcome the schemes of Pharaoh; gave him the privilege to stand before the ark of covenant; and appointed him to the office of high priest to serve the most holy God.

Aaron's blossoming rod reinforced the point that Aaron was able to minister and bear fruit on account of God's divine grace and power. For that reason, no one had the right to reject him as high priest.

The miracle of Aaron's rod also reminds us that we, as Christians, were once sinners—indistinguishable from others in the world. However, when God chose us, He bestowed us with power and honor, and the privilege to partake in His holy work. Apostle Paul understood this truth, for he said, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor 4:7). Our achievements are like the budding of Aaron's rod: they are only possible because of God.

### 2.4 Blossoms of Hope

The almond tree is native to Egypt and Israel. It flowers ahead of other trees, usually in the first or second month of the year, and announces the coming of spring. It has lush green foliage, grey branches, fragrant white (or pink) blossoms, and green fruits that turn brown when ripe, splitting open to reveal an edible nut. We can imagine that the sight of Aaron's rod blossoming and bearing fruit in the inhospitable wilderness would have created quite a stir. But most importantly, the flowering rod served to quell Korah's rebellion and re-affirmed Aaron's position as high priest. Furthermore, this wondrous sign hinted at the future Messiah and His status as the firstfruits of resurrection (1 Cor 15:20).

When Jesus came to the world, He made it His mission to teach, heal and proclaim the gospel of the heavenly kingdom. He showed compassion on the people who were, in His eyes, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9:35–36). Through His work, the hearts of men came to life. Therefore, Jesus was like the almond blossoms, bringing hope by signaling the end of the harsh winter and the arrival of spring.

In response to Korah's rebellion, God gave a sign to the Israelites: He made Aaron's rod sprout, blossom and bear ripe almonds. By doing so, He put an end to their doubts and re-affirmed Aaron's position as high priest. However, the miracle also pointed forward to the coming Messiah, specifically His resurrection, which established Him as the everlasting High Priest. As Christians, we should trust in the leadership and guidance of this everlasting High Priest with a submissive and humble heart. ★

*Like Aaron's rod, Jesus Christ would resurrect; He would have the power of life (Heb 8:1) and be acknowledged as the most honorable, glorious and everlasting High Priest (Heb 7:20–25).*

# Contradictions in the Book of Jonah

Vincent Yeung — Cambridge, UK

Jonah's story has been told and retold, and yet familiarity obscures unfamiliarity. When we scan quickly through the Bible, we often overlook the subtlety of its messages. Like the well-trodden path of a journey home, the surroundings and landscape appear familiar; we profess to know all there is to know, but our busy minds have long filtered out the details. For this reason, Jonah's personality remains foreign and remote. The readers should ask themselves the question: is the book simply the story of a failed prophet, or is it a challenge to examine our own psyche?

## CONTRADICTIONS

Jonah's life was full of contradictions. He was God's spokesman, but he did not want to preach (Jon 1:3). Instead of responding promptly to the divine call, he set out to escape as far away as possible. Finally, when he did preach, he did not wish to save (Jon 3:1–3; cf. 4:2). Indeed, his message was so negative (Jon 3:4) that we marvel at the positive response. Jonah predicted Nineveh's condemnation, and that there would be no way of escape.

In the book, we see plenty of contrasts – the prophet's noble office and his unwillingness to serve; the gracious intention of God versus the harsh words and intention of the messenger; the stark mismatch between man's understanding

and reality; one's action and intent. All these clashes must have dug deep into the prophet's psyche.

## DESERVING AND UNDESERVING SINNERS: THE DEMARCATIION IN OUR HEART

It is clear why Jonah ran away from God (Jon 4:2). His action was motivated by prejudice: he deemed the people of Nineveh unworthy of God's salvation. Such behavior reveals our instinctive tendency to compare: to envy those who appear better, and to look down on those whom we consider inferior.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother toiled day and night, and was angry and upset when his father held a sumptuous feast to welcome his wayward sibling back (Lk 15:28–29). He could not comprehend how his life of servitude appeared less worthy than that of his brother who had chosen an errant lifestyle, and had made a split-second decision to turn back only when in dire straits.

Sometimes, we may feel that some people are so sinful that it is not possible for them to receive God's grace, and the prejudice may be heightened when we feel that they have benefited from their sinful behavior (Ps 37:7–8).

It was for this reason that the prophet Habakkuk questioned God's favorable

disposition towards the Chaldeans, a nation who were seen as violent, wicked and prosperous (Hab 1:6–17). Also, we see the contempt of the self-righteous Pharisee for the tax collector praying in the temple (Lk 18:10–11). Jonah was no different. To him, it was inconceivable that Israel's oppressor could receive God's grace.

Do we hold the same type of prejudice deep inside of us? Do we, from time to time, possess a self-centered attitude? And do we see the story counteracting a prejudice that some of God's chosen people believe they have a monopoly on human virtue and view the rest of the world with such suspicion that they refuse to share their experiences and knowledge?

The dividing lines were clearly drawn: the prophet Jonah versus the depraved city of Nineveh; the hardworking older son versus the prodigal son; the righteous Pharisee versus the sinful tax collector. The contrasts were startling, and yet the outcomes were so unexpected. Who were more righteous in God's eyes?

## SEEKING TO BE FORGIVEN, YET UNFORGIVING

Jonah pleaded for God's mercy deep in the belly of the fish (Jon 2:9). In truth, he had no choice. His prayer revealed his thinking on how man should receive

*The contradiction between knowledge and practice in Jonah's story reminds us to reconsider our own belief. Do we possess an unspoken prejudice and disbelief that clouds our judgment?*

mercy from God: "Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy" (Jon 2:8).

All sins can be defined as rebellion against God's commandments (Jas 2:9–10). In this respect, Jonah was no different from the people of Nineveh: both were rebellious and fell short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Yet, when Jonah spoke of his own rebellion, he only mentioned its consequence, and not the cause: "For You cast me into the deep..." (Jon 2:3). He appeared to be tolerant of his own failing and was happy to accept God's mercy, but he could not accept God's mercy towards other sinners (Jon 4:2).

The message of deliverance in the book of Jonah evinced God's forgiveness, but Jonah's own prejudice remained. At the end, we see how he showed pity for a plant that died after giving him shade from the sun, but not the people of Nineveh (Jon 4:10).

Today, many Christians make the same mistake. They desire God's forgiveness for themselves, but are not willing to show pity on others (Mt 18:32–33) and are even happy to condemn those who have wronged them.

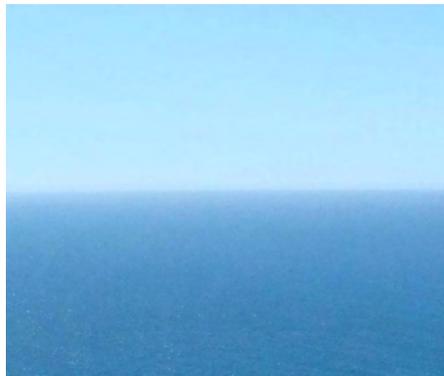
God wants us to show love (Mt 5:23–24; 1 Jn 4:19–20) and requires us to love our enemies as ourselves (Mt 5:38–48). The Bible teaches that if God so loved us, we ought to love one another (1 Jn 4:11). It is unfortunate, then, that our love is often limited, and we choose to love our own brothers and sisters only. Perhaps we should consider Jesus' answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk 10:29).

The city of Nineveh was saved (Jon 3:10), for God showed pity on the people (Jon 4:10–11). He had expected Jonah to empathize and to show his love. It is disappointing, then, to see Jonah's recalcitrance.

### **MISMATCH BETWEEN FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE**

There was an evident mismatch between what Jonah claimed to know and what

he actually believed and practiced. He claimed to fear the God of heaven (Jon 1:9), and yet he dared to challenge Him by running away from His presence to Tarshish. How could anyone run away from the LORD, the God of heaven? He described God as gracious, merciful and kind (Jon 4:2; cf. 3:9), but he himself expected swift judgment and retribution on Nineveh. Knowledge does not help unless it is augmented by faith (Heb 4:2). The Bible states that even the demons believe in God (Jas 2:19–20), but their knowledge does not benefit them. For believers, it translates into a discrepancy between belief and behavior, meaning we fail to do what we know or preach, or we try to rationalize God's word to disguise our unbelief.



When Jesus challenged Martha's faith by stating that her brother would rise again, Martha interpreted His meaning to be that he would rise on the last day (Jn 11:24). And when challenged again, she sidelined the question by affirming Jesus as the Son of God (Jn 11:26–27). But all the while, her grief remained (Jn 11:31).

The contradiction between knowledge and practice in Jonah's story reminds us to reconsider our own belief. Do we possess an unspoken prejudice and disbelief that clouds our judgment? As True Jesus Church members, we pride

ourselves on a true knowledge of God—a knowledge that is manifested in sermons, Bible studies, theological seminars and spiritual convocations.

However, knowledge remains theoretical and non-beneficial, unless we actualize it in our daily living. Jonah might well have been able to find a plethora of examples and teachings in the Scriptures to justify his stance, but he failed to see the pathos of God. Job's friends had exhausted their arsenal of arguments to defend God's righteousness, yet they were off the mark in God's eyes (Job 42:7; cf. Jon 4:10–11).

It would be a pity if we possessed the knowledge of God, but denied it through our actions—much like the Pharisees who knew the Scriptures, but failed to come to Jesus (Jn 5:40). To come to Jesus is more than knowing and subscribing to the ten basic beliefs and our common faith; we also need to have the compassion of Jesus (Phil 1:8) and to actualize God's kindness, longsuffering and forbearance (Jon 4:2; cf. Joel 2:13; Rom 2:4). In this way, we fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:1–2)—the commandment to love one another that Jesus gave to His disciples before His departure (Jn 13:34).

### **IGNORANCE AND RELIGIOSITY VERSUS KNOWLEDGE AND BLINDNESS**

Jonah, God's chosen vessel, preached God's message, thereby saving many lives. Nevertheless, he did not see eye to eye with God. In contrast, the Gentiles exhibited far more positive behavior: the sailors sought God with a simple heart in the midst of difficulty (Jon 1:6, 10); they wanted to save Jonah's life by putting their own on the line (Jon 1:13, 14); they showed gratitude to the Lord by making sacrifices and vows after He stilled the storm (Jon 1:16).

Similarly, the people of Nineveh were receptive to God's word (Jon 3:5) and believed that He would change His mind (Jon 3:9). Their belief was translated into action, and God saw their works and responded accordingly (Jon 3:10).

The people who were supposedly

*We should take time out from our busy church schedules in order to re-examine our faith. We should also take our focus off others and look at ourselves, to ask, "Are we really doing God's will?"*

ignorant and unenlightened appeared to know God better than Jonah. The Gentiles searched for God, but the prophet was slumbering; the Gentiles wanted to save, but the prophet wanted to condemn. The Gentiles perceived God's kindness and forbearance, yet Jonah wanted judgment.

It is often said that the longer politicians are in office, the further removed they are from the people. They become so accustomed to being in power that they stop listening. Here lies a warning for God's people: we may have knowledge of the truth, but we should not lose sight of the needs of the people of the land.

The Pharisees despised the people, saying "But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed" (Jn 7:49). They claimed to see, but were really blind (Jn 9:39). In contrast, the unlearned blind man was able to see (Jn 9:25). Jonah could not see his own faults, God's will, or what was important.

The moral for believers today is that we should take time out from our busy church schedules in order to re-examine our faith. We should also take our focus off others and look at ourselves, to ask, "Are we really doing God's will?" (Mt 7:21; 1 Cor 9:27). In reality, we may be sleeping in the hold of the ship, or cosseted in the belly of the big fish. The problem is, we may be so accustomed to our situation that we do not feel any discomfort. If so, it is time to wake up and pray to the Lord!

### A STORY WITHOUT ENDING

The book of Jonah ends abruptly with a rhetorical question, and we can only speculate at what happened to the prophet. Nevertheless, his adventure and folly remain for our benefit and warning—teaching us never to ignore or rebel against God's will. As in the case of Jonah, our own chapters remain open. May we take the opportunity to search deep within ourselves. ★

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January 2012

### The Great Flood

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? [Read more...](#)



### Christian Living



### Joseph in Egypt

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? [Read more...](#)

### Our Stories



### God's Way is the Best Way

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. [Read more...](#)

### Q & A



### Sabbath or First Day of the Week?

Why do most Christians worship on Sunday and what is the Bible's perspective? [Read more...](#)

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## All Things Are Possible with God

Sew Chan Lee—Singapore

### LIVING IN DARKNESS

It all seems so far away now, almost an unbelievable bad dream. My eyesight started to deteriorate when I was in my mid-twenties, and by 2006, I was totally dependent on other people's assistance in my daily life. I chafed at my helplessness. Enveloped by a despair that I could not shake off, I often felt that life was meaningless. Worse, I became demon-possessed. It was truly and literally a time of darkness.

Pained by my suffering, one of my brothers suggested that I seek the help of the church he attended—the True Jesus Church—to drive out the demon from me. I was so tired of living in my shell of a life that I was willing to try anything. But when I came to church, I came with sorrow in my heart. I also felt so useless because I needed the assistance of our brothers and sisters to bring me to church.

### FINDING THE LIGHT

Miraculously, through all the prayers of brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as the laying of hands of preachers and deacons, the devil left my body just two weeks after I came to church in August 2006. Approximately two months later, God granted me the precious Holy Spirit. Thank God, I was baptized into the church on November 26, 2006.

I resolved to myself: "Since I have this

precious opportunity to come to church, I must pay attention with all my heart, to know the truth and to understand the Bible better." In this way, I prepared myself to go to church every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. I was determined to learn God's word in order to change and truly become a new creation. By listening attentively to sermons and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I came to understand the Bible better. The word of God was like a light—shining and bringing joy into my heart. Moreover, I learned to trust in God and rely on Him in my life. I tell Him all my sorrows in my daily prayer and ask Him to lead me in all things.

About one year after my baptism, I realized that the sorrow and emptiness in my heart had been replaced with happiness, peace and contentment! My bad dream had turned into a marvelous new life in Christ. When my other brother saw the miracle that had happened to me in the True Jesus Church, he left his old church and came to the true church to "have a look". After careful observation, he was convinced that the truth and the works of God abided in our church; and, after a year, he was baptized into the True Jesus Church.

The downpour of the Lord's abundant grace did not just stop at me and my brothers. It was soon my son's turn to see

*The word of God was like a light—shining and bringing joy into my heart.*

the light. Given my poor eyesight, my son took it upon himself to pick me up after service and take me home. Since he had to come to church anyway, he decided to come earlier and listen to the sermons. Convinced that there was truly a living God in the True Jesus Church, he was baptized in 2010.

### BRINGING THE LIGHT TO OTHERS

Having tasted such wondrous joy and contentment, and seeing the grace on my family, I then resolved to redouble my efforts to pray for my parents and their salvation.

*In January 2011, I began to fast and pray for my family every Monday morning.*

My mother was a Buddhist and my father an atheist. One day, I was talking to one of my brothers about how to preach to our parents. But my brother was skeptical, “How can you preach to an atheist? You will never convince him! You’d probably have to wait for the day that he has an incurable disease.” Despite his words, I was not deterred and decided to put in more effort to pray for our father. So, in January 2011, I began to fast and pray for my family every Monday morning.

In June 2011, I returned to Malaysia to attend my mother-in-law’s funeral service. During the funeral, I preached to my father. My father’s response was unbelievable—he told the rest of my family that he wanted to go to church. The whole family just couldn’t believe their ears. When I heard his words, I literally jumped for joy!

I informed the local church and very soon after my conversation with him, various Malaysian preachers began visiting my father. In July 2011, he finally stepped into the True Jesus Church.

On just his second visit to our church, my father saw a vision of Jesus Christ in a bright robe. When he went home that day, he joyfully told my mother that

there is indeed a living God in the True Jesus Church. This incident motivated my brother and me to intensify our preaching to our mother. However, she was a tougher nut to crack—she firmly refused to give up Buddhism.

One day in August 2011, my father was driving his motorcycle along a very narrow road that could only accommodate one vehicle at a time. So when he saw a car coming towards him, my father immediately swerved to the left to avoid the car. To his horror, he suddenly realized that he was about to roll down a very deep ravine. At that moment, he felt a strong force pushing his right arm, which caused him to swerve the motorcycle back onto the road, thus saving his life. When he returned home, he told my mother about his close shave with death.

After that incident, my brother and I continued to share many testimonies with our mother. Finally, in September

trust. All things are possible with our Almighty God. He changes a nightmare of existence into a beautiful and meaningful life.

Moreover, our loving heavenly Father is not willing for anyone to perish—so even the most stubborn of our loved ones can come to believe in Jesus Christ if we persistently rely on God and ask for His guidance. Praise Him for all His goodness. Amen! ★

2011, my mother suddenly announced that she wanted to go to church. Seeing the grace of God upon my father and hearing us continually share God’s word had finally changed my mother’s mind and motivated her to believe in Christ.

By October 2011, all the idols in my parents’ house were taken away. When my father asked to be baptized, the church persuaded my mother to be baptized at the same time. Thank God, in November 2011, both my parents were baptized into Christ. I am now continuing to pray for my parents to receive the Lord’s promised Holy Spirit.

### NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

Through this personal experience, I have learned precious lessons of patience and

*Our loving heavenly Father is not willing for anyone to perish—so even the most stubborn of our loved ones can come to believe in Jesus Christ if we persistently rely on God and ask for His guidance.*



# The Church and Evangelism

Recall the Past.  
Measure the Present.  
Take Action for the Future.

Adapted sermon from Singapore

*“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’” (Mk 16:15).*

Evangelism is the command of the Lord Jesus Christ—we have heard, read and said this countless times. We know all the evangelism-related passages by heart, perhaps even in English, Chinese, Greek and more. But more importantly, what have we done about it?

This article considers evangelism from three aspects:

- Where did we come from?
- Where are we now?
- Where should we go?

## I. THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM PAST

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

(Mt 28:19–20)

This mandate of Christ to the church is commonly known as the ‘great commission’. It starts with a powerful command—“Go!” Fellowship in the Lord is a blessing. After all, the warm, fraternal and godly atmosphere of the apostolic church summarized in Acts 2:42 is often

held up as an ideal that the true church today should strive for, and invest effort to sustain. But Jesus’ intention is also for us to take concrete action, “Go and make disciples of all nations”. This is the explicit command for evangelism. In fact, to make disciples is the very reason the church exists.

There are some who say that we are “only a pastoral church”. There are at least two erroneous concepts in this sentence. Firstly, this statement implies that pastoral work – loving and tending the sheep and lambs – is all that the church needs to do. For such people, evangelism is nothing more than maintaining a presence or a prominent profile in their current community. But Jesus’ statement here is more unequivocally active—He want us to “Go”.

Secondly, there aren’t any ‘pastoral only’ churches. What is the ultimate goal of pastoral work? It is to make disciples, teaching them all (emphasis added) that Jesus has commanded. So every person who calls himself or herself a disciple of Jesus Christ must keep all of the commandments, which includes the commandment to “Go and make disciples”. In short, pastoral work and evangelism must go hand in hand.

The church that “only pastors” is a moribund organization which will eventually die. Consider a family without

a breadwinner and living off a bequest. The parents may be very frugal but the inherited money is still being used up; so if nothing else is done to bring in ‘new income’, this family cannot survive.

In the context of the church, new babies born and baptized may not be sufficient to replace old members who die. So without evangelism, there may be no-one left to pastor in the end.

## The Apostolic Spirit

The apostolic church started with only 120 people in Jerusalem. Many were women, some were uneducated people and most had never traveled outside Palestine. Yet, within a few decades, the gospel was preached throughout the Roman Empire. What underpinned this extraordinary growth? In a nutshell, it was passion in responding to the Lord Jesus’ command.

More specifically, there were several salient growth factors.

## EVERYONE PREACHED

The apostles preached, the deacons preached and the believers preached wherever they went. They preached to the masses; to their family members; to their friends; in fact, they preached to just about anyone who was willing to listen. They preached in good times, they preached when they were persecuted,

*Fellowship in the Lord is a blessing. But Jesus' intention is also for us to take concrete action, "Go and make disciples of all nations". This is the explicit command for evangelism. In fact, to make disciples is the very reason the church exists.*

they preached when they were in prison. Evangelism was the very essence of the apostolic spirit; almost as if they lived to preach!

It was no different for the early True Jesus Church.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKED MIGHTILY

After the first downpour of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the church grew from 120 to 3000 members; and then from 3000 to more than 5000. Miracles abounded—the shadow of Peter could heal the sick; a mere handkerchief from Paul could cast out demons!

Today, wonders and miracles continue to occur but, compared to the early church, they are far fewer. This is correlated to the reduced frequency of our preaching.

Miracles are a sign for unbelievers so if we do not preach, why would God perform a miracle? The apostolic church understood this; so BEFORE they asked God to perform miracles, they first prayed for boldness to speak the Word (Acts 4:29–30). The direction of causality is clear. We do not wait for God to first perform miracles before going out to preach. The apostolic church preached, and then God performed miracles. Similarly, the early True Jesus Church workers preached, and then God performed miracles. In short, God works miracles only when we preach.

### CONSISTENCY BETWEEN BELIEVERS' LIVES AND THEIR FAITH

There are many aspects we can learn from the apostolic church but one stands out as "uniquely TJC".

*"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:46).*

Such a depiction of the first church mirrors the early church in Taiwan. The people received the gospel with gladness, led very simple lives and attended services every single day. In fact such a life is itself a powerful witness to the gospel because it shows that we actually practice what we believe.

However, many of us today are worried over many things—we are caught up with our studies, our jobs and the world. Service attendance is relegated to a leisure activity—something to do as and when we are free. How then do we expect others to be convinced when we declare to them that life on earth is transient, and there is an eternal, more precious life to come?

These same three factors were indispensable to the evangelical efforts of the apostolic church. Paul confirms this:

*"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thess 1:5).*

First is the 'Word'. We must open our mouths to preach. Second is the 'power of the Holy Spirit' because it is not our eloquence that moves the hearts of men toward God. Third, the 'kind of man we were amongst you for your sake'. The preacher's conduct must match his faith. All three factors were present in the apostolic church as well as the early True Jesus Church.

## II. THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM PRESENT

The next important question is "Where are we now?" Every church has an 'evangelistic temperature', which is the sum of our individual evangelistic temperatures. Are we hot, cold, or somewhere in between? Check your temperature against Chart 1. Being hot means that our thoughts are always about our Father's business of saving lives. On the other hand, being cold means that we are too busy with our own personal business. We do not feel any urgency to preach. Many of us invest considerable time in a variety of divine work, but check ourselves:

- Do we spend an hour each week preaching to our friends?
- Do we spend just half an hour each week, thinking about whom to preach to, when to preach and how to preach to?
- If we do not do the above, do we feel guilty?

### Obstacles to Evangelism

Why do we lag behind the apostolic church and early TJC in evangelistic fervor? Let us focus on two key reasons.

### LOST IMPACT ON US: RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The apostolic church's evangelistic zeal was fuelled by two factors—one

## In the Apostolic Pattern: The Early True Jesus Church

**Personal evangelism:** In China, the early workers traveled thousands of miles on foot or by ship. Occasionally, they went without food and/or shelter. Yet wherever they went, they would preach, baptize, and then quickly set up a new church. Church growth was phenomenal. In 1920, within a mere nine months, these workers had set up forty-two new churches; an average of five churches per month! Moreover, these new believers would then take the gospel back to their hometowns, sharing with even more friends and family.

**Holy Spirit:** The evangelistic services were simple but effective. Believers went out to the streets, sounding gongs to attract public attention. They distributed pamphlets that boldly declared: "The lame walk, the blind see, and the dumb speak". Many miracles were performed, many received the Holy Spirit, and many were baptized.

On one occasion, at the end of a spiritual and evangelistic meeting where they had discussed doctrines and prayed for the Holy Spirit, almost the entire congregation of a Presbyterian church believed in the doctrines of the true church. So all they needed to do was to return to their chapel and change the signboard of the Presbyterian church to the True Jesus Church!

CHART 1: THE EVANGELISTIC THERMOMETER—ARE YOU HOT OR COLD?



external, and the other, internal. The **external factor** is the **tremendous miracle of Christ's resurrection**. Today, we have heard this fact repeated so often—Christ is resurrected from the dead—that we have been inured to its great significance. But in the apostolic church, Jesus' resurrection was a very powerful push factor. This fact showed that He was God in the flesh.

The deaths of globally renowned names such as Steve Jobs or Michael Jackson make the news for days if not weeks. People who first heard it could not wait to put the information on Twitter, Facebook etc. Many who did not even know them personally left condolence messages—"R.I.P., Steve or Michael". Such behavior gives us a glimpse of how impactful the resurrection was to the apostolic believers, and an understanding of what motivated them to run around to their family and friends, crying, "He lives! He lives!" The disciples never expected Him to rise so when He did and reappeared to them, it was so life-changing that they just had to tell everyone the message.

The second powerful and **internal push factor** is **the Holy Spirit**. When they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they were compelled to preach. Peter told the Sanhedrin, "We cannot but speak of the things we have seen and heard." Rightly, we have no choice but to speak. But unfortunately, today many of us long-time believers choose not to speak.

New converts, on the other hand, are often very zealous about preaching the gospel. Asked why, their answer is simple—because the gospel saves. This is yet another message that has become

trite to us. But to someone who has just been convicted of the gospel, it is everything in the world. They are like the man who had just discovered a pearl in the field. Overjoyed, he sold everything to buy that field.

It is therefore critical for us to realign our priorities in our lives. If we have lost that love of preaching, we must return to our first love—to that very moment when we first came into contact with the gospel; or the time when we first received the Holy Spirit; or even the time when we first came into contact with God. Without these two push factors, evangelistic fervor cannot be sustained.

**FEAR OF FAILURE**

Undeniably, the rate of successful conversion is extremely low. The amount of time invested and the response obtained frequently do not commensurate. Our ideal scenario is that people quickly accept whatever we proclaim and believe the message we preach. We want to be like Peter at Pentecost—one single sermon pierces the people's hearts so that they crowd around, eager to know, "What is this that is happening?" Occasionally, this happens but it is rare.

Oftentimes, in order to convert anyone, we have to work very hard to convince them to change their worldview. Doing this takes a very long time but we need to learn from Paul at the school of Tyrannus. He reasoned daily with the people who were there.

Besides the first two, these are three other groups of people we shall meet when we preach.

- Athenians: They will talk, reason

and engage with you as if they are very interested in the gospel, but they are actually more interested in the debate itself.

- Jewish multitudes: They are indifferent to whatever you say; they cannot be bothered (Luke 7:32).
- Hardcore Jews: They take time and effort to tear down your arguments; and to put every obstacle in the way of your preaching.

Different countries will have varying proportions of these five types of people. But for many of us living in developed urban societies, an additional drawback is that the pace of life is too fast and everyone is busy. Not only are we too busy to preach to our friends, many of our friends are too busy to listen to us. But this fact is no reason to stop preaching; we just need to work harder than others. Paul felt that he had to work harder than the rest of the other apostles because he had to make up for all the time in the past that he had wasted on persecuting Christians.

Some people blame everything and everyone else for the lack they suffer. But there are others—like Paul—who just work harder to overcome their disadvantage. How will we respond to the difficulty of evangelism? Do we excuse ourselves with, "That is why I don't preach, they do not believe."? Or do we resolve "I must work harder to preach, to try to make them believe."?

Do not worry; there will always be people for us to convert. Jesus clearly told us to "make disciples". By inference, there must be disciples for us to make. So let us hold on to the implicit promise in the Lord's command and persist in preaching.

**III. THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM FUTURE**

What are the key areas to work on for the future?

**Personal Evangelism**

From the Bible we see that the scope of God's plan moves like a ripple outwards, i.e. always from near to far. This means that we should first preach to our family members, then to friends, then to strangers. For this reason Jesus told a formerly demon-possessed man, "**Go home to your friends**, and tell them what

*First is the 'Word'. We must open our mouths to preach. Second is the 'power of the Holy Spirit' because it is not our eloquence that moves the hearts of men toward God. Third, the 'kind of man we were amongst you for your sake'. The preacher's conduct must match his faith.*

great things the Lord has done for you" (Mk 5:19).

These close and loved ones should have priority in our evangelistic efforts. Otherwise, why would God have placed them in our midst? Preaching to the nearest and dearest is both easy and difficult. It is easy because we already have a connection with them, unlike a stranger whom we are meeting for the first time. The latter does not need to listen to us.

Notwithstanding, personal evangelism can also be very difficult because those who are close to us have seen us at our worst. This is a timely reminder that our behavior among friends and relatives is crucial to personal evangelism.

#### Door-to-door Evangelism

Personal evangelism is our priority, and door-to-door is a bonus. It allows us to expand the scope of our networks. Having our more mature-aged members participate in door-to-door preaching can be an advantage: people generally respond more politely to them and are more prepared to listen. We need not know reams of Scripture. Just be prepared with one or two personal testimonies that we can share with the homeowners.

*Evangelism reflects the very nature of God—love.*

#### Befrienders

Many of us enjoy catching up with brethren after service. Happily chatting away in our own groups before or after services, we fail to notice that truth-seekers are left alone to find their way around church, or to just sit quietly in a pew waiting for service to start. Little wonder then that some stop coming because they lack a sense of warmth and belonging.

We need more people to join this group to look out for truth-seekers who are alone, befriend them, talk to

them after service, and make them feel at home. Befrienders should also keep a lookout for truth-seekers who have stopped coming. Give them a call just to see how they are. All these contribute to that sense of familial warmth so prevalent in the apostolic and early church.

#### Prayer Group

Sometimes, truth-seekers may fall seriously ill or face huge problems. At such times, not only do we need to just tell them to pray, we should actually go as a group to their homes to pray for and with them. Such prayer groups can also bring back long-lost sheep to God's fold because we help to build bridges between them and God through prayer.

#### LET GOD'S LOVE INSPIRE YOU

Evangelism is a command of Christ and so we have no choice but to preach. Yet even more importantly, evangelism reflects the very nature of God—love. We preach because we reflect the very nature of God, best captured in John 3:16:

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life".*

This is the precious central message of the gospel. But have we grown dull to it? Are we just happy that we are saved, unconcerned that millions of people have not yet heard of the deep love of Christ? Believers of the apostolic church and the early True Jesus Church may not have had all our advantages of education and access to knowledge. But this they knew—God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God so loved them. So they urgently sought to tell their friends and relatives of this wonderful love. What about the True Jesus Church today? ★





# Know Your Challenges (I): False Prophets

Based on a sermon by Aun Quek Chin—Singapore

*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?*

*(Mt 7:15–16)*

Jesus has long warned us to be vigilant against false prophets. But false prophets are not just found in the world, outside the church. Jesus' warning was of false prophets who have come into our midst, those who have entered the fold of the true church. These are the most dangerous.

Coming in with sheep's clothing, they convince many that they are the sheep of God. But inwardly, they are ravenous wolves. They hide amidst the fold just like a Trojan horse. The story of the fall of Troy is a reminder that, while our strength enables us to fend off external attacks, we are very vulnerable when the enemy hails from within.

Paul sounded a similar warning to the Ephesian believers (Acts 20:28–31). After his departure, savage wolves clothed in sheep's clothing would arise amongst believers. Sparing none, they would deceive and draw away disciples after them! Paul had good reason to worry. He knew these false prophets existed and only his presence deterred them from wreaking havoc. He also knew that

the moment he left, they would appear, some entering the church, and some arising from within.

The prospect of this grieved him so much that he unceasingly reminded everyone night and day with tears. Unfortunately, after Paul's departure, heresies indeed crept in and many souls were lost.

Hence Paul emphasized that overseers of the church must be even more vigilant for themselves besides watching out for the entire flock. Obviously, if the leaders are deceived, the effect on the church is greater.

## RECOGNIZE THE CLOTHING

As we look around us, we can clearly identify three types of "sheep's clothing" assumed by these false prophets:

### 1. Bible knowledge

The first sheepskin oft-used by false prophets is the Bible. Their familiarity with the Bible is impressive and their "explanations" of the Bible appear convincing. Naïve sheep are taken in, erroneously equating these wolves' mastery of the Bible with sincerity of faith.

In fact, several biblical events have shown us that the devil is even more familiar with the Bible than us and can quote the Bible very precisely. For

instance, Satan quoted the Scriptures accurately in his attempt to tempt Jesus. However, while he understands the Scriptures perfectly, he does not interpret it accurately. Let us thus be on our guard against false prophets' deliberate misinterpretations of the Bible.

At the same time, all workers of the Lord must be careful in their exposition of God's word. Besides the preachers, Religious Education teachers and parents have to explain the word of God as well. As we explain the word of God, are we rightly dividing the truth? If our personal interpretation is not in line with the actual meaning of the Scriptures, then our explanation has deviated from the truth.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.*

*(2 Tim 2:15–16)*

In the same epistle, Paul also tells Timothy and us to deal with false prophets:

*And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.*

*(2 Tim 2:17–18)*

The **Trojan Horse** is a tale from the war between the Trojans and the Greeks. After a 10-year siege, the Greeks still could not conquer the city of Troy. One day, the Greeks suddenly retreated but left behind a gigantic wooden horse. Rejoicing, the Trojans pulled the horse into their city as a victory trophy. Little did they know that a select Greek force was hiding inside the hollow horse. In the quiet of the night, as the Trojans slept, the Greeks crept out of the horse and opened the gates for the rest of the Greek army which had sailed back under cover of night. The Greeks entered and destroyed the city of Troy, decisively ending the war.

Paul specially names the two men whose wrong explanation of the truth had affected the faith of many: Hymenaeus and Philetus.

Unused to this concept of highlighting wrongdoers, some believers may think Paul's actions harsh. Why did he have to mention their specific names? In our context today, why are the names of wrongdoers specifically mentioned in sermons? Surely they were not the only two who preached heresies? It is, after all, human weakness to occasionally teach the wrong thing. In fact, when Paul urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus "in order to charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim 1:3), he did not mention any specific names.

So why were Hymenaeus and Philetus singled out?

The key difference between Hymenaeus and Philetus and the others was that the latter could still turn back. All they needed was encouragement or advice. In contrast, the message of Hymenaeus and Philetus was set to spread like cancer. Not only could they no longer turn back, they were continually influencing and destroying others. Just like a malignant tumor, they had to be clearly identified and excised lest the cancer spread.

Excommunication is an agonizing step because every soul is precious to us. But recalcitrant false prophets must be stopped and removed. Critically, their names must be highlighted so

that other believers can recognize and be vigilant against their heresies. If no names are mentioned, the congregation may assume that the situation is not that serious. Hence, as believers, we must understand why the church today takes seemingly harsh steps, just as Paul did in the past.

## 2. Godliness

*If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*

(1 Tim 6:3-5)

Another misconception that we may have is that fierce and ravenous wolves would actually look fierce and ravenous. Paul reminds us that false prophets often don't godliness as a means of gain. These "godly sheepskins" enable them to deceive many. When we see a person who is God-fearing, active in church work, filled with wisdom and eloquence, humble and full of love, it is easy to conclude: "How can such a person be a false prophet? Did Jesus not say that that we can tell a person from his fruits? Since good fruits abound in him, it must mean that he is good and thus cannot be a false prophet!"

But consider the Pharisees. In the eyes of men, they were godly people - they were faultless in the law; they faithfully kept the laws of God, and they taught God's commandments zealously. They frequently fasted and prayed for long durations, always tithed, and always participated in a lot of work.

Yet, in the eyes of Jesus, they were

hypocrites, and their godliness, false. Thus, do not judge by outward godliness. Instead question whether the message preached is consistent with the doctrine which accords with godliness. Would the sound doctrine lead to pride, envy and strife?

Today, we shall also encounter eloquent and clever false prophets who are "obsessed with disputes and arguments over words". When we voice doubt over their teachings, they will debate us into speechlessness; and challenge us until we are at a loss for words. Verbal victory is their yardstick of truth: If I am wrong, why can't you prove that I am wrong?

Human wisdom and our eloquence have their limits, and cannot be the basis for discussion or debate. Instead, we must always use the Bible as validation: is the teaching according to the "wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Does it have a basis in the Scriptures? If it does, is this basis correct? Do the passages that have been cited or one's understanding of these passages contradict other parts of the Bible? Is the basis that has been cited only applicable for a very specific scenario?

The truth is not skewed. Instead, it is wholesome. The truth is not contradictory. Instead, it is unified and continuous because it is the word of God. Therefore, do not just look at outward godliness. Instead, look at the person to see if his very nature is according to the word of God. Listen and see whether he speaks in accord with all the teachings of the Bible. Does he speak the wholesome word of God, or has he already gone astray?

## 3. Miracles

Occasionally, the teachings of false prophets make us feel uncomfortable.

However, the moment we see this person perform miracles, our fears are allayed. Seeing him perform healing and

### *Excising the Cancer of Heresy*

1. *Establish whether the person has been preaching heresies.*
2. *Determine whether the heretical content has been spreading quickly and causing harm to the community of believers.*
3. *Take quick and stern action so that believers will not continue to be deceived and drawn away.*

casting out demons, we are convinced that his prayers are really effective and conclude that this person must definitely be from God. We ignore the tinge of discomfort we feel at the contents of his preaching.

But the Lord Jesus has warned us. *Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.*

(Mk 13:21–23)

False prophets performing signs and wonders have deceived many of the Lord's sheep— not just the little lambs, but even the experienced older sheep. They are amazed at the "power" of these false prophets and conclude that such signs and wonders can only be from God.

However, the Lord Jesus warns us that the power may not be from God but the devil (Rev 13:11–14). The beast mentioned in the book of Revelation represents false prophets and false christs. If we do not listen carefully, we may erroneously conclude that this person is a true Christ or prophet.

Many are deluded because seeing is easier than listening. Very often, when we listen to something, we don't listen to it in entirety. On the other hand, when we see something, it is very clear and obvious. Hence, when we see great signs and miracles, we don't doubt what we have heard. This is the way the false prophets and false christs use their power from Satan to deceive many.

There are moments in our lives when we really want a supernatural power to heal us of our terminal illnesses, help solve relationship or financial issues, or to gain us fame in society. No human can achieve this for us, so will you then rely on evil powers? Will you disregard the truth in order to achieve your goals?

The late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping once said, "Black cat, or white cat, as long as it catches the mouse, it is a good cat." Can this be extended to spiritual matters, i.e. Holy Spirit or evil spirit, as long as the spirit can help me, it is a good spirit? Are we prepared to disregard the consequences and forgo eternity for the sake of temporary happiness, glory and power?

Satan once told Jesus, "Worship me and

I will give you all of these." Undeniably, Satan has the power to heal you of your sicknesses, and give you women, position and status...if you worship him; if you sell your soul to him.

Choose wisely. Be wary of the wolves that come in like sheep, even if they perform miracles, signs and wonders. Although we often need a greater power to help us, we must not be deceived by the power of Satan.

### LOVE THE TRUTH OF GOD, NOT THE TEACHING OF MAN

Why are devout Christians deceived by false christs and false prophets? Paul says it is because they do not receive the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:9–12). They love

*The Dangerous Beast*  
(Rev 13:11-14)

*He is able to perform miracles and signs to deceive many. However, this person's power comes from the dragon.*

*He looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon. Not every word he speaks is from the dragon because it would be too easy to prove that he is false. Rather, his speech is mixed with the words of Christ and the words of the dragon.*

and esteem the teachings of men over the teachings of God. Hence God allows them to believe in the lie. And since they do not believe the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness, they will be condemned.

There is only one truth, and that is Jesus Christ. And if we love the truth, then it will not matter to us who the speaker is. As long as he teaches us according to the truth, we are willing to submit to this teaching. However, if we choose to only listen to what speaker X says, and reject speaker Y, then our love is for the teachings of men, not for God's word.

Peter also reminds us that in the future there will be "false teachers among [us] who will bring in destructive heresies" (2 Pet 2:1). These are teachings without biblical basis, which are adapted instead from the philosophies and religions of the

world or from personal interpretations of the Scriptures. Some false teachers defend their teachings as "logical and rational". But these two characteristics are not good enough—a "logical and rational" teaching cannot save us; only a biblical truth can.

If we love the truth, we will know how to use this checklist to measure the "new teachings" we hear:

- The teaching may be reasonable and logical, but does it contradict the Bible? Or is it consistent with the Bible?
- Is the teaching from the Bible? Or is it developed by man and/or adapted from the world's beliefs?

### ABIDE IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

#### Humbly accept God's word

*"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 Jn 9).*

To transgress means to supersede the boundaries of the doctrines of Christ. In other words, if what we say and teach has no biblical basis and has even gone beyond biblical teachings, we are no longer keeping the truth. We shall thus not have God's abidance even if we purport to worship Him.

In this case, we no longer have God because we have elevated our personal teachings and thoughts to the level of God's. We are in fact applying our own way of thinking and explanations to supplement God's ways and God's thoughts! When a person reaches a stage where he considers his ideas equivalent to God's level, and acceptable as God's teachings, imagine how great a transgression that is. This is a person who no longer has God for he is adding to and removing from God's teaching at will!

This is extremely and terribly wrong. God's commandments are not for us to debate. To debate over or take a vote on His commandments in the name of "democracy" lowers our almighty God to our level; reducing Him to being "one of us"! God is our Creator and source of life. The whole duty of man is to keep His commands. We are in NO position to discuss and debate whether we should keep His commandments, or vote on which one we ought to keep. If and when we do that, we are no longer

regarding Him as Lord. And what else would that be if not a transgression?

The Lord Jesus has said, "Can a servant be greater than his master? Can he who is sent be greater than he who sends him? I am your Master, so do as I have commanded you."

*O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge-- by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.*

(1 Tim 6:20–21)

### Guard what has been committed to us

Besides being careful never to use our own wisdom to add to or take away from God's teachings, or to apply our personal interpretation without biblical basis, we must also be careful to "guard what [has been] committed to us".

Paul warned of people who had strayed from the truth; teaching "idle babblings, contradictions and what is falsely called knowledge". When did they start to deviate?

Deviation often starts from a small issue. People often take slight deviations lightly. However, left uncorrected, slight deviations will eventually lead us off course as we proceed farther. By the time we realize that we have gone a little too far or that the impact of that slight deviation was greater than we expected, we have already deviated too far off course.

Sometimes we might not even know that we have deviated. For example, we know our car has drifted slightly from the lane we are driving in. We earn a honk from the car behind us but we continue driving, thinking that we are safe. Before we know it, we have deviated into the next lane and caused an accident! It is then too late for regret. Our unwillingness to heed the warnings of others and correct our deviation brings harm not just to ourselves, but to all those around us.

### BE PREPARED

Some people are alarmed that false prophets can arise in the true church that has both the Holy Spirit and the truth. Such alarm is truly alarming because it means that such people have not yet prepared for the end-time.

Our Lord Jesus has long warned us of

false prophets both in the world as well as in the true church. Let us no longer be paralyzed by alarm but rise to equip ourselves. Let us recognize the signs and know the challenges to our faith in the 21st century from the ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing. Let us love only the truth of God and resolve to abide in and only teach the doctrine of Christ. ★





# Interview with Elder Joshua Phoong, Director of the Eastern Hemisphere Department of World Missions (EHDWM)



*The Department of World Missions (DWM) was established in 1975 as one of the departments under the International Assembly's Executive Council. Its aim was to plan, coordinate, execute and supervise tasks for world evangelism. It was subsequently divided into Eastern Hemisphere (EH) and Western Hemisphere (WH) departments. For this issue, Manna magazine had the opportunity to interview Elder Joshua Phoong about the missionary work in the Eastern hemisphere. He shared with us how the work began, what the current developments are, and the challenges that lie ahead.*

## Elder Phoong, when and why was the DWM split into Eastern Hemisphere and Western Hemisphere departments?

The DWM was divided into the EHDWM and WHDWM during the World Delegates Conference in 1997.

There were several reasons for this. The workload of the DWM was getting too heavy. There were too many pioneering areas for the DWM to take care of—other than the seven countries with General Assemblies, all the other areas were considered to be pioneering areas. It was not possible for the DWM to care for all these countries.

We also wanted to strengthen efforts and increase the focus on pioneering

work in the two hemispheres. Splitting the DWM in this way would allow better utilization and mobilization of resources in both hemispheres. It was thought that this would be a more effective and efficient way of pioneering new areas in the two hemispheres.

## How is the EHDWM structured and which countries are taking care of which areas?

The EHDWM has the support and participation of all the General Assemblies (GAs) and Coordination Boards (CBs) in the Eastern hemisphere. Each GA or CB appoints a Mission Committee (MC) that coordinates the divine work in a country allocated to it. They send personnel from their own countries first. When further assistance is needed, they may request it from the EHDWM.

Every year, the chairmen of the GAs and CBs, together with the coordinators of the MCs, meet to discuss, plan and support the divine work in the EH.

Members of EHDWM	Areas under their care
Korea GA	North-eastern China
Taiwan GA	Thailand, Hong Kong/ Kowloon, Japan, China
Sabah GA	Philippines

Malaysia GA	India
Indonesia GA	Pioneering areas in Indonesia
Singapore CB	Myanmar
Australia CB	Fiji & Papua New Guinea
New Zealand churches	Tonga
EHDWM	Vietnam, Cambodia, Samoa, other new areas

## To which countries in the Eastern Hemisphere has the gospel been preached since the EHDWM was established?

### Which countries were the first to accept the gospel?

After the establishment of the EHDWM, we began to strengthen the divine work in existing pioneering areas like India, Philippines, Thailand, Fiji and Myanmar by allocating them to different GAs and CBs.

Evangelism to new areas began in the same year. In 1997, evangelistic work began in Vietnam and Cambodia. In two years, a total of about fifteen were baptized. However, because of unfavorable conditions, the work stopped two years later. In the year 2005, we re-established the work in Vietnam and



Cambodia.

A visit was made to Nepal in 2003 through a contact from the Internet, but there were no further developments here.

The work in Tonga started in 2005 when we realized that we had some China members there. We have now registered the church in Tonga.

We went to Papua New Guinea in 2006 to contact some China members. However, due to security reasons, we only returned to continue the work in 2010. This year, 2011, we started the work in Samoa, where we have ten China members and some truth-seekers. We have also explored the possibility of preaching in Laos and Bangladesh.

### What are the objectives of the EHDWM?

Our primary missions are to pastor and to evangelize. This involves caring for the existing pioneering areas in the EH and bringing them to maturity.

In addition, we strive to further extend the evangelistic work in newly pioneered areas, to preach the complete gospel to areas that it has not yet reached, and to assist in the evangelistic work in countries which request our assistance.

### What is the current scope of work of the EHDWM?

Firstly, the EHDWM seeks to actively identify potential pioneering areas. We do this by following up on contacts we have received through the Internet and also by starting pastoral and evangelistic work in new areas to which our members have moved.

Secondly, we are trying to step up evangelistic efforts in existing pioneering areas, and finally, we are continuing in our efforts to develop a pool of voluntary resources.

*We expect the pace of evangelism to accelerate in the coming years. In preparation for this, we must have our resources in place to face the challenges ahead. Greater efforts should be made towards producing evangelistic literature in different languages and towards effectively mobilizing our voluntary workers.*

### What do you expect from this ministry?

As the world becomes a global village, accessibility to different countries is getting easier. Many of our members are moving to new countries to work. The political situation is changing to favor greater religious freedom. We expect the pace of evangelism to accelerate in the coming years. In preparation for this, we must have our resources in place to face the challenges ahead. Greater efforts should be made towards producing evangelistic literature in different languages and towards effectively mobilizing our voluntary workers.

### In your view, what are the major challenges in this ministry and how can the church overcome them?

Language is one of the major problems that we are facing. We cannot be sure how accurate the interpretation of local interpreters is. We also need literature to support the work of evangelism; we are translating these from existing languages, but progress is very slow.

In addition, cultural and behavioral differences can cause misunderstandings. Some of these behavioral patterns are created by the long-time presence of other denominations. For example, many truth-seekers have come to expect financial aid from us, as other religious organizations in their countries provide such aid. Furthermore, many Christian denominations compromise with the local traditions. Drinking, smoking, ancestral worship, idol-worshipping and superstitious practices are commonplace and therefore accepted. It is not easy to change such well-entrenched practices.

Finally, our ministry is mainly supported by volunteers. The lack of a full-time presence in these pioneering areas is a problem. A constant change of workers is also unhealthy.

### How does the work of the EHDWM relate to the believers in general? (We may sometimes consider missionary work to be the preacher's job only.)

Soon after the EHDWM was set up, it embarked on efforts to mobilize believers in general to work for God. We began to entrust pioneering countries

*EHDWM has just started its own website: [eh.tjc.org](http://eh.tjc.org). It serves to create greater awareness of pioneering areas and to encourage members to pray for, contribute to and join in the work.*

to different GAs, which promotes greater participation of the various GAs in the pioneering work. Moreover, the Voluntary Mission Team gives members in general the opportunity to participate in pioneering work according to their availability. We also have a Voluntary Ministers Course that prepares ministers to make a greater contribution towards pioneering work.

Apart from that, the EHDWM has just started its own website: [eh.tjc.org](http://eh.tjc.org). It serves to create greater awareness of pioneering areas and to encourage members to pray for, contribute to and join in the work.

### How can TJC members support this ministry?

Since all GAs and CBs are responsible for at least one new pioneering country, individuals can refer to the Mission Committee in their own countries to join in the work. Those who wish to participate in the work in other countries can contact the EHDWM. They can also join the Voluntary Mission Team Training and the Voluntary Ministers Training. We will then make arrangements for these volunteers to join upcoming missionary trips.

### Thank you very much for this interview, Elder Phoong.

*As we can see, the church faces many challenges in this work, not least of which is a shortage of workers. We hope this interview has encouraged you to contribute in whatever way you can, be it through prayer, financial support or by joining a Volunteer Mission Team in your area. All we need is a willing heart to do our part to support the work of global evangelism that has been entrusted to us! ★*



# I in the Sky

ANON—West Malaysia

## LIFE OF DREAMS?

*Veni, Vidi, Vici*. This often quoted Latin phrase, purportedly coined by the great Emperor Julius Caesar, succinctly describes an overwhelming victory over yet another hapless city state standing in the path of his quest for eternal glory and recognition. In English, “I came, I saw and I conquered”, the phrase resonates in the life of many of us today. This was the brief but telling report sent back by the emperor’s messengers to an adoring Roman senate craving for news of the battle.

Yet this, unfortunately, is also the battle cry adopted by many Christians in the TJC, especially the younger generation, who are caught up in the whirlwind pace of the 21st century. We seek to live up the life of dreams, a life of “having it all”, of grappling with the world and all of its glories and pleasures, through the toil and labor of our own hands. We plunder what we desire of this hedonistic life which we exhibit as trophies, treasured pieces to serve as memories of our conquests and a motivation to grab even more.

Perhaps this is an overdramatized painting, a bleaker picture than the true state of play. But if one were to take a stroll into the digital realm of cyberspace—Facebook comes to mind—we can see from the postings that, to a large extent, this state of affairs is

unfortunately part of the lives of many Christians: they are living to be gratified, ever seeking, grasping, fighting and striving after; dreaming.

## THE “I” WITHIN

Poor souls, indeed. Just like Solomon who wrote Ecclesiastes, the king who had it all and lived it all, and yet discovered it was simply not enough. Palaces, gardens, power, influence, wives, wealth and wisdom, all promised happiness and contentment, all represented the life of dreams, a quest to achieve the illustrious state of “*Veni, Vidi, Vici*”.

Yet none of these delivered. The more wealth, the more worry; the more knowledge and wisdom, the more the spirit grows tired and weary ... and the list goes on. At the end of it all, if left unchecked, if we cannot break free from the numbing influence of Satan, ours is a life which is meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless.

King Solomon of old is embodied in the life of many of us today, always seeking, always searching and yet always empty and unfulfilled. The route to happiness, purpose and contentment for a Christian seems an impossibility. If Solomon, having it all, still failed to find the answer to this question, as seen in the earlier chapters of Ecclesiastes, what hope do we have? What, then, was the cause of old King

Solomon’s problem, which is also the root of all the troubles for those of us who have inherited the problems of the old Solomon?

The problem lies in the “I”: “I set my heart”, “I built for myself”, “I acquired”, “I made”, “I planted”, “I this”, “I that”, “I, I, I”!!

The insistence of the first person singular is striking. It is reiterated, time and time again, and it is out of sync, discordant and in conflict with the will of the Lord. There is no other book in the Bible that uses the word “I” so many times than Ecclesiastes in its earlier chapters.

The problem with the Solomon of old, and us, who would be the new Solomon, is that we keep thinking only of ourselves, the reiterative and recalcitrant, “I”. We are unable to say “NO” to “I”. As for happiness, purpose and contentment, we ought to know better as Christians. We were taught that these dwell in a very different world ... the world devoid of “I”.

But we choose to refuse and reject our lessons from the Bible. We scribe more and more in cyberspace our thoughts, our desires, our pleasurable moments, our acquisitions, our purchases, our grandiose plans, our extravagant meals. We scribe more and more of this great “I” in the sky in the world of the clouded



dreams. Does this not ring a bell and sound familiar? Is this not just as old King Solomon was in Ecclesiastes chapter two? What of this "I" ... can it be tamed? Will it be saved?

**SAYING "NO" TO "I"**

It can, and it will, if only we muster enough courage and strength to say the hardest word of all to "I"; that of "NO".

If we lack the ability and the desire to say "NO" to the self serving, self selfish "I", we lose the ability to say "YES" to a better life, a life of purpose, happiness and contentment that which was intended by our Lord Jesus. When we say "NO" to "I", we are committing ourselves to a higher and greater purpose. We must reject and stay far away from this unrepentant and domineering "I", bound and bolted on tightly to this dying world of man and remember, instead, to seek the will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who wants us free from these shackles. Unless we can say "NO" to this "I", we will never be able to break free from this plague which afflicted old King Solomon and which continues to afflict so many of us wannabes.

*Vidi, Vici*" sounds out loudly, please leave the battlefield of the world to those who continue to strive for this meaningless and fruitless life. Flee from the life of service to "I"; the "I" in pursuit of the wind, an empty and unfulfilled life.

Lord and Savior, and He will lead us ever onward.

Less of self, but More of Thee, Lord. ★

**REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR**

For those filled with youthful vitality and vigour, seeking to carve a path for ourselves, remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come and when you take no pleasure in them (Ecc 12:1). Fear the Lord, keep His word and stay on His pathway to salvation, so that, when the day of the Lord comes as He surely will, each and every one of us will be counted as worthy to wear the crown of righteousness.

Perhaps, through the divine mercies of our Lord Jesus, this "I" will be saved, and will not be one of those hapless

*We are unable to say "NO" to "I". As for happiness, purpose and contentment, we ought to know better as Christians. We were taught that these dwell in a very different world ... the world devoid of "I".*

*We must reject and stay far away from this unrepentant and domineering "I", and remember, instead, to seek the will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who wants us free from these shackles.*

To many still in their youth and at the peak of life, the rallying call of this age continues to be "Have it all". With this battle cry stems the cause of the problem that "I" can do it all, and "I" can be and have everything, even if not all at once, but if "I" can work for it, "I" will eventually attain it. "I" must have it. We continue to serve the "I" as we shy away from making the hard and right choice of saying "NO" to "I". We fail to see or choose to ignore the irreconcilable conflict and dilemma, that to say "YES" to "I", is an affirmation of the self but a rejection and refusal to accept the pathway of the Lord.

We must instead say "NO" to "I" which translates to "No way" to a hundred desires, "No Thank You" to a thousand temptations, and "BE GONE Satan", as your riches in millions and the height of the glory and fame promised are but nothing to me ... NOTHING.

As the horn and trumpet of "Veni,

*For those filled with youthful vitality and vigour, seeking to carve a path for ourselves, remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come and when you take no pleasure in them (Ecc 12:1). Fear the Lord, keep His word and stay on His pathway to salvation.*

billions of souls vanquished by Satan, in the nefarious scheme to bring all of humanity with him, the fallen angel, into damnation.

What will become of our "I" ... the chapter is left open, the journey is not finished. Many are in grave danger of falling. That is the honest truth. Can we pull ourselves back from the brink of this everlasting pit? Do we have the courage, strength and the moral fortitude to overcome these trials of life?

Let us stern ourselves and resolve to overcome this "I" and succeed where our ancestors, Adam and Eve, failed. Bring on this new battle cry of "Jesus Christ", our



# Whom Do I Serve?

AC

About this column...

The Ministry Column gives Bible-based guidance regarding the correct attitude in serving God as well as practical advice for our servitude.



## WHOM DO I SERVE?

The answer to this question is straightforward to us Christians: we serve the living and true God, the Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, apart from serving God, many of us serve another master, whether it is mammon (Mt 6:23; Lk 15:13) or our own belly (Rom 16:17–18; Jude 12–13)—our various lusts and pleasures (Tit 3:3). For this reason, the question “Whom do I serve?”, gives room for self-reflection, and reminds us that we belong to God alone (Act 27:23), and should serve the Lord with all our heart, through our worship and participation in His business.

Once we have ensured that we worship and serve God only, what are the attitudes that we should have in our worship and service to Him?

The Bible uses different human relationships to describe the relationship we have with God and our attitude towards Him. Let us narrow our scope and look at three of them.

## HE IS OUR MASTER, WE ARE THE BONDSERVANTS

Previously we were slaves of sin, uncleanness and lawlessness. Yet, through baptism, we have become slaves of righteousness (Rom 6:22). Since Jesus has purchased us with His own blood (Act 20:28), we belong to Him—He is

our Master and we are His servants. The apostles had this kind of understanding when they introduced themselves at the beginning of their epistles as bondservants of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:1; Jas 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1).

In fact, the Lord often used parables that describe the relationship between master and servant to illustrate His expectations towards His followers.

So, what is the attitude expected from a bondservant in his service to the master?

*“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ” (Eph 6:5).*

Obedience to the master is the fundamental quality expected from a bondservant or slave. Obedience is also expected from children to their parents (Eph 6:1) and wives to their husbands (Eph 5:22). Yet the unique characteristic of the obedience shown in a master-slave relationship is “fear and trembling”. A slave who has recognized his unworthiness and lowliness will always respect his master, and rightly so! The better we understand the majesty of our holy, glorious and almighty God (Isa 6:1–5), the more we will respect Him with fear and trembling.

We should have a God-fearing heart

when we come before God. This is the right footing in starting our relationship with Him. It also forms the basis for a growing relationship.

Many Christians today emphasize on an equal love relationship with God. The danger of which is, without godly fear, one would easily end up being disobedient. This usually begins with complaining about God’s ways of doing things and eventually rejecting God’s authority. Moreover, godly fear will enable us to be submissive until the end, even if we face situations beyond our understanding that may create doubts in us. The willingness of Jesus to submit to the will of the Father best illustrates the importance of godly fear. The author of Hebrews quoted that it is this godly fear which enabled Jesus’ prayer to be heard (Heb 5:7).

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

*(Phil 2:12–13)*

“Fear and trembling” is the attitude we should maintain in our journey of faith, for it rectifies our hearts and gives us no room for pride or arrogance, knowing that it is God who is working in us.



## HE IS OUR FATHER, WE ARE HIS FIRSTBORN

God created man in His own image and Adam had the status of God's child. Although Adam later fell short of the glory of God, our sonship is restored today through the Lord's salvation grace. In the eyes of God, we are precious and beloved as a firstborn in a family (Heb 12:23), and as such we have the promise of a heavenly inheritance.

With privilege come responsibilities, in that we, as firstborn sons, must be about our Father's business (Lk 2:49). Contrary to what is being practiced in many modern-day families, where parents serve their children even when they are able to take care of themselves, God expects us to serve Him. For this reason, He told Pharaoh, "So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me" (Ex 4:22-23).

As we serve our heavenly Father, what should be our attitude?

*How beautiful and different will our service be, if it is motivated by true love for God!*

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and your mother,' which is the first commandment with promise" (Eph 6:1-2).*

Again the Bible mentions obedience. However, in a father-son relationship, honor or respect is introduced and emphasized. For this reason, we should consider whether we are bringing honor or disrepute to the holy name of our heavenly Father as we serve Him. The other equally important concern is whether we are bringing honor to Him or to ourselves. The importance of both aspects is best illustrated in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught us to begin with "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" and to end it with "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Mt 6:9-13).

## HE IS OUR HUSBAND, TO WHOM WE HAVE BEEN BETROTHED

No other human relationship is more intimate than that between a husband and a wife. Paul used this to describe the mystery concerning Christ and the church.

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a*

*great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

*(Eph 5:31-32)*

Husband and wife can never be separated because they have become one. Likewise Christ and the church are one and thus inseparable. The love of Christ is the foundation of this oneness. What hinders this perfect unification is our lack of unreserved love towards Him. *"I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them" (Hos 11:4).*

*"Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases" (Song 2:7b).*

Does He still need to ask us, "Do you love me?" (Jn 21:15-17), before we respond to His unreserved love for us?

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your*

*God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut 6:4).*

*"For love is as strong as death" (Song 8:6).*

*We serve God by serving our brethren.*

In our service to God, we should not only focus on the outward act of obedience, for such actions can come from someone with a heart of reluctance and a mouth of murmurings. Instead, we should say, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (Song 7:10). How beautiful and different will our service be, if it is motivated by true love for God!

## WHOM DO I SERVE? DO IT TO THE LEAST AMONG YOU

When we say we serve God, it does not mean that He needs anything from us, for He is our Creator and provider (Acts 17:24-25). So even before we think about what we can do to serve Him, we should firstly glorify and thank Him through our daily lives and worship.

So what can we do to serve God although He does not need anything from us? Based on the principle "if we did it to one of the least of these, we did it to our Lord" (Mt 25:40), we serve

God by serving our brethren. By the will of God, David served his own generation (Acts 13:36). Similarly, the will of God is for us to serve one another through love (Gal 5:13).

*"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pet 4:10).*

## MAINTAINING A LIFE-LONG SERVICE

In our life of service, we will inevitably face setbacks that will discourage us even to the point of giving up, for serving our brethren means that we are serving imperfect men. In addition, we are imperfect as well.

Although Moses was indeed a faithful servant (Heb 3:5) in God's entire household, he could not bear it when the meat-craving people wept and complained to him (Num 11:1-15). Subsequently, Moses turned to the Lord who chose seventy men to help him manage the people, opening a way so he could continue serving.

While we humbly serve the Lord, we must also be prepared to face trials and sufferings. In fact, Paul told the saints in Philippi that it is a grace and special privilege, not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for His sake (Phil 1:29-30).

Paul's secret to maintaining his life-long, diligent and fervent service to the Lord can be summed up in the following actions: "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer" (Rom 12:11-12).

Therefore, following Paul's footsteps, let us always remember that we can take joy in serving our Lord. We can find joy in serving God together with our fellow brethren and have the confidence that He will accomplish His own good work. When putting this into practice, it means that we remain focused on our ultimate heavenly objective, and always remember that our Master and our prize await us above (cf. Phil 1:3-5; 3:1,3; 1:6; 1:18,16; 3:20-21; 3:12-14).

Finally, when we should require it, indeed, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10)!

May we all imitate the many servants of the living God, to serve God continually, day and night, for God who sits on the throne is dwelling among us (Rev 7:5)! ★



## Peniel: Seeing the Invisible God

Peter Shee—Singapore

*In the stars His handiwork I see,  
On the wind He speaks with majesty,  
Though He ruleth over land and sea,  
What is that to me?*

*...Till by faith I met Him face to face  
And I felt the wonder of His grace,  
Then I knew that He was more than just a  
God who didn't care,  
That lived away out there  
And now He walks beside me day by day,  
Ever watching o'er me lest I stray,  
Helping me to find the narrow way,  
He's everything to me.<sup>1</sup>*

Great things happen when one meets God face to face. A personal encounter with God left Jacob a different man. Years before, he had vividly dreamed of the God of his fathers, standing distantly above a heavenly ladder. Despite its awesomeness, the vision only drew from him faith that was conditional: "IF God will be with me ... and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, THEN the LORD shall be my God" (Gen 28:20–21).

Two decades later at the ford of Jabbok, Jacob held on to God till the break of day, saying, "I will not let you go unless You bless me!" (Gen 32:23–26). This close

encounter with God left him physically crippled but spiritually, he was enabled.

With renewed faith, the patriarch, newly re-named Israel, limped his way out of darkness into the rays of the rising sun, marveling that he had "seen God face to face" (Gen 32:30–31). Up until his deathbed he still acknowledged "the God who has fed [him] all [his] life long to this day" (Gen 48:15).

As for the place of his nightlong struggle with the divine, Jacob named it *Peniel*, literally "face of God" (Gen 32:30).

### DEUS ABSCONDITUS: THE HIDDEN GOD

At Peniel, the same heavenly Being who declared Himself to be God of Abraham and Isaac obscured His identity and acted contrarily towards His own, physically wrestling Jacob. This goes beyond mere "hiddenness" of God in Christ's incarnation, suffering and death.

Few in Jesus' time understood Him to be God incarnated in flesh. He would not have been crucified if the people of His age had known Him to be God (1 Cor 2:6–10). This is what Paul meant when he talked about the "foolishness of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18–25).

Towards Jacob, God as the wrestling angel did not appear to possess any recognizable kindness. He behaved,

as Job would put it, like a complete adversary:

*"Why do You hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy?" (Job 13:24)*

*"He tears me in His wrath, and hates me; He gnashes at me with His teeth; my adversary sharpens His gaze on me" (Job 16:9).*

Job mistook the reason for his suffering as God's attack. In Jacob's case, the attack was actually objectified.

Job's realization of God's doings at the end of the trials—"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5)—bears much resemblance to Jacob's response at Peniel. This coincidence is remarkable as we see in both incidences that God does sometimes inflict His people for greater good.

For Jacob, irony presented itself more than once. First, he asked a blessing from an Opponent who had just injured him. Then his name was changed by the One who withheld His own name. And finally, he understood the identity of the Stranger who refused to reveal His name.

Jacob's recognition of his Opponent whom he wrestled against was an enlightening lesson. Through his sojourning years, he had learned that God who appeared to Abraham continued

<sup>1</sup> From the hymn "He's Everything to Me" by Ralph Carmichael (1964)



to be present with the chosen lineage to provide and protect them against adversity (Gen 28:13–15).

Now, he saw God's face in actual adversity itself and even sought His blessing (Gen 32: 26–29). God had become his *personal* God.

### BELIEVING IS SEEING

What opened Jacob's eyes but faith? Since faith is "conviction of unseen realities" (Heb 11:1, NBV), God's hiddenness is compatible with faith. It is a blessing to see and hear and believe (Mt 13:16–17). But ultimate faith is to believe without seeing (Jn 20:29), for the ultimate object of faith, God, is unapproachable and can never be seen (1 Tim 1:17).

Faith then is as good as sight, and believing is seeing.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). Faith transforms our experience with a hidden God, *Deus Absconditus* (cf. Is 45:15), into a "Peniel" moment, when we see the face of God revealed, *Deus Revelatus*. Thus we are no longer hindered by the things we cannot fathom, to accept and obey the things revealed to us (Deut 29:29).

When faith and revelation are fully played out in a person's experience with the divine, he arrives at his own "Peniel". As the words of Christ generated faith in the Samaritan woman, she progressed through her prejudice, doubt and ignorance to finally recognize her Savior (Jn 4:9, 11, 15). The men of her city upgraded their faith from second-hand to first-hand after meeting the Lord face-to-face (Jn 4:42).

Then there are examples of faith transcending physical sighting. In contrast to Philip's request to see the Father (Jn 14:8, 9), Peter's recognition of Jesus as "Christ, son of the living God" stemmed from the Father's revelation (Mt 16: 16,

17). The hearts of two disciples on the road to Emmaus were ignited when they heard the Scriptures expounded by the risen Christ (Lk 24:16, 32). They realized who Christ was at the moment when Jesus disappeared from their presence (Lk 24:31).

Adding on, there is the dying thief who stopped his mocking the moment his faith gave him a glimpse of the kingly profile of the man crucified next to him (Lk 23:40–42; cf. Mt 27:44). Mary Magdalene had her *eureka* moment by the empty tomb in the darkness, when the true identity of the gardener dawned on her (Jn 20:14–16).

And, most famously, there's Paul the apostle, one of the best expositors of the Hebrew Scriptures. Formerly Saul the persecutor, his spiritual enlightenment came the moment he became blind physically (Acts 9:3–9).



### SEEING HIM AS HE IS

*"As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps 17:15).*

*"For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).*

Moses, who gave us the Law, saw only the form of God, but was not permitted to see His face. God hid him in the cleft of a rock, and he was shown only the back of God, *posteriori Dei* (Ex 33:20–23).

Christians today enter the Holy of Holies through the blood of Christ (Heb 10:19); thus we can approach the throne of grace without fear (Heb 4:16) to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD as expressed in one of the Davidic psalms (Ps 27:4).

*Faith transforms our experience with a hidden God, *Deus Absconditus* (cf. Is 45:15), into a "Peniel" moment, when we see the face of God revealed.*

Moses veiled his face to hide the glory of God from the people when he came down from Sinai (Ex 34:29–33). But we New Testament saints can behold with unveiled face as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and be transformed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:13, 18). The Holy Spirit not only enlightens our minds to understand the Scriptures, but transforms our lives to conform to its standards.

For this reason, when Christ comes again, we who are in constant communion with God through prayer and obedience to His word shall be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2). ★

*As for the place of his nightlong struggle with the divine, Jacob named it *Peniel*, literally "face of God" (Gen 32:30).*

About this column...

PENIEL aims to encourage readers to have a personal encounter with God.

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 #68:**

### **Topic: Succession—Generation Next**

**Articles due: May 15, 2012**

Our youths are the future pillars of the church. For this reason, it is crucial to cultivate and train them to become faithful servants. But the world is also competing for them—how can we help them to withstand the tide of secularism? What are the major challenges to our next generation's faith? How can we help them to overcome these challenges, inspire them to love God and train them to serve God faithfully?

*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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## *1<sup>st</sup> Eastern Hemisphere English Writers Retreat 2012*

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Registration ends March 14, 2012.

Contact: [manna@tjc.org](mailto:manna@tjc.org)