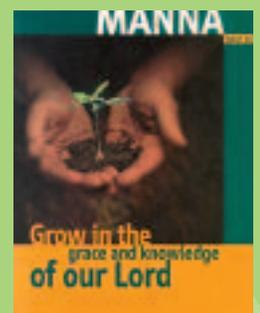
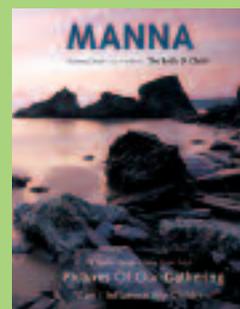
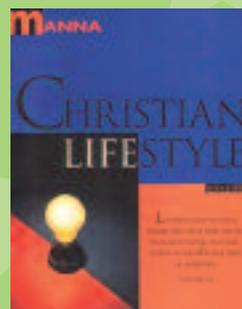
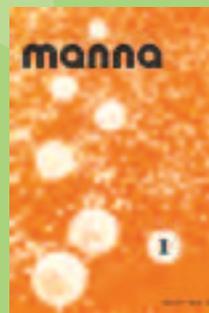
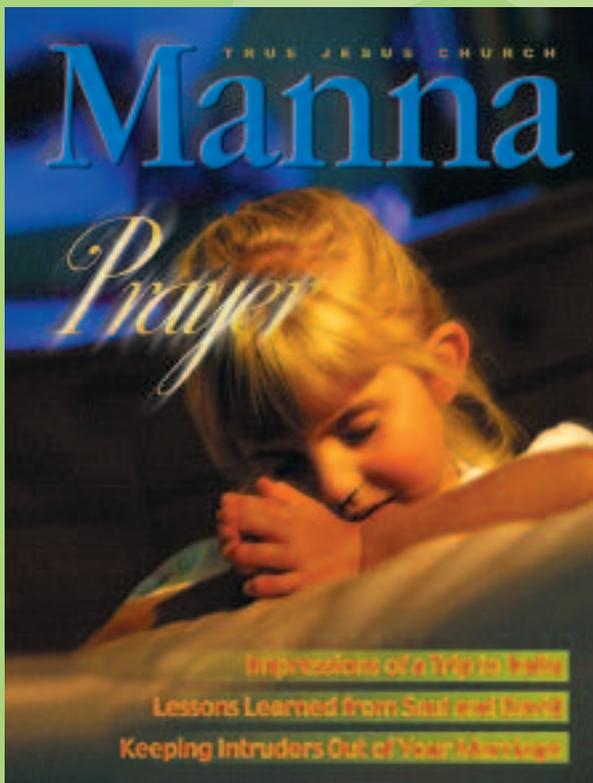
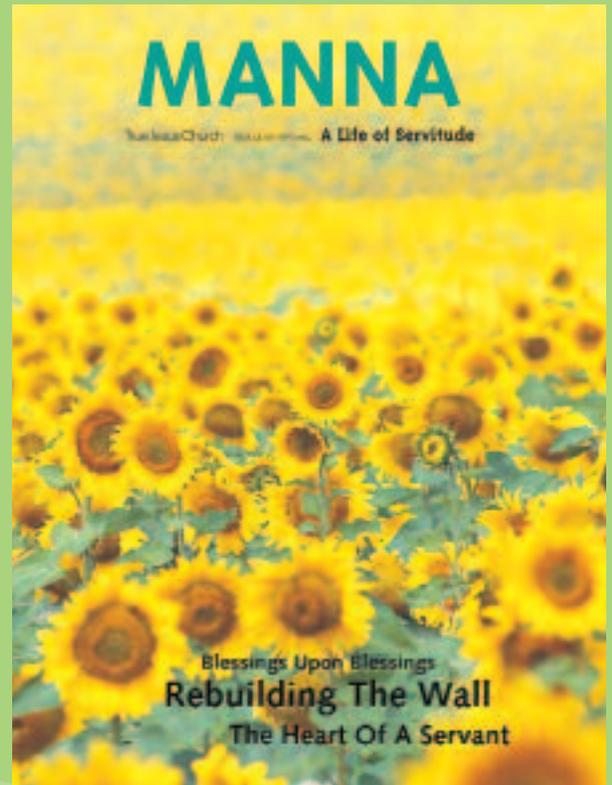
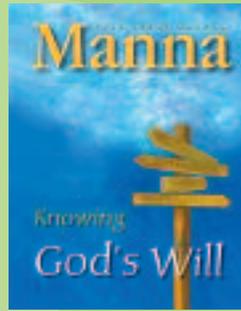
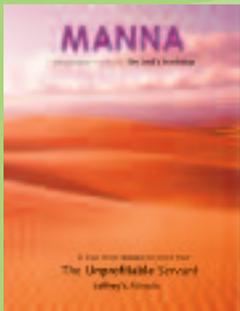
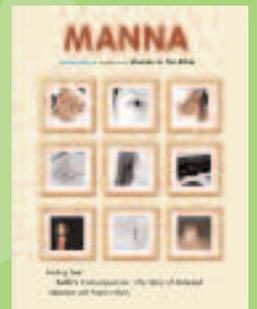
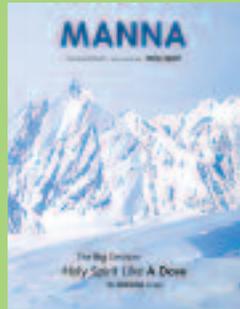
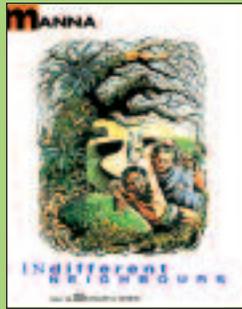
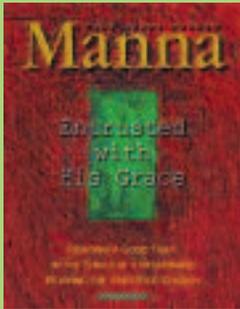


# MANNA



## Special Edition

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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—revised and adapted (Manna Issue 4, p.19-25)



*Dear Reader,*

It is with thanksgiving and a merry heart that we bring this special issue of Manna to you! As we come to the thirtieth year that our beloved magazine has been in print, we want to celebrate the important work of Literary Ministry and thank God for His continued guidance.

Over the years, this ministry has echoed the growth and expansion of our church, and in the years to come it will be an essential vehicle for spreading the message of salvation and for encouraging the believers in faith.

We have seen God's word and gospel reach all areas by His hand, and we are thankful that we have a medium such as this to read about and share His great works. Here, we count His blessings together and learn precious lessons from one another.

In recent times, this ministry has expanded into the World Wide Web, and its results have been phenomenal. We have witnessed God's words changing people's lives and affecting them to want to know Him more. This is the power of His word and His love, which we strived to proclaim.

It was with this same heart that a handful of early workers and writers began penning their faith. They wrote about God's love, His comfort, His teachings, His instructions, His grace, and His mercy. And as resources improved and skills sharpened, Literary Ministry took flight. Looking back, while we were putting this issue together, we are thankful for their pioneering work and their vision to spread God's word in this growing capacity.

In this issue, we'd like to familiarize you with the different types of English publications that are currently in progress, and we encourage you to read them and contribute to them. You can find exhortations about writing in the first section, **From Writers**.

You will also find heartwarming stories about how God touched the lives of believers, how He sustained their lives, and **From Experience**, how they touched God. And in the third and last section, we are republishing articles **From the Past**, to remember the good teachings imparted to us from previous writers, and to whet your appetite so that you might go back to past issues and re-read them when you have a quiet moment or two.

For myself, I have my own copies underlined in several different hues and dog-eared from traveling with me wherever I go.

May the Lord continue to guide this ministry, and may He equip His writers with His power and His spirit.

*—the Editor*

# Introduction to

# LITERARY MINISTRY

## what is Literary Ministry?



### Serving Various Audiences and Needs

- General public, friends, family
- Skeptics
- Seekers of various religions
- Seekers from various Christian denominations
- New believers
- Believers of different age groups
- Workers and ministers

### effects of Literary Ministry

#### **The written message can be read anywhere anytime**

Anyone around the world can read about the faith, even in the privacy of their own homes, at any time of the day.

#### **The written message preaches without the preacher**

Writings can reach places where the gospel have not been heard, even before a preacher goes there to preach. Writings can continue to touch lives even after the persons who wrote them are no longer present.

### **The Bible is the best example of literary ministry**

God chose to preserve His revelation to the human race over generations in the written Word, which has been translated into hundreds of languages. Through the Bible, God has transformed the lives of countless men, women, and children over the ages. The Bible itself is a testimony to the power of preaching through writing.



## Goal of Literary Ministry

Fulfill the Lord's commission

COMMISSION

### PREACH TO ALL CREATION

*“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*  
(Mk 16:15)

Through articles, testimonies, and Bible study outlines, we proclaim the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ and the complete teachings of salvation.

### MAKE DISCIPLES

*“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)

Whether it is in the form of articles on daily Christian living, lesson-by-lesson guides on spiritual growth, Bible study references, or training materials on becoming a worker of Christ, literary ministry aims to help all believers to be faithful followers of the Lord.

### FEED HIS SHEEP

*Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.”* (Jn 21:16)

Through devotionals, exhortations, reflections on God's word, and creative pieces, literary ministry provides spiritual nourishment for the soul.

## Serving through Various Media

### PRINT PRESENTATION

Flyers, magazines, booklets, books, pocket-size references, etc.

*(this page and the opposite page showcase some of the literary ministry projects that fall under this category)*

### ONLINE PRESENTATION

Web sites, email, forums, etc.

*(look for the article on internet ministry in the next issue)*

### OTHER MEDIA

CDROM, handheld devices, etc.

### Did You Know

The first issue of Manna was actually printed in 1976, which puts us in the 29<sup>th</sup> year of publishing. But in keeping with the consistency of our archiving convention, we round it up to the 30<sup>th</sup> year.

# Examples of

## BASIC BELIEFS

### Outreach series

Flyers that address common objections that people raise about the Christian faith



### Testimonies series

Flyers that contain real life stories of how God's great love and power brought people to know Christ personally, as well as testimonies of people whose lives God has touched and changed



### Gospel series

A series of booklets, written in simple language, that provides a Bible-based explanation of the ten basic beliefs of the True Jesus Church



### Inquiry Series

Books that address commonly asked questions that inquirers have about the basic beliefs



### Doctrinal Series

Still in progress, books that provide a comprehensive and in-depth study of the basic beliefs of the True Jesus Church, comparing them with views of other faiths and denominations and pointing out the correct biblical interpretations



# PRINT PUBLICATIONS

## CHRISTIAN LIVING



### **Manna magazine**

A quarterly magazine that helps the reader make the connection between biblical truths and daily life; contains articles on practical living, Bible studies, doctrinal studies, and personal testimonies



### **Discipleship series**

Still in progress, a series of guides on being a disciple of Jesus Christ; covers a wide range of Christian living topics for various age groups and address common issues in our personal lives; and aims to make believers faithful and mature followers of Christ

## BIBLICAL REFERENCE



### **Bible study guides**

Guides that help believers study the Bible in greater depth; shows the user how to focus on individual passages, discover God's truths, and apply the teachings to life

## TRAINING MATERIALS



### **Training Guides and Outlines**

To be made available online, a full spectrum of training materials compiled and written by ministers and seminar instructors for the purpose of guiding workers in various areas of sacred work

## MINISTRY RESOURCES



### **Bible reading charts**

Motivates believers to read the Bible daily and helps keep track of their progress



### **Basic beliefs pocket reference**

A handy reference for personal evangelism, listing key points and verses supporting the basic beliefs of salvation



### **Prayer explanation card**

Given to first-time visitors to the church, a card that provides a simple explanation on how to pray



### **Visitors information card**

Helps local churches to collect information from first-time visitors to the church for the purpose of follow-up work



### **Pocket calendar**

Printed with the name and web site of the church, a great tool to tell others about the church

## The word went out

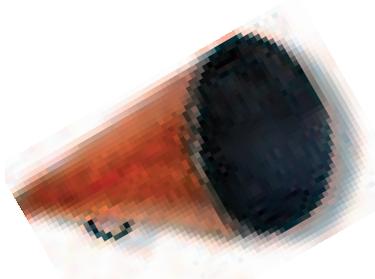
Examples of how people came to the Lord through literary ministry

In early 1926, Deacon John Voon of Singapore Church sent a copy of the Holy Spirit Times to Mr. Tsen En Fook of Jesselton, North Borneo. As Mr. Tsen was preoccupied with his business he did not have time to study it but instead he sent it to a friend in Sandakan, Lee Siak Lin, with a note "A True Church has arisen." After reading the Holy Spirit Times, Lee Siak Lin was deeply moved. Because of a fervent desire to seek the truth, he boarded a ship to Singapore and located the True Jesus Church there. After studying the truth for some time, he received water baptism on January 11, 1927. Three days later he received the Holy Spirit. Then, Elder Tan Chien Sing and Dn John Voon, together with a few others, travelled with him to Sandakan to preach the truth there. Thus, the first church in Sabah was established. Now, we have 76 churches and over 12,700 members in Sabah.

A young man in the Philippines was a student at a theological seminary. One day, he stumbled onto a box of booklets that was covered with dust and shoved away in a corner of the seminary office. He took out one of the booklets, titled *Words of Life* (a set of booklets published by the True Jesus Church), and began reading. After studying the doctrines taught in the booklets, he contacted the church in Singapore. He became one of the first converts in the Philippines.

A leader of a Christian group in Kenya visited London and met a brother from Ghana who happened to live in the neighborhood where this leader was staying. The brother introduced the gospel to him and gave him some church publications to read. Upon returning to Kenya, he contacted the International Assembly, which later sent ministers to preach the perfect gospel to the group he was with. Consequently, a large number of them received the message and joined the True Jesus Church. There are now over 400 True Jesus Church members in Kenya.

In 1981, after an unfruitful missionary effort in Nigeria, a few True Jesus Church preachers were heading back home and transiting in Liberia. While waiting for their flight in Liberia, they decided to pass out all of the flyers they had on hand at the airport. One of the passersby who took a flyer read it afterwards and wrote to the church to express interest in the gospel. This opened the way for subsequent missionary trips, thereby leading to the establishment of churches in this country. As of today, there are more than 300 believers in Liberia.



## Your Part in Literary Ministry

### Did You Know

It can take anywhere between 300 to 1,000 hours to complete one Bible Study guide, from research to printing?

### PRAYER

- Through your constant prayer, the Lord will make use of the written word to **move the hearts of readers**. We sow the seed and water the plant, but **it is God who makes it grow**.
- Pray that God may **motivate more workers** to take part in literary ministry.

### WRITING

- If you have the gift of writing, keep a journal and **write down** your inspirations and personal reflections. Take the ones that have potential, expand upon them, and email them to our editors at: **content@tjc.org**
- Write and share your **personal testimony** of God's grace and power and submit them to our editors. God may want to use your testimony to touch another person's heart. You may also **interview** someone who has received God's grace and help him or her put it in writing.
- **Transcribe sermons** and send us the transcripts. Ideally, they are accompanied by a corresponding outline of the sermon.
- Volunteer to **translate existing content** from publications or web content in another language.
- If you have background in **editing** content, we would love to hear from you!

Cont'd on page 17

## DIVISION OF ENGLISH LITERARY MINISTRY (DELM)

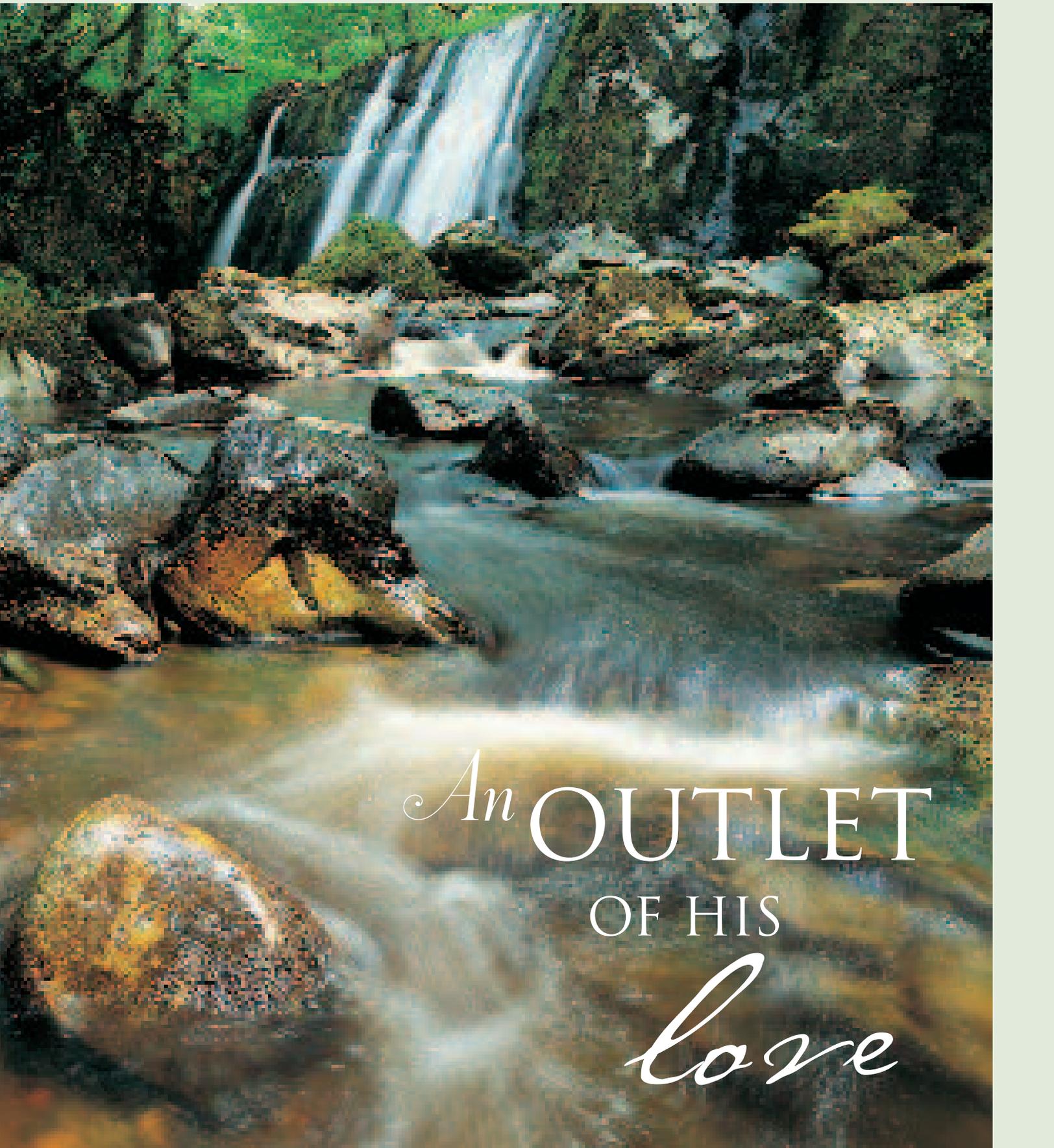
A division under the International Assembly, the Department of Literary Ministry was established to unite the efforts of workers around the world.

Major countries that use English as a primary language form this division. They all take part in the English literary ministry by means of contributing writings and financial resources.

These countries include Australia, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, the U.K., and the U.S.



*As we meditate on the importance of God's spiritual manna  
and the literary ministry, let's also resolve to  
become outlets of God's blessings and words.*



*An* **OUTLET**  
OF HIS  
*Love*

## THE MACEDONIAN SPIRIT

Apostle Paul once encouraged the Corinthian Church with the spirit of the Macedonian believers, who were deeply impoverished. And what was that Macedonian spirit? It was a spirit of giving—one that gives above and beyond one's ability (2 Cor 8:3).

This was the work of love offered up by the Macedonian believers, and we can only imagine how the needs of the saints in Jerusalem were so set within their hearts. After sharing the Macedonian spirit, apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers with these words:

*It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what [one] does not have. (2 Cor 8:10-12)*

Apostle Paul shared with the Corinthians the blessedness of being able to complete a work of love—not merely to intend a work of love but also to complete the doing of it. For, as he says, if there is first a readiness to do the work then there should also be the completion of that work.

Like the Corinthian believers, we are those who live under God's blessings and have received God's word. So we are those whose treasuries have been filled by the Lord. Yet the Lord has not only filled our treasury; He has given us the power to partake of this treasury and access it freely. This is the blessing God gives to each of us.

No matter how poor we are in our finances, no matter how inadequate we feel in our service, God gives each of us a treasure house of blessing. Through this treasury, we have free access to God's grace. But what will we do with it? Will we bury it or share it with others?

## THE TREASURY FROM GOD

As the beneficiaries of God's word, we may feel we have nothing to share of His word, and nothing to give of His love. Just as a writer might wonder why their creative juices have suddenly dammed up and stopped flowing, we might wonder why our spiritual accounts read "zero balance."

There are many times I've felt there's nothing left—nothing else good—with which to share with other brothers and sisters. But then the Lord will shower me with some piece of His love, or a brother or sister will share a good word with me, or God will enlighten me through some act of kindness shown by a stranger, and I will realize that the treasury is still full because God fills up the account. It is from this treasury we must continue to share God's good blessing.

### The Storehouses of God's Word

In the Bible, storehouses were used to hold the offerings of God's people for the use of God's house (Mal 3:10; Neh 10:38). These storehouses, or treasuries, found in the Bible referred not only to storehouses in a literal sense but also referred to storehouses in a more spiritual sense.

Thus, references to storehouses in the Bible might refer to an actual literal treasury, whether it be of God's temple, the king's house, or an individual's wealth (1 Kgs 15:18; Isa 39:2; Jer 48:7), or, on the spiritual level, to a source of divine blessing and wisdom (Deut 28:12; Prov 8:21).

Jesus Himself spoke of storehouses both literal and spiritual. He taught us:

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Mt 6:19-20)*

Though a rich man might have many storehouses around the world by which to impress other men, the Lord taught us there is a more important storehouse we must attend to—the storehouse of God. There, we lay up our treasures in heaven.

So, in Luke 12:13-21, Jesus shares a parable about a rich man whose cropland yielded so plentifully he did not know where to store all his newfound wealth. He decided to build larger storehouses for all his accumulated wealth and then take his ease.

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**BUT THEN THE LORD WILL SHOWER ME WITH SOME PIECE OF HIS LOVE... AND I WILL REALIZE THAT THE TREASURY IS STILL FULL BECAUSE GOD FILLS UP THE ACCOUNT.**

---

But God had this to say to the rich man: "...This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" Such is the folly of the person who lays up treasures only for himself but is not rich toward God.

Likewise, a person with no outlet for the grace they have received is a very sad person—a "black hole," really. They are like storehouses without doors, whose badly designed treasury seems to be used only for hoarding wealth.

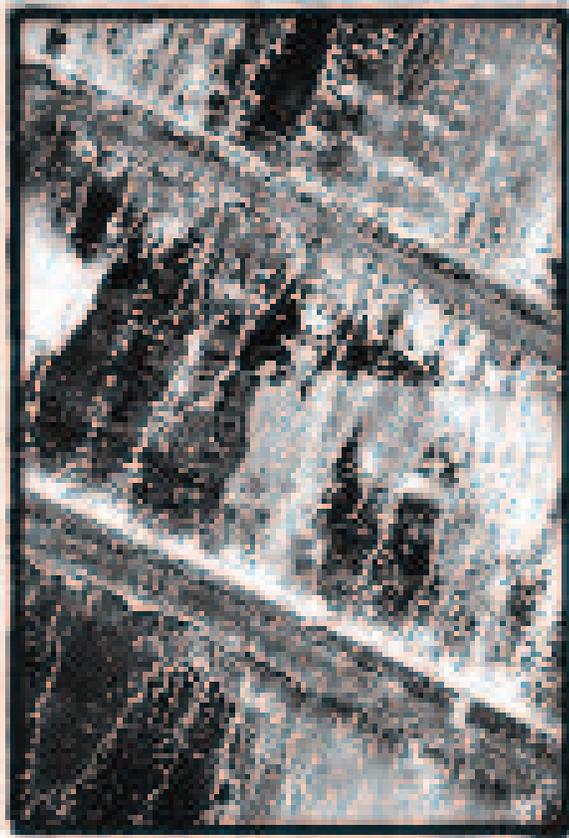
So how do we become an outlet of His love? I'd like to share a testimony about what the Lord recently taught me in answer to this question.

### THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One night as I was in a "stuck state," praying and pondering about how to continue writing about this topic, namely, being an outlet of God's love, the Holy Spirit began to move my hands and arms in a way I had never expected.

I had experienced this type of spiritual experience before—a long time ago—but this time it was different because I felt the Holy Spirit was both teaching and feeding me something miraculous. I won't pretend to fully understand what this "spiritual dance" or "movement" meant, but I'll share what little I feel I've been taught by the Spirit through this experience.

This teaching by the Spirit is a lesson in and of itself. It is a meditation on becoming an outlet of God's love. For before we can even come to the first lesson, we must first be willing to be taught. That is the "pre-lesson" to becoming an outlet of God's love.



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THEN I UNDERSTOOD. THE REASON I COULD NOT FIGURE OUT WHAT TO WRITE WAS BECAUSE I HAD NOT FULLY SURRENDERED THE WORK OVER TO GOD. GOD REQUIRES THIS TYPE OF SURRENDER TO DO HIS WORK—TO BECOME HIS OUTLET.

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### The *First* Lesson: Surrender to God

The first lesson the Holy Spirit taught me was the hardest lesson for me (and I suspect others as well) to accept. I believe many people may never be able to master this first lesson—not to be pessimistic, but to encourage us to strive harder.

I do believe the first lesson is a major "stumbling block" for many good Christians, so, practically speaking, it may be the hardest lesson of all. This is the lesson of surrender.

On that night the Spirit moved my arms in prayer, and the first movement the Spirit gave me brought my arms and hands up and behind my head. My first thought was, "This is extremely weird. I feel like I'm being arrested."

Then I understood. The reason I could not figure out what to write was because I had not fully surrendered the work over to God. God requires this type of surrender to do His work—to become His outlet.

### **The *Second* Lesson: To Be Led**

The second lesson the Holy Spirit taught me was a continuation of the first.

After I was “arrested” by the Spirit’s pull, the Spirit stretched out my hands as if I were being handcuffed. I pictured myself as a captive being led away. The lesson I gathered from this action was that, after we surrender ourselves to God’s work, we must also be led by God’s hand.

This is the Lord’s word to Peter:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. (Jn 21:18)*

So the second lesson to becoming an outlet of God’s love is this: surrendering is not enough. After we surrender to God, we must also be led by God, for to be led is the action behind surrender.

### **The *Third* Lesson: Eat God’s Words**

In the third lesson, the Holy Spirit reminded me to eat God’s words. After I was led like a captive, with my arms stretched out, the Spirit began to feed me something and both my hands began to put something into my mouth. I felt this was God’s mercy on someone very poor.

Immediately the picture of a weak and weary Elijah popped into my mind, and I began to see myself as poor Elijah. The Bible says, “Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, ‘Arise and eat’” (1 Kgs 19:5).

Honestly, I don’t know what the Holy Spirit was feeding me. Perhaps it was a lesson: I must learn to eat God’s words. This makes sense to me as I was meditating on how to become an outlet of God’s love.

The simple teaching is this: if you want to be an outlet of God’s words and God’s love, you must first possess His words and His love. That means you must eat God’s words and His love.

### **The *Fourth* Lesson: Swallow God’s Words**

The fourth lesson the Holy Spirit gave me followed the third.

From the movement of my hands, this time the Spirit was showing me I had to swallow what I had been given to eat. The Spirit led my hands to repeatedly push down whatever it was I had eaten down into my stomach.

The lesson I received was this: after we eat God’s words and God’s love we must swallow it. To me, that means we must take God’s words in completely.

We often take bits and pieces of God’s word but not the whole Word. We like this part of the Bible so we will keep it. We don’t like this other part so that part goes out the door.

“Here it speaks of God’s grace, I like to listen to that.”

“Oh, I hate all that stuff about judgment and sin, let’s not read too much about that.”

If we only take the parts we like to hear and rid ourselves of the parts we don’t, we have to go back to lesson number one: surrender.

### **The *Fifth* Lesson: Become an Outlet**

The fifth lesson the Spirit showed me was that, after we have eaten and swallowed God’s words and God’s love, we need to become outlets. This outflow of God’s words and God’s love comes from

within—it comes from that same place where we swallowed God’s words, and it flows from that same place we touched God’s love most deeply.

The Holy Spirit revealed this to me by moving my hands from where I had swallowed what I had eaten, took what I had eaten out of my mouth, and then let it flow out into the world to share with others. These are the basic lessons the Holy Spirit taught me about becoming an outlet of His love.

There were two further “action” lessons the Holy Spirit impressed upon me, which I will only share briefly. One dealt with plowing, planting, and farming. The other dealt with eating once again.

But perhaps this final time was not to eat God’s word but to eat the fruit of one’s labor. Isn’t this the greatest joy of becoming an outlet of God’s words and God’s love? Isn’t this the greatest joy in life—that we can see the final blessing of our toilings? Isn’t this the hope of the patient farmer?

---

JUST AS A THRIVING AND LOVING FAMILY FREELY SHARES WITH ONE ANOTHER ALL THE GOOD THINGS OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE OF ITS WEALTH, SO EACH MEMBER IN GOD’S FAMILY MUST DO LIKEWISE.

---

## SHARING THE TREASURY OF THE LORD

In 2 Cor 8:10-12, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to share of their material gifts from their earthly storehouses with the saints in Jerusalem.

Yet, Paul understood that this sharing of material gifts by the Gentile believers in Corinth possessed a much deeper significance for the Corinthians than the mere act of physically giving to their Jewish brethren. It also implicated other more significant issues of fellowship, unity, and love in Christ’s family.

Just as a thriving and loving family freely shares with one another all the good things out of the storehouse of its wealth, so each member in God’s family must do likewise.

An elderly minister once confessed that he was asked to retire because of his old age according to church regulations. Yet, although he was obliged to retire from his administrative duties in the church, he continued with his spiritual duties.

He continued to write and lecture at the church’s theological school, preach on the pulpit, and share God’s words with others. Where there was no regulation, he offered himself completely to the Lord. He shared that, when he decided to become a full-time minister for the Lord, he made a decision to lay down his life on God’s altar and to never take back this decision.

Thus, he said that, as long as he was still able to speak God’s words, he would do so till he could no longer speak. As long as his hand could still hold a pen, he would write down His words till his hand could no longer hold a pen.

He said that he would never take his life back for himself because he gave his life to the Lord. These words touched me deeply, for they taught me what it means to be an outlet.

When we share out of the treasury of the Lord, we come to realize that God has both filled and given us free access to the treasury. We ourselves, therefore, will suffer no lack.

Apostle Paul understood these things when he said in 2 Corinthians 8:15, “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.”

When we hoard the treasures God has blessed us with, we will gain nothing and experience nothing; yet, if we share out of the abundance of God’s blessings—speaking, writing, and sharing God’s word with others—God will supply our lack and we will experience God’s grace. This is the blessing of God’s manna. May we eat of it, swallow it, and become an outlet of His love. Amen.



# MY STORY AS A *Writer*

I'M THANKFUL OF GOD'S GRACE AND OVERJOYED THAT I WAS ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF MANNA. WHEN I LOOK BACK AT MY WORK FOR LITERARY MINISTRY, I CANNOT BUT MARVEL AT THE WAY THE LORD HAS TAUGHT ME THROUGH THE COURSE OF WRITING.

I started writing some short Christian prose and passages back in the year 1988; not exactly with the intention of getting them published in various English TJC publications, and this was before Manna unified them all in the mid-90s.

The idea was to express some of my reflections and teachings that I gathered from Bible reading and my encounters in service to God. Also, I wanted to ensure that I would remember these precious inspirations, both directly from God and through Bible study sessions, and develop them into more readable, organized, and structured messages to share in the community of faith.

It is still somewhat clear in my mind that whenever I felt like expressing myself, I would quickly scribble it down on a sheet of paper for a proper type-out later. In those days, a laptop was quite a rare commodity—a gadget that only the rich literate could afford, let alone for me to carry around to meet my spur-of-the-moment writing needs.

I habituated myself to the practice of translating thoughts into written words. I enjoyed doing it so much that, even after a game of Scrabble, I would not hesitate to pen my thoughts down. When time permitted, I would revise them. A few years later, by the grace of God, I managed to produce many unpolished articles, both short and long, some of which were adapted, revised, and used for the church literary ministry.

To be honest, and maybe suffering from some sort of forgetfulness, I can remember neither the topic nor the publication date of my first church article. Many times, however, when I recall how God has provided me with the opportunities to write for Him, there is always a sense of impossibility in view of my background but immense joy for where I am now in the Lord. My response to such grace is to continue to write for Him whenever and wherever possible.

Each time that a chance arises for me to share in writing, I humbly and happily accept the offer. I have been so eager to serve in the ministry of writing, and my zeal for it grows everyday. How God has shaped my writing has been deeply imprinted in my mind. It has been a long and difficult journey—one that started out with a sense of impossibility in view of my background—but a truly fulfilling and rewarding one.

Come to think of it, to be given the ability to write was well beyond my wildest ambitions and expectations. I have come to realize that a gift may not be readily given to us when we ask of the Lord. It requires much effort on our part, and it takes time for the gift to develop. The best way to fulfill our writing potential for God is to frequently get involved in writing itself. Constant practice instills confidence and creates momentum in our will to produce works through trial and error. It makes us long to learn more.

When Pr. M.S. Tsai was in the UK in the early 90's, he always helped conduct literary workshops to train up more writers in London Church. I was always one of the most faithful participants. I even took up a writing course by correspondence with a writing school, though I did not complete it. These courses actually helped me a lot; especially the technical aspects of writing. They resolved some of the problems that I faced, as they would to any new or experienced writer alike.

When trying to jot an idea down, for example, some of us may suffer writer's block, which, in fact, happens to all writers. But if we face it positively, it compels us to search more deeply and regularly into the Bible. If we persist, we become more and more acquainted and equipped with the word of God, with the understanding that learning is life-long and humility is always required. And before we know it, we would have accumulated enough writing to use at our disposal.

Below is an excerpt from my article, "Be conversant with the Bible," which I think might be useful for those who are in pursuit of God's word:



“[Being conversant with the Bible] is best achieved, as some may assume, by reading, searching, and preaching. We can take verses from any chapter to commit to our memory. Memorizing a list of verses may have a retention value but we may only acquire weak feeling for life’s application and impartation. Knowing the Bible should not be a mechanical process but should occur spontaneously with learning, meditating, and practicing the truth. Apart from searching, learning God’s words requires divine guidance for our comprehension. Not only is it for self-edification but also the enhancement of others’ spirituality. Meditating on the scriptures is the key not only to increasing the retentive capacity but also discovering the pattern of the sounded word. When we come upon an important verse... pause and ponder over it to find out how it is related to other passages. Most importantly, we need to know how it can be applied to our lives. Practicing the words should be the strict reason for being conversant with Scriptures. It is the practice of God’s words and not just academic proficiency that brings out the spiritual momentum and vitality in the doer. The more we do, the deeper our understanding, thereby becoming conversant with the Bible.”

*Writing* for God is a spiritual discipline. Not only does it help me understand more of His word, it also shapes my spirituality.



I can still remember the early years of my writing for the church. I found it hard to piece biblical ideas together. To make them flow and easily understandable, I adopted the approach of organizing them into thoughts and drafts and then revising them as the writing progressed. It was wonderful.

It was during that time that I had many quiet moments of meditation over God's word. It even became an intrinsic part, if not the whole, of my character. This was also the phase of my life where I grew to love and embrace God's word in totality.

Whatever teachings I learned in the past from workers of the church are now dearly mine. In particular, I thoroughly worked through practically every doctrine that our church preaches. I developed them into booklets, and I answered questions raised by other denominations in writing. It became very handy when talking about, preaching, and sharing the Bible. By repetitively going through the same mental process, I became more organized in my verbal presentation, such as talking to truth-seeking friends and giving sermons.

Through regular writing, I also generated a system, with God's direction, to uphold the precious truths that the Lord has given to the church. I learned how to defend the truth logically, though I did not and still do not perceive myself as one worthy or qualified to do so. And once it is put on paper, it will not be forgotten and is good for future reference, which can be improved upon and useful for the church and the many generations to come.

Writing for God is a spiritual discipline. Not only does it help me understand more of His word, it also shapes my spirituality as I learn to co-operate with the circle of fellow writers in the church.

For an article to be published, it has to pass through the editorial and review processes. Sometimes, the article may have to be revised. Other times, it may have to be shelved, to put it in the mildest possible way. To me, this is the time at which my humility and endurance are put to the test.

I learn to be less egotistic when rejection occurs and see how my writing can be improved upon with help from my brethren. The good thing about having been through such a situation is that in my service to the Lord, I become less critical of others and more open to diversified views, insofar as they are not against the Bible.

Serving God through writing is very meaningful, and anyone who has a willing heart is able to experience it as long as he or she tries. God values the heart to serve Him much more than the writing skill acquired.

I believe the youngsters of the church today are so much more equipped with the basics to embark on the ministry of writing, as long as humility is in the forefront and is the foundation of their work. Globally, many of them have a good command of the language, which, in this case, is English, and have been through numerous Bible seminars and training courses.

If you are one of them, do you still linger?

*Now is the time to serve God through writing.*

## Your Part in Literary Ministry (cont'd)

### FINANCE

Your financial contributions will help further the ministry in many ways.

#### Print and mailing costs

With increased funding, we would be able to forward our publications to a larger population around the world via more promotional channels. We would be able to provide more materials to seekers who express interest in learning the gospel.



#### Personnel

We are currently extremely short of writers and editors who have the gift and dedication to serve in this ministry. We do not have enough people who can write feature articles, Christian living resources, Bible study guides, doctrinal studies, training materials, etc.

Also, if we want to reach a diverse audience with an increasing range of media, it means creating more types of content such as e-newsletters, commentaries on current events, innovative content for people of various age groups, etc. We will also eventually need people who will be able to provide advice and counseling in writing by email or online forums. It is our hope and prayer that we will have full-time workers who can devote themselves to all these important areas of sacred work.

In order to support more workers in the long term, we need to build up a substantial amount of fund. This is where your financial contribution plays a crucial role in the ministry.

### Did You Know

It took over 40 hours, involving 3 writers, to complete one Outreach Series flyer from planning to printing?

Make your checks and money order payable to True Jesus Church and specify that the offering is for the purpose of Literary Ministry.

send to

**Attn: Department of Literary Ministry**

True Jesus Church  
314 S. Brookhurst St. #104  
Anaheim, CA 92804  
U.S.A



## Questions?

## Suggestions?

Send us an email anytime: [lm@tjc.org](mailto:lm@tjc.org)

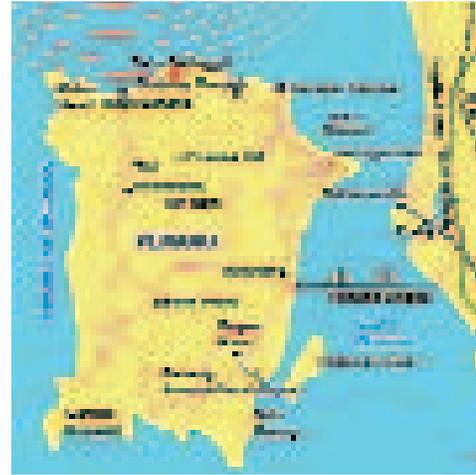


# PEACE IN A STORM

Sis Lew Lee Fen and her family were originally from the Alor Setar Church in the northern region of West Malaysia. Currently, her mother, elder brother, his wife, and their two daughters live in Penang, and worship at the Penang Bayan Baru Church. Sis Lee Fen and her husband live in Singapore and worship at the Adam Road Church.

“*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*”

The sudden Indian Ocean tsunami that hit South East Asia on December 26, 2004 caused over 150,000 deaths in more than nine countries. When the local inhabitants and foreign visitors headed out to enjoy the beaches that day, they would never have thought that, within seconds, they would also perish there. Life is fragile indeed. Every moment of our lives lie in His hand.



In Malaysia, the city of Penang received the brunt of this tsunami and the earthquake aftershocks, and it suffered the largest number of casualties, deaths, and missing persons. Even though it has been several months since the tragedy, I can still vividly remember how my family and I witnessed the astounding disaster at the Batu Feringgi beach in Penang that day. Thank God that He kept everyone in my family in His merciful embrace.

### AN INNOCENT DAY AT THE BEACH

As it was the year-end vacation, I happily went for a visit to Penang. An outing to the beach was planned for December 26 as my sister-in-law and her three sisters wanted to give the children a treat. I was also eagerly looking forward to it as I had not been to this beach in twelve years—ever since I left for Singapore in 1992.

Around nine o'clock in the morning on December 26, my older brother, who was still in bed, felt some earthquake tremors. He immediately went to the living room to tell my mother and my sister-in-law, but because they had been walking around the house doing chores they did not feel the light earthquake that had indeed struck the city. I was fast asleep, so I had no idea what was happening.

We set off at 11:30 a.m. for an afternoon picnic by the seashore. There were altogether eighteen of us—my brother with his wife and two children; my mother and I; and the three sisters of my sister-in-law with their husbands and children.

When we arrived at the beach, the children immediately went off to play while I strolled slowly with my aged mother. The sand was more moist than usual, which made it hard for us to walk. Mom could not stand for too long, so we went to one of the coffee stalls along the beach where we had tea and chatted. Not long after, my brother and one of his brothers-in-law also joined us.

Around noontime, I received a text message (SMS) from an old friend in Alor Setar telling me that they had experienced some tremors around 9 a.m. in the morning. She asked whether we had felt it in Penang. I was stunned because Alor Setar was only 100 km north of Penang, and this was the first time in my life that I had heard about an earthquake in that area. I immediately related this to my brother. Overhearing our conversation, the coffee shop owner confirmed that they, too, had felt some tremors that morning. We concluded that this was probably the result of a severe earthquake in Sumatra\*.

Despite all these, we sat there and enjoyed the delicious Penang Laksa. I was seated facing the ocean and the expansive horizon uplifted my spirits. No one could possibly have predicted that, within minutes, the calm and gaiety around and in front of us would be shattered.

*Around nine o'clock in the morning on December 26, my older brother, who was still in bed, felt some earthquake tremors.*

\*Sumatra is an Indonesian island located to the west of, and runs almost parallel to the peninsula of West Malaysia.

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*I was seated facing the ocean and the expansive horizon uplifted my spirits. No one could possibly have predicted that, within minutes, the calm and gaiety around and in front of us would be shattered.*

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### ADMIRING THE WAVES

Around one o'clock in the afternoon, I was the first in the family to notice there was a distinct change to the serene ocean. Suddenly, scores of white bubbly waves appeared on the horizon—clearly truncating the continuous expanse of blue that had been sky and ocean.

From afar, these elaborate rippling waves looked magnificent, forming over ten different series of patterns as they rolled shoreward. As the winds were calm the whole time, none of us expected these to be the precursors of a tsunami, so all of us took out our digital cameras to capture the unusual phenomenon before our eyes.

At that time, I overheard my sister-in-law telling her sisters and the children to come out of the water and to get changed in the public restrooms a little farther up the beach. However, the six of us—all the men folk, my mother, and I continued to stand along the shore to watch the magnificent waves.

The first waves looked ordinary and without much force, and a few beachgoers praised their loveliness. People continued to linger on the beach, and a group of five youngsters even sat on the sand awaiting the waves. Possibly, these were frequent visitors to the beach who weren't intimidated by the size of the waves. More onlookers gathered to watch.

After this first hit of waves, my family continued to stand around to wait for the next break. Even though my mother's cautious nature prompted her to remind us to be careful as we took photographs, she was also attracted by this scene.

As the second series of waves approached the shore, these appeared much stronger than before—churning not only seawater but mud. Sensing something was amiss, some people immediately went up to the grounds, but those five youngsters remained seated on the sand.

Suddenly, the white waves increased tremendously in amplitude and force; roaring like the sound of thunder and undulating with water and sludge toward us at the height of a two-storey building. We immediately ran for our lives.



## A TOTAL DISASTER

My mother and I stopped under a tree by the road. Worried about the safety of their wives and children, my brother and his brothers-in-law were at a loss about how to proceed. The whole event had taken only about three minutes, and we were worried that the women and children had not made it to the public bathrooms in time. With mixed emotions, my mother and I prayed beneath the tree—asking God for courage and peace.

After our prayer, I told my mother to wait there while I returned to the disaster site to help my brother. But she was in shock and worried about my safety. I insisted on going and promised her that I would take extra precautions. I am quite timid by nature, but thank God that He gave me some courage during this chaotic time.

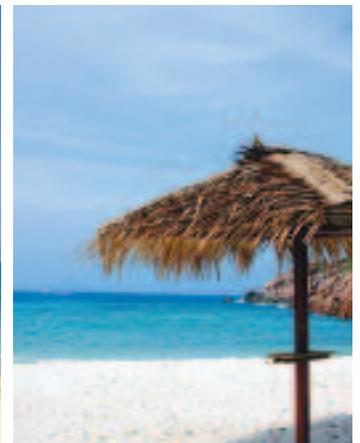
When I returned to the shore, there was utter disarray. The waves had totally deluged the beach, destroying beach front souvenir and coffee stalls along the shore. I saw my brother and the others desperately searching for their wives and children. My brother and one of his brothers-in-law had injured their legs from a fall and they were covered with mud.

A janitor told my brother that there was no one in the public bathrooms, but some bystanders suggested that we should still try to search the bathrooms. As we approached the bathrooms, we saw my sister-in-law and the children file out one-by-one from the back door of the bathroom complex. Our hearts were filled with great thanksgiving to God for His mercy, for while we were rushing about like anxious ants on a searing pot, He had already opened a way for us.

According to my sister-in-law, the moment they walked into the bathroom they heard the sound of huge waves. She wanted to go out with her second sister to see what was happening, but the gigantic waves they saw rolling towards them forced them to stay in the bathroom. A kind stranger told them not to be afraid and advised them to wait until the winds had ceased and the waves had receded. They could then leave the bathroom by the backdoor.

After everyone had been accounted for, we immediately went to the parking lot to retrieve the cars while I ran back to the tree to look for my mother. Although there was utter confusion everywhere, my entire family finally got into our cars. As we slowly inched our way back towards the town, we saw the once-charming Tanjung Bungah Beach completely flooded. In a matter of a few hours, everything had changed. Who would have expected beautiful waves to turn into beautiful killers? Houses, cars, trees, and flowers along the seashore were all swathed with sludge. Many sat weeping beside motionless bodies.

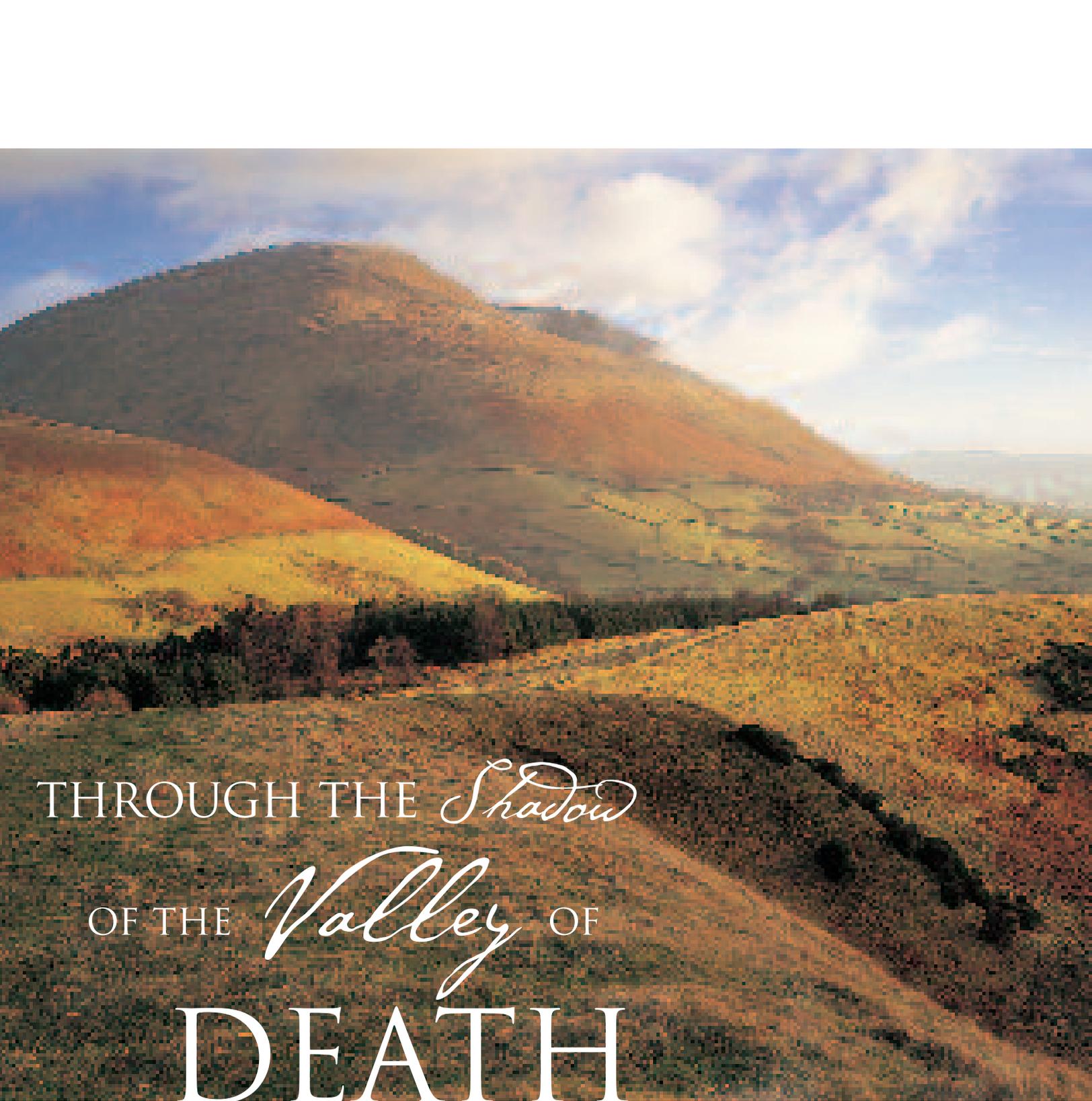
*Our hearts were filled with great thanksgiving to God for His mercy, for while we were rushing about like anxious ants on a searing pot, He had already opened a way for us.*



Danger was not over yet. Traffic had slowed to a crawl on the narrow road. On our left, there was no more beach—just the sea. On our right were the craggy mountains. If the waves had continued to press forward, we literally had nowhere to turn. Suddenly, the eight to ten kilometers of road ahead felt long and arduous to finish. We continued to pray silently; asking the Lord to guide our path.

Ahead, there were major detours because of roads that had been flooded. That afternoon, it took us one and a half hours to complete the normal twenty-minute drive home. The whole family was exhausted and famished, but our hearts were filled with thanksgiving. It was only when we watched the news that evening that we realized that the tsunami was an international disaster, and we were filled with thanksgiving anew at the remarkable protection of God.

*Cont'd on page 26*



THROUGH THE *Shadow*  
OF THE *Valley* OF  
DEATH

“*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 23:4



### JUST A FEW MORE YEARS, LORD!

On December 4, 1999, Brother Ming Kai Wu went to the hospital for an exam after having coughed for more than a month. The doctor told him, “Just go ahead and enjoy whatever it is that you like to eat or buy.” When Ming Kai heard this, he knew things were seriously wrong. It turned out that he had been diagnosed with more than twenty tumors in his body.

Completely unprepared for something of this magnitude, Ming Kai could not accept the diagnosis. But through the doctor’s persuasion, he reluctantly checked into the hospital to receive chemotherapy.

Ming Kai stayed in a comfortable and beautiful hospital room, but he hardly slept at night. He kept thinking, “How could this be? Will I leave this world just like this?” In great turmoil, he opened the Bible to read: “In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry entered His ears” (2 Sam 22:7).

He also knelt down and prayed for over an hour, but he still could not find peace. Thinking about God’s will, he said to God, “I dare not go against Your will, but please add numbers to my years the same way You did for King Hezekiah. It is not that I don’t want to enjoy rest, but my children are still young, and I would feel indebted to them if I went to heaven now. Would you please let me serve a few more years?”

Insomnia-ridden, Ming Kai continued to pray through the silent night.

### WHY IS IT SO PAINFUL?

Ming Kai simply could not accept the doctor’s “sentence.” He thought of seeking a second opinion at another hospital. His daughter, who studied at the School of Chinese Medicine, recommended a professor in her department who was a lung specialist. Ming Kai agreed to see this doctor on December 14 for an exam.

The doctor told him that the cancer cells had not only covered the entire right lung but had also spread to the left lung. Ming Kai had only two or three more months left to live. This doctor also urged him to be hospitalized.

On December 16, Ming Kai underwent an intrathoracic ultrasound examination, where a 120-cm-wide tube was inserted through his nose. At first, when the tube was inserted, Ming Kai could still pray, saying, “Help me, Lord!” But when the tube went through his trachea and pierced his right lung, fluid and blood that had clogged his air duct gushed out like water.

The doctors and nurses grabbed hold of him and told him to be brave and endure the pain. At this point, he was in such extreme pain that he couldn’t pray anymore. Every time the tube moved further inward, blood would shoot out. Regardless of how hard they tried, the nurses could not stop the blood from flowing.

After repeated pricks, cuts, and much vomiting, the twenty-minute exam finally passed. Ming Kai was almost completely paralyzed, lying in his own blood. It was about five o’clock by that time, and the doctors were getting ready to get off work, so they asked Ming Kai to return to his room on his own.

“It was December. The weather was very cold. With one hand holding my wounds and the other hand leaning against the wall, it took me one-and-a-half hours to walk the 500 meter distance back to my room,” said Ming Kai with a heavy voice.

After returning to his room, he vomited more blood and fluid and used up all the paper towels in his room. He could neither eat nor rest but could only moan in pain.

In extreme pain, Ming Kai prayed to God, “Lord, why is it so painful? Please take away the pain. Are you not a merciful Lord? Are you not the Shepherd?” At the same time, he felt ashamed at having lost sight of God in his suffering, when he had always encouraged others to have faith and trust in Him.

Later, Ming Kai’s daughter showed him the passage in Romans 8:26-27:

*Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Ming Kai couldn’t but examine himself: “In my weakness, my prayer is full of complaints and pleadings for health. I grieve the Holy Spirit, yet the Holy Spirit never complains about us but intercedes for us according to God’s will. Isn’t this God’s great love?”

That night, he continued to pray. About 30 minutes later, he heard the Holy Spirit speak kindly to him in his ears, “Ming Kai, Ming Kai, is it very painful? I know. But I tell you that the pain will be even greater.” Ming Kai thought, “He just comforted me, but why does He tell me that I will be in greater pain? Could I have heard it wrong?”

### “IS YOUR PAIN AS GREAT AS MINE?”

After praying for about another hour, the Holy Spirit said, “Ming Kai, I know it’s very painful. But you won’t die. Is your pain as great as Mine?” When he heard that he would not die, his heart was very much consoled.

Ming Kai remembered how many believers had visited him, prayed for him, and comforted him during his stay at the hospital for more than a month. But when the Lord was nailed on the cross and in great agony, who comforted him? Not only was He alone, but He also endured scorn and ridicule.

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*After praying for about another hour, the Holy Spirit said, “Ming Kai, I know it’s very painful. But you won’t die. Is your pain as great as Mine?”*

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*You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor... Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none. (Ps 69:19-21)*

This thought made Ming Kai realize that he had no right to grumble.

The test results, which came out on December 20, confirmed that cancer had spread through his lungs. The doctor told Ming Kai that he had to undergo surgery immediately. He told the doctor that he was very afraid of pain, but his primary care doctor told him, “I believe your God will help you.” When Ming Kai heard the words of the doctor, who was not a believer, he cheerfully replied, “Then I’ll leave it all in your hands.” The doctor said, “Not in my hands, but in God’s hands.”



The surgery on December 22 lasted five hours. A 16-cm incision was made on his side, and two thirds of his lungs, along with two ribs, were removed.

During the critical seventy-two-hour interval after the surgery, five tubes fed a range of medications into his body. When the excruciating pain would deprive him of sleep, Ming Kai could only pray. He spent those seventy-two hours in repeated pain, prayer, and sleep. Because the Lord watched over him, he was able to pass through that agonizing time.

The following day was Sabbath. Ming Kai prayed with his daughter: "We usually only make requests in our prayers, but at this hour, I am repenting of my weaknesses and offering a prayer of thanksgiving."

### I ASK FOR DEATH, LORD!

As he gradually recovered, Ming Kai was able to wheel himself to visit others in the hospital. One day, he felt a sudden, sharp pain in his chest. His blood pressure dropped to 30 mm, and his pulse became only 6 or 7 a minute. The nurse immediately asked the doctor to take an X-ray.

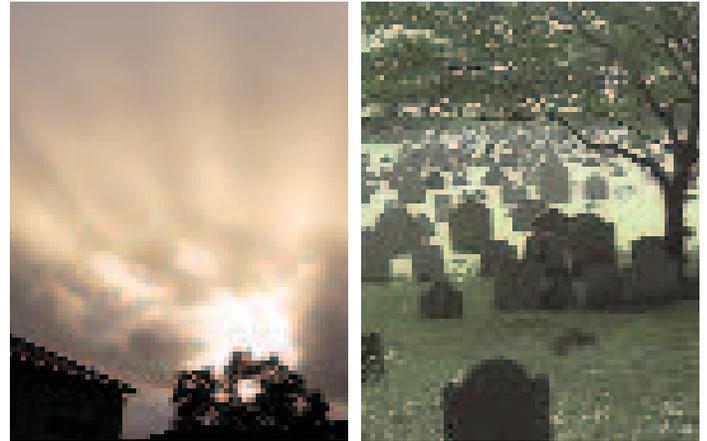
They found that much blood and fluid had accumulated in his lungs and heart, so he was rushed to the operating room. The second surgery turned out to be even more painful than the first because he was physically weaker, having gone through two surgeries in ten days.

After dinner on January 8, 2000, Ming Kai felt very uncomfortable. A few church members happened to be visiting him. They felt his body and said, "Brother Wu, why are you so cold?" He still had his senses, but he couldn't feel any body heat or blood pressure, and he was in great pain.

He took the hands of his mother, wife, children, and the many brothers and sister who were there and asked them all to pray for him. They prayed earnestly for him with love. But he could only pray to God saying, "It's so painful, Lord! I can't take it anymore! Please take me away!"

Then he asked himself, "Everyone is praying for me to live, but I'm praying to die. Can a Christian pray for death?" Utterly weak physically and mentally, as he was asking for death, he suddenly saw a dark, enormous figure. He knew in his heart that it was an evil presence.

He quickly cried out three times, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, away, Satan!" But the dark figure did not depart. Ming Kai held the hands of his family and gave his last words. He had forgotten God's grace—how God saw him through those critical seventy-two hours and kept him company. Now, he only knew to seek death.



"When a man is at the verge of death, he is very weak indeed," Ming Kai reminisces later.

### SATAN SOUGHT FOR ME

Later, he felt that his soul left his body. Ming Kai described in detail his struggle with Satan as he was asking for death:

*My soul smiled and nodded at me, then turned to leave. At that moment, Satan also turned around and faced me. He smiled at me and beckoned me. I was very weak but still maintained my alertness. I was still praying. My soul floated upward, but Satan would not leave. Then, I saw a nurse approaching from the left, but there was no sound of footsteps. It turned out to be an angel. My soul was at the ceiling, and I could see my family and the believers praying. I also saw the battle between the angel and Satan. It was a magnificent scene. Satan lost the fight and disappeared through the wall. The angel asked me to come down and told me, "The Lord Jesus is not letting you die yet." I was very glad, and my soul returned to my body.*

*"As long as my breath remains, I will love the Lord with all my heart, with all my strength, and with all my soul. I will grasp each opportunity to work for the Lord in order to repay His grace."*

## PEACE IN A STORM (cont'd)

Ming Kai earnestly shares these words with all believers: “The devil is ruthless. He seeks for those that he can devour. Even if you are heading to heaven, he won’t let you go. He will tempt you even in your last breath. So whenever the Lord’s sheep are leaving this world, it is especially important that we watch and pray for them.” He also feels deeply about the apostle’s admonishment in 1 Peter 5:8-10:

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

After the angel left, the nurse came into the room to check his blood pressure and pulse, which were 130 mm and 70 mm, respectively. His temperature had also gradually returned to normal.

“Just as God had promised, I did not die.”

**A**fter this journey through the shadow of the valley of death, marked by extreme pain and anguish, Ming Kai deeply felt that the Lord’s staff and rod comforted him and guided him, so that he did not fear evil.

“As long as my breath remains, I will love the Lord with all my heart, with all my strength, and with all my soul. I will grasp each opportunity to work for the Lord in order to repay His grace. May all the glory, honor, and praise be given to the heavenly Father. May He also grant His blessings and peace to His sheep.”

### SORROW AND GLADNESS

Looking back, I can still see and feel the moment when the thundering waves suddenly crashed towards us. This was when I was most taken aback. And then, in just a few short minutes, three of the five unprepared youngsters were swept away by the waves before my very eyes. I was greatly saddened by the fact that I could not help them when they most needed help. This really troubled and grieved me.

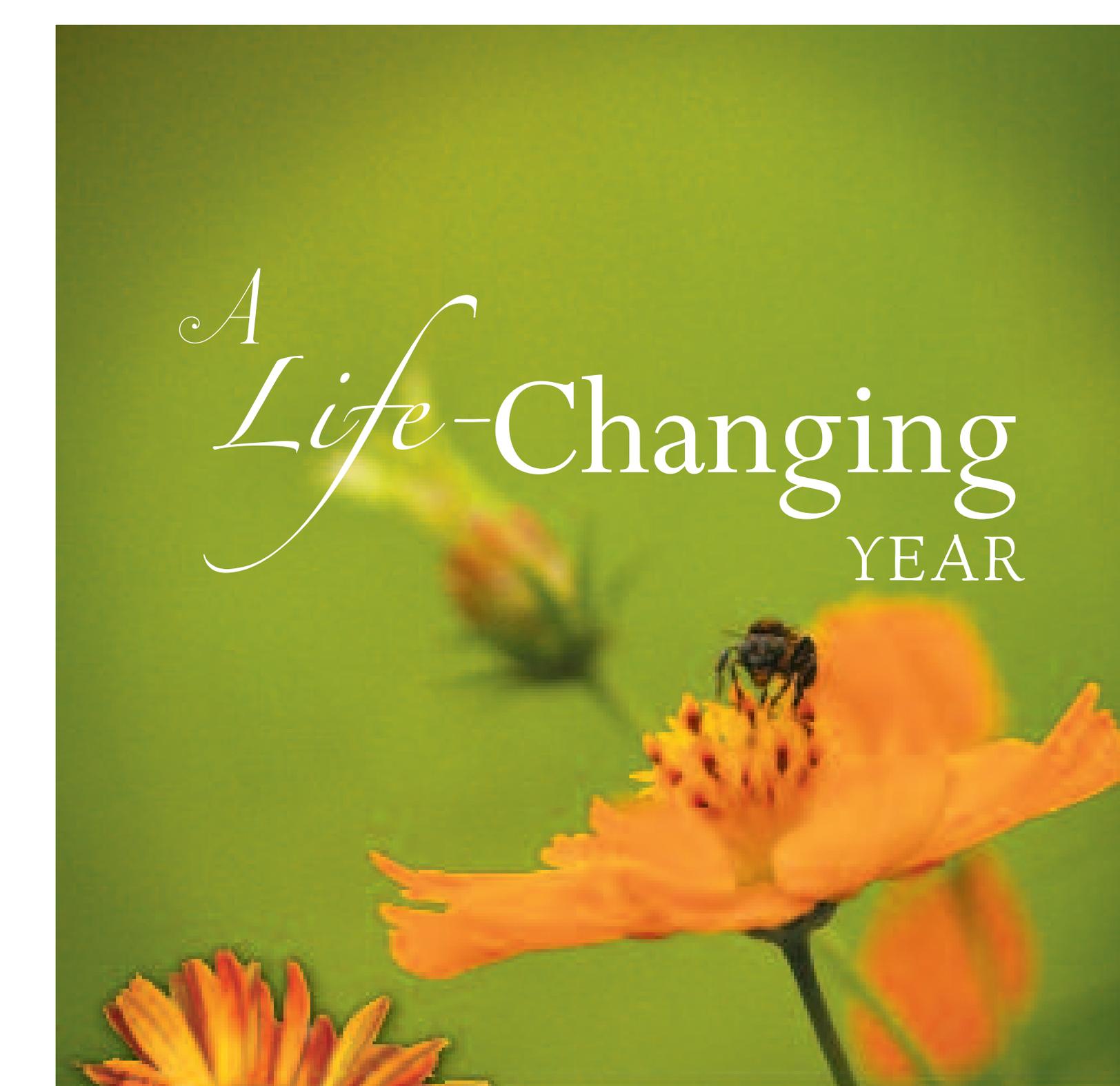
But this incident is a good reminder of the need for vigilance in our Christian lives. The waves were very attractive initially, which lulled many of us into putting caution aside. Then they revealed their true selves—gigantic walls of water like roaring lions—persistently looking for people to devour. Only those who were vigilant were saved.

Tragedy does not respect boundaries. In those tense and chaotic moments, no matter what one’s nationality or background, everyone was fair game. Everyone had to try to flee if they were to save their lives. Indeed, being able to survive and live from day to day is enormous grace from God.

My sister-in-law, in particular, deeply felt God’s protection. If she had not told the women and children to go back up to shore, one cannot imagine what would have happened to them. My relatives, who are not yet believers in the Lord, also felt the help of God and experienced this unexpected peace during that time.

From experiencing the earthquake aftershocks in the morning to our safe return home, I saw how God watched over and protected us every step along the way. I can only offer unending thanksgiving, with gladness and praise for His glory. Truly, He gave us peace in the storm. Amen!





*A*  
*Life*-Changing  
YEAR



“*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said,  
out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*”

*John 7:38*

## TERRIBLE NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR

In January 2004, while everybody was making New Year resolutions, I received some upsetting news from my gynecologist. He told me that the results of my last physical showed the presence of abnormal cells in my uterus, and the worst case scenario pointed to the possibility of uterine cancer.

I was devastated. I was sure he must've been wrong. What was the likelihood of a young and healthy twenty-eight-year-old getting uterine cancer? He went on to tell me about a patient two years younger than me who had also been diagnosed with this cancer and how her symptoms were very similar to mine.

My heart dropped at the news and I felt faint as the words sank in. My life then catapulted to a month-long visit to the hospital for tests and biopsies. That was February 2004: the darkest month of my life.

The tests were not painful. What really tortured me was the two-weeks of waiting for the results to come back. During that period of time, I began to take notice of all the things that I had taken for granted, and how I may not be able to enjoy them in the very near future—things like going shopping, swimming, eating, and even just breathing. When death comes, it takes everything away. How delicate life seemed to me.

I also started to have anxiety attacks about facing death. There were many nights when I would think of the love of my family and would shed many tears. I wasn't ready to leave them, and it made things much worse because they were so far away in a different country and I could not tell them the things I was going through.

### Looking to a Higher Being for Help

One night, while I was really depressed and unable to concentrate on anything, a thought came to me: *Why don't you pray? If you, an ordinary human being, cannot help yourself, maybe God—the Supreme Being—can help you.*

I didn't know the correct way to pray, as I came from a Buddhist background. So I decided to pray the way I saw other people pray on television. Facing the window, I knelt by the bedside, closed my eyes, and said to God, "God, if You really exist, if You are really in heaven looking down on us, please listen to me. I don't know what to do with my life, and I need your help!"

Amazingly, after that prayer, my heart felt much calmer and my shoulder was much lighter. I started to think about looking for a church. Right around the same time, a coworker knew that I was going through some troubles. She asked me if I wanted to come to church with her. When I heard her invitation, my heart felt very joyful.

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*One night, while I was really depressed and unable to concentrate on anything, a thought came to me. Why don't you pray? If you, an ordinary human being, cannot help yourself, maybe God—the Supreme Being—can help you.*

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During my first visit, I noticed the sign outside the chapel: True Jesus Church. Although my colleague had already told me that they prayed in tongue, I was still surprised by the volume and the sound. Prayer, in my mind, and as I had learned again from television, was in silence or in understandable words. So, while they prayed, I couldn't help but open my eyes to observe.

The members looked very much into their prayer, and I wondered why I could not concentrate to pray like they did. Despite all this, I was very attracted by the sermon, and I enjoyed being surrounded by the church members. I had this inexpressible feeling of peace and comfort just sitting in the chapel, which was very good for my weary heart, so I decided to visit again to find out more.

Not long after I began to attend church services, I started to have a series of dreams that I don't think I will ever forget for the rest of my life.

## A SERIES OF DREAMS

### Experiencing Hell

The first dream took place in a high-rise apartment building, where I was a resident on a thirty-plus floor. While I was sleeping, a force sucked my soul out of my body and threw me through the window, and I rapidly fell towards the ground. I went through the ground and fell towards hell. It was a horrible experience, and I was very scared.

I continued to free fall, and I was terrified at the thought that I was going to die. At that moment, I realized that I could ask God for help, so I began to pray to Him while trembling. I prayed very earnestly and lost sight of my surroundings, at which point the dream ended.

When I got up in the morning, the memory was so fresh in my mind that I could still remember many details of that dream—down to what the window looked like. The strange thing was that I could not remember anything that I had seen in hell, and I attribute this as a blessing from God. This inexplicable dream made me think about what message God had wanted to send me, and I became more attentive in seeking the truth.

During the first few times I went to Sabbath, I especially enjoyed the lunch hour, where I could sit around and fellowship with others. Speaking to them helped me realize the importance of the Holy Spirit, and I began to take this matter more seriously.

I decided to pray to the Lord to cleanse me. I did not dare to ask for the Holy Spirit because I thought I was unworthy. In that prayer, I appealed to the Lord to remove any evil or wickedness from my heart. Then I thought, “Who am I to ask God for help?”

Past memories began to play in my mind. I remembered how I used to live and how I used to despise His name. I felt so ashamed and guilty before Him that I began to cry in deep sorrow. I wasn't sure how long I prayed, but after that prayer I felt like my body was falling apart. I went straight to sleep after that since I still had to work the next morning. That night, a second dream came to me.

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### Experiencing the Holy Spirit

I dreamt that I was sleeping again, but this time, I was sleeping in my own room and on the same bed that I was lying on. I dreamt that I awoke from my sleep and started to speak in tongue, and there was a stir of echoes hovering over the ceiling of my room saying, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!”

As the echoes grew louder, I started to speak in tongue. Although I did not see anyone in my room, I did not feel alone, either. My body couldn't move, but I didn't feel discomfort. My only concern was whether the loud echoes would wake up my roommates.

I examined my tongue because I had never felt my tongue move this way before. It was like a gentle electrical charge on the tip, and it was rolling loud and fast together with the echo. When the voice filled the full capacity of the room, a crystal-clear-like ball started to form in my stomach. It slowly flowed out from my stomach into my throat and out of my mouth. And the second dream ended there.

The next day, I told the colleague who brought me to church that I had dreamt of receiving the Holy Spirit. She was so happy and encouraged me to pray more diligently, as this might be a sign that I will receive the Holy Spirit soon. I also got word from the doctor that the tests results had come back positive, which ruled out cancer, thank God!

## A Disturbing Time

After this, I had two other disturbing dreams that left me feeling very disoriented and shaken up. It seemed as if Satan would not leave me alone because many things in that period of time reminded me of how sinful and wicked I was; how undeserving to come before the Lord. I kept these feelings to myself and did not tell anyone. Nobody knew, but our merciful Lord saw my despair. He gave me the strength to enter His house and to be close to him. And He prepared a sermon for me to hear.



## SEPARATING FROM EVIL

During one afternoon service at church, the speaker talked about how Satan can easily attack us in the dark and when we are weak. The devil can easily lead us astray. The speaker also said that when we confess to one another, others can pray for us. It just dawned on me that I needed to share my burdens with others. Strangely, I had this faith in my heart telling me not to be ashamed but to trust that brothers and sisters would pray for me.

After the service, I grabbed two sisters whom I often spent time with and I told them some of the troubles I was having. I was so relieved. These two loving sisters even visited me one Sunday with a brother who is a theological student. We realized perhaps Satan was trying to disturb me while I was drawing closer to the Lord.

They suggested that I throw away any ungodly objects or idols in the name of the Lord Jesus, so that I might not be bothered by Satan again. Because I vividly experienced speaking in tongue in my dream, they encouraged me to pray harder for the Holy Spirit. So, I went home and threw away all the idolatrous objects that I had and began to pray fervently for the Holy Spirit. But I still had no evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit.

I kept thinking there was perhaps something that I had forgotten to throw away, so I kept this matter in prayer and asked God to guide me. Then, I remembered the bracelet on my left hand, which I had worn everyday for the past seven years. The bracelet

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*When I prayed and said Hallelujah, my tongue started to roll, and the experience was exactly the same as it had been in my dream.*

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was made out of coconut shell and had been given to me by my best friend. This kind of bracelet is very popular in South East Asia, and it's said to have supernatural powers that protect its owners from evil spirits.

Apart from that, this bracelet was a special souvenir of a sweet friendship from my childhood, so my heart was reluctant to throw it away. I held the bracelet in my hand and asked God one more time whether it was the bracelet that was the obstacle, and my heart said yes. I was also comforted by this passage from the Bible:

*For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you. (Deut 23:14)*

The next day, a Thursday morning, I threw the bracelet in the trash in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following Sabbath, a sister came and asked if I was still bothered by weird dreams, and she told me that they had been praying for me. I was very touched by their love. In the thanksgiving prayer before the afternoon sermon, I thought about their prayers and had this grateful feeling of love flowing through my heart. When I prayed and said Hallelujah, my tongue started to roll, and the experience was exactly the same as it had been in my dream.

**Moved By Jesus' Love**

When brothers and sisters found out that I had received the Holy Spirit, they asked me when I would decide to get baptized. At the time, baptism had yet to become an important priority to me, so I decided to put off this decision until later.

One Sunday morning, while I was waiting for a friend to go swimming, I had some extra time and was wondering what to do. When I turned my eyes, I saw my Bible on the desk in front of me, so I decided to make use of my free time to read it. Before I began reading, I prayed in silence and asked God to show me what He wanted me to read. With my eyes closed, I opened the Bible and it fell on the first epistle of John.

This was the first time I would read this letter, and I had no idea what it was all about. By the time I had finished reading the first chapter, which contained only ten verses, tears covered my face. Every word that I read reminded me of His undying love.

As I kept reading, many memories flooded into my mind. Memories of how my life changed after I came to know Him, how I no longer had any desire to attend late night parties, no more irresistible craze to shop frivolously, no more desire to smoke, and many other bad habits. I no longer needed those worldly things to fill the emptiness in my heart because I had received God's divine love.

I came to realize just how perfect is His love is. He did not only show me love but taught me how to love Him by teaching me to obey His commandments. As I read 1 John 5:3-4, I asked myself if I was born of Him, and as I continued to verse 8, the Bible told me that only having the Holy Spirit is incomplete, for "the Spirit, the water, and the blood... agree as one."

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*I came to realize just how perfect is His love is. He did not only show me love but taught me how to love Him by teaching me to obey His commandments.*

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My sins had to be washed away by the water and the blood. Then, I could belong to Him as His child. God loved me so much, I also wanted to be His for always. I decided to get baptized as soon as there was a chance. On August 22, 2004, I was baptized in Baldwin Park Church. Praise and thank God.

After coming into God's light, I thank the heavenly Father for giving me so many loving brothers and sisters. I thank Him for letting me understand the divine power of prayer. And He promised not only to hear our prayers but also to give us whatever we ask for in His holy name—the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May all glory and grateful praise be unto our heavenly Father! Amen.





# THE DIMENSIONS OF LOVE

“How much do you love me?” the murmuring Christian asked Jesus stretched out His hands and said, “This much.” And then He died.

Love is the virtue many desire and expect of others while believing that they themselves have already given in great measure. It is the core of music and poetry, and in this world where the pop icon earns more than the ordinary head of state, it has become the fashionable morality.

Singers sing of love and the world echoes in chorus. They mouth cute homilies on children being our future while being pregnant out of wedlock. And then they slip in the notion that the greatest love of all is to love oneself. Meanwhile, another sings to all the girls he had loved before, who had traveled in and out his door. It does not surprise anyone that this balladeer has been called The Great Lover.

To the most feral, love means sex. To many others, love means attraction, friendship, compatibility and family. For dreamers, love is fireworks, laughter, tears, and that ultimate display of sacrifice. Their paragons range from Valentino to Mother Theresa to Oskar Schindler.

In colonial times, honor was the virtue in trend. During other eras of our world's troubled history, enjoyment, knowledge, and achievement have taken their turn at the head of the list. I suppose, as Christians, we should be glad that love has taken its rightful place in the thoughts and imagination of people today.

And yet, no one can really feel comfortable looking at the world today. Or see what the Bible says: Because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold<sup>1</sup>.

*But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress, for men will be lovers of self, lovers of money... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God<sup>2</sup>.*

Love is the greatest abiding virtue<sup>3</sup> but the perversion of true love has become the greatest deception to humankind. It has literally spawned millions of illegitimate babies, released thousands of savage criminals with but a light reprieve, sustained the immoral and extravagant lifestyles of music and movie stars, attacked justice and discipline, and compromised the doctrines of the Bible.

Today, more than at any other time, we need to know what true love is.

*... that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend... what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God<sup>4</sup>.*

We want to speak of the dimensions of love so that we can measure against them what purports to be love.

## BREADTH

Too often, people speak of love but mean it in a very narrow and selfish way. The dejected or perhaps, rejected lover finds that he cannot love anyone else, not even himself. And finding life meaningless as a result, he kills himself. Such is the stuff of romance a la Romeo and Juliet. The suicide victim cannot understand the anguish he has caused to his family and friends. Children may be orphaned as a result of their parents' action.

Jesus lived and died for all humanity<sup>5</sup>. That surely is the greatest breadth we can imagine that love can take. He died for both sexes, all nationalities, all races, and all people of all time.

How broad is your love? Does it only encompass one, yourself? Here's a simple test. When you say, "The church has no love!" do you mean no one cares about you? Because if you had loved others in the first place and not just expect others to love you first, the church could never be without love—it has yours!

The ever-broadening circle of love begins with ourselves, then our family, our friends, going on to the brethren in church, then those who are not saved, and climaxing with our enemies; and all the while our love for God is increasing and becoming our motivation<sup>6</sup>.

Are we so easily fooled by a pop star giving of his abundance to the children of the world while all the time, the TV cameras are rolling and the media hordes pressing closer for a better picture and quote? But still, that is something compared to the majority of superstars and religious leaders who speak of love to their poor worshippers while they themselves live in the lap of luxury. Check ourselves to see if our acts of charity and offerings are merely to salve our conscience or for publicity. A truly loving person finds it hard to spend lavishly on himself while others are suffering.

There is another area of concern that bears looking into. In showing hospitality to visitors from other countries, every local church needs to analyze whether a disproportionate amount of effort has been channelled to tourist groups while students and foreign workers who stay for longer periods are neglected. Priorities and scope of loving others must go hand in hand.

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**WE WANT TO SPEAK OF THE DIMENSIONS OF LOVE SO THAT WE CAN MEASURE AGAINST THEM WHAT PURPORTS TO BE LOVE.**

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## LENGTH

Time heals all things. Equally, time can destroy all things. Many perfect love-matches have disintegrated with the passing of years. Similarly, many Christians have noticed that their initial burst of ardor for the Lord have somehow faded away but how or when it went, they cannot for their life figure out<sup>8</sup>. The answer is simple—time has taken its toll.

God said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”<sup>9</sup> This is no empty boast. Consider this. After Adam and Eve sinned, God made coats of animal skin for them, providing for their protection from the elements and symbolically providing for the spiritual salvation of future humankind through the sacrifice of Jesus. Then He maintained a chosen group to be His light of truth for the world throughout the generations, beginning with Seth, Noah, Abraham, the Israelites and finally the Christian church. He sent prophets to tell humankind His will. He sent writers to pen His word for our instruction. He sent Himself to die for our sins. All this, and for at least 6000 years, in spite of the sin and rebelliousness of humanity, in spite of rejection and unfaithfulness, in spite of personal suffering, humiliation and risk.

*A love true  
Is like pure gold  
It won't wear out  
Because it's old.*

Today's celebrities often have pre-nuptial contracts with their intended spouses for fear that they may lose a substantial amount of their fortunes if (when?) they divorce in the future. The irony of such contracts is that the participants proclaim true love for each other. The message seems to be: true love in the world is, for the moment, ever-lusting but not everlasting.

Divorce and adultery will never be Christian options if, individually, we strive to keep our marital vow of true love. There will be quarrels between a couple. Yet, if we realize that when we say “I love you”, we mean it for life, we will work on our marriage.

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**POSSIBLY, THE MOST VISIBLE ASPECT OF LOVE WOULD BE THE GREAT DEEDS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH IT.**

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We will not justify straying eyes or companionship of the opposite sex in times of loneliness or of being misunderstood. We will not say that our love has died a natural death and feel no guilt about it. True love stands the test of time. It cannot die while the couple is still alive<sup>10</sup>.

In church, let us also ensure that our display of love is lasting to be genuine. Let not love be showered only to someone who is new. Granted that such need more love, there still cannot be a sudden total neglect after a person is baptized, for instance.

In like fashion, the church should not proceed with a project if she knows that she cannot or if she has no intention of sustaining it. Of that kind of image-building and report-enhancing programmes, the Lord of love has no need<sup>11</sup>.

## HEIGHT

Possibly, the most visible aspect of love would be the great deeds that are associated with it. The earnest young man will dare to climb the highest mount, swim the deepest ocean, and fight the fiercest beast for the hand of his beloved. A mother will brave the flames to rescue her child and a patriot will not betray secrets even under torture for the sake of his country.

Monuments whether attesting to great deeds, heroes or wealth are often high structures to amaze the eye and capture the heart. The power of true love is such that it will raise its own monument. Though the great flood covered the whole earth and left no mountain visible, the Song of Songs says: Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it<sup>12</sup>.

It was a man-sized cross on a small hill in a small country. But the wrenching drama of the Man from Galilee was the greatest act of love the world will ever know.

Who has believed what we have heard?  
 And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?...  
 He was despised and rejected by men;  
 a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
 and as one from whom men hide their faces  
 He was despised and we esteemed Him not.  
 Surely He has borne our griefs  
 and carried our sorrows;  
 yet we esteemed Him stricken,  
 smitten by God and afflicted.  
 But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
 He was bruised for our iniquities;  
 upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole,  
 and with His stripes we are healed.  
 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
 we have turned everyone to his own way;  
 and the Lord has laid on Him  
 the iniquity of us all.  
 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
 yet He opened not His mouth;  
 like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
 and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,  
 so He opened not His mouth.  
 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;  
 and as for His generation, who considered  
 that He was cut off out of the land of the living,  
 stricken for the transgression of my people?  
 And they made His grave with the wicked  
 and with a rich man in His death,  
 although He had done no violence,  
 and there was no deceit in His mouth.  
 Yet it was the will of God to bruise Him;  
 He has put Him to grief;  
 when He made Himself an offering for sin,  
 ... because He poured out his soul to death,  
 ... He bore the sin of many,  
 and made intercession for the transgressors<sup>13</sup>.

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IS THERE ANY GREAT ACT OF LOVE THAT YOU CAN LAY CLAIM TO? CAN GOD SEE YOUR LOVE? IN GOD'S EYES, IS OUR MONUMENT OF LOVE AN EIFFEL TOWER OR A MINIATURE REPRESENTATION OF OUR OWN HOMES?

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Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends<sup>14</sup>. —Jesus Christ

Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all. —Whitney Houston

The world has strange messages for the unsuspecting and the wayward. The great monuments of love such as filial piety, patriotism, religious sacrifice, love for God and love for our neighbor have been brushed aside by the banner of individualism and freedom, behind which hides simple selfish love.

Go to the rescue of a man being attacked in a restaurant? Oh, no! I've got a family to look after. Who's going to feed them if I should get hurt?

Do more work in church? Oh, no! I've got a family to look after. I've got to earn as much as I can to make their lives as comfortable as possible.

Is there any great act of love that you can lay claim to? Can God see your love? In God's eyes, is our monument of love an Eiffel Tower or a miniature representation of our own homes? Is there any great act of love that your local church can lay claim to?

## DEPTH

A tall building needs a firm foundation, the deeper the better. Some great deeds of love, when carefully scrutinized, have been uncovered as fakes or to have come from a quite different persuasion. Soldiers may have died for their countries simply because they enjoy the exhilaration of mortal combat. A philanthropist may have donated a largesse to ensure the memory of his name, etched in concrete on some building in some university.

An iceberg stands one-tenth of its mass out of the water. That is to say, what you don't see under the frigid waters is nine times the hulk visible above the water. True love is deep and in relation to its deeds, is always more than any single one of them. It has great potential for more great deeds and it has also accomplished many other unseen works. True love does not boast of itself<sup>15</sup> and so very often what you see is not everything that it has done or that it is capable of.

*a* little girl came up to her Mummy one day and handed her a list.

"What's that, honey?" Mummy asked.

"It's the money you owe me," the little girl replied.

Mummy took the list and her heart ached as she read:

For clearing up the toys —20 cents.

For washing the dishes —\$1.

For putting baby brother to sleep —50 cents.

Altogether —\$1.70

Mummy put aside her apron and started to write a list of her own.

"May I see what you have written, Mummy?" the little girl asked.

She took the note from her and read:

For carrying you nine months in my tummy —Free.

For keeping awake at nights to feed you and when you were ill —Free.

For wiping your nose when it ran —Free.

For hugging and comforting you when you were sad and in tears —

Free.

The little girl's eyes filled with tears and quietly she took her list from her Mummy.

She scribbled on it and returned the note.

Over the list was written —PAID IN FULL.



The depth of our love should be plumbed so that we can better understand our present situation and then, humbly and prayerfully, improve on it. Similarly, the breadth, length and height of our love need to be measured, for a more complete appraisal of our condition.

In the same way, love in the True Jesus Church ought to be measured. We should not solely compare our love with certain aspects of warmth and care in other churches and then proceed to bash ourselves for our lack of love. In many places such remonstrations have done nothing to improve the church but instead have demoralized members and led to attrition and decline.

Our church has done admirably in some dimensions of love. We have conscientiously preached the gospel to all, excluding none based on race, nationality, occupation, health or social status.

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**SIMILARLY, THE BREADTH, LENGTH, AND HEIGHT OF OUR LOVE NEED TO BE MEASURED, FOR A MORE COMPLETE APPRAISAL OF OUR CONDITION.**

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We have already said that the sacrifice of the Lord on the cross was the highest act of love of all time. Yet, the immense depth of that love continues to astound and move anyone who has searched and whom the Spirit has moved to understand. What Jesus gave up for us<sup>6</sup>, what daily sufferings He bore, the abject passion when the Father forsook Him on the cross<sup>7</sup>, death itself<sup>8</sup>, all these were not as visible as the physical and verbal abuse He suffered for us on the cross. But the love that carried Him through all that was deep and strong indeed.

How deep is your love? Love makes the most shallow existence meaningful but if that love was shallow also, how bleak such lives must be!

One test of depth is constant thought for the beloved<sup>9</sup>. People who are deeply in love always think of each other, cherish precious memories, and plan pleasant surprises for each other. How much do we think about God or about the church? It is difficult to say that we love the brethren if we hardly ever hold them in our thoughts or prayers. We cannot say that we love our parents if we often ignore their feelings and claim that we alone should decide our course of action.

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**THE LORD HAS DEMONSTRATED THE EXTREMES OF LOVE AND THOUGH WE CAN NEVER EQUAL HIM, WE SHOULD STEADILY STRIVE TO EXTEND THE LIMITS OF THE DIMENSIONS OF OUR LOVE.**

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Believers in the Taiwanese hill tribes offer out of their poverty to build beautiful church buildings for the Lord while their own homes remain modest shelters<sup>20</sup>. Members in the United Kingdom and continental Europe are famed for their warm hospitality and concern for visitors and backpacking tourists<sup>21</sup>. In Singapore, members frequently donate blood at hospitals for our sick as well as for nonbelievers<sup>22</sup>. What about the steadfast love of the believers in the Philippines who hold on to the truth in spite of their poverty? Or the sacrifice of the intellectuals from the United States who gave up well-paying jobs in industry and universities to become full-time workers? Indeed in every land where the True Jesus Church is, there are monumental examples of the heights that true Christian love has achieved.

And what of our depth? Dare we question those who have died for the Lord in the religious persecution of Communist China? Or the integrity of our preachers who have given all and compared to other churches, work for a pittance?

It is wrong to boast of ourselves but we are not doing so here. If anything, we boast of the grace that God has given us<sup>23</sup>. We list our achievements out of God's love so that those who denigrate the church of God may be put to shame and be exposed for their own selfish versions of love and harm to the church. For he who criticizes and lays burdens on others without lifting a finger to help is the real Pharisee of today<sup>24</sup>.

We also list our achievements so that we can measure them against the dimensions of love discussed above. We should not blindly follow any other model of love that the world is so ready to provide. To do so would be to build a skewed version of the love that God intends for us.

In addition to our achievements is the acknowledgment that we still have far to go to reach the standard required by God. Still, the direction we must take is that of building on the correct dimensions of love. The Lord has demonstrated the extremes of love and though we can never equal Him, we should steadily strive to extend the limits of the dimensions of our love.

With this true model of love, we shall escape the deception of this world and live to glorify God and benefit humanity.

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<sup>1</sup>Mt 24:12; <sup>2</sup>Tim 3:1-4; <sup>3</sup>1 Cor 13:13; <sup>4</sup>Eph 3:17-19; <sup>5</sup>2 Cor 5:14;

<sup>6</sup>1 Tim 5:8, Gal 6:10, 1 Jn 4:20-21, Mt 5:43-48; <sup>7</sup>Mk 12:41-44;

<sup>8</sup>Rev 2:4; <sup>9</sup>Jer 31:3; <sup>10</sup>Mt 19:3-9, 1 Cor 7:39; <sup>11</sup>Mt 6:1; <sup>12</sup>Song 8:7;

<sup>13</sup>Isa 53:1, 3-10, 12; <sup>14</sup>Jn 15:13; <sup>15</sup>1 Cor 13:4; <sup>16</sup>Phil 2:5-8; <sup>17</sup>Mt 27:46;

<sup>18</sup>Heb 2:9, 14-15; <sup>19</sup>2 Cor 11:28; <sup>20</sup>Hag 1:2-4 (the opposite);

<sup>21</sup>1 Pet 4:9, Heb 13:2; <sup>22</sup>Heb 12:4; <sup>23</sup>2 Cor 10:13-18; <sup>24</sup>Mt 23:4



# What It Means to Be a Christian *Wife*

“...till death do us part. Amen,” I muttered, shy and staring down blankly. Then, turning to me and fixing his tender gaze upon me, he gave me a warm and assuring smile. The same smile that caused my heart to flutter several months ago; on the same visage that has occupied my mind ever since, even in my sleep.

The next moment, the dulcet voice of the minister was heard again: “In the mighty name of our Lord Jesus, I pronounce you man and wife.” The organ soared into Mendelssohn’s majestic Wedding March. As we turned around, the congregation rose to their feet. My mother and some other women were trying vainly to hold back their tears. The whole atmosphere in the church was charged with joy.

I slipped my hand under his arm as he gently led me down the aisle. It wasn’t a particularly big church, but the march seemed so long. It was as if I were walking on clouds. I didn’t know exactly what to think, but I knew that my cheeks and my ears were burning hot. We were greeted with approving smiles and showers of confetti as we passed row after row of friends and relatives.

It was a beautiful wedding

And as we stepped outside the portal, a certain strange muddle of feelings welled in me. It was not just the result of my trepidation arising from the ceremony or the exciting fulfillment of my teenage fantasy. It was something that I had never felt before—an uncertain anticipation of married life.

The man I'd fallen in love with is now my husband, and I his wife. What does it mean? At that moment, lost in the flurry of emotions and inexperience, I was oblivious to the real meaning.

## YOUTHFUL IDEALISMS

The world has so many things to offer. I was fortunate, compared to my forbears, that society had just taken a turn so that the doors of higher education also opened to women. Though a self-professed romantic, I was not weak-minded. I had learned enough to realize that there was greater fulfillment for women in the world outside the home.

I viewed the traditional concept of marriage in many societies with disgust—an institution made by men for men to enchain women with the fetters of domestic chores and to reduce them to mere objects of pleasure. I believed I could excel in society. I had the opportunity and the capacity, and I wanted to do so.

On the other hand, I was not prepared to throw the idea of marriage out of the window. I still needed to be loved, to feel the warmth of a loving embrace, a strong shoulder to cry on when I was sad, and a man to share my dreams as well as my joys. But I was determined not to allow myself to fit into the “traditional” role of a wife.

I believed that an ideal home was where the husband and the wife were equal partners, coming to decisions the same way my associates and I would have in business—with lots of bargains and compromises. I believed that household work should be fifty-fifty—cut right down the middle. I believed I could be both a successful career woman and a great wife!

It was 1963, and a startling new book had just rolled out of the press. That book, the *Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan, became a bestseller and changed the course of history and the lives of thousands of young men and women.

Friedan advocated the liberation of women from wife/mother roles to find their own identity as persons and to engage in professions to be growing people. In ten years, her book sold over 2 million copies. I was impressed. Her views were consistent with mine, and I accepted them.

It was a time when women really did make some remarkable breakthroughs in society through politics, business, education, entertainment, and sports. We were all caught up in the Women's Liberation movement, fighting for equal rights and equality. What

that was, none of us really knew.

In the barrage of activities, I did not consult the Bible, to see what God had to say about all this. I didn't bother to. It didn't matter then. It was not until some time after my marriage that I began to have sober thoughts on this issue. I had to. What was to be the climax of my fantasies turned out to be a rude awakening to reality, and I realized that those youthful idealisms I had couldn't work.

Time, a bitter teacher, taught me that marriage meant more than I had imagined. But it had not taught me what.

Blessed with a Christian foundation, I began to turn to the pages of the Bible for relief and for answers. Only then was the wonderful plan of God unfolded before my very eyes, and for the first time I discovered the keys to a complete and happy marriage.

And from that moment, I began to experience the joys of marriage and the real meaning of being a wife. The Almighty has a purpose for everything He creates. If we live according to that purpose there is abundant life.

I first had to grasp why God created women.

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*What was to be the climax of my fantasies turned out to be a rude awakening to reality, and I realized that those youthful idealisms I had couldn't work.*

## A FITTING HELPER

Turning to Genesis 2:18, 21-22, I read:

*And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” ... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.*

Yes, I am to be a “helper fit for him.” The original Hebrew equivalent, *ezer kenegdo* (literally “a helper as in front of him,” i.e., “a helper corresponding to him”), indicates complementarity. A man is incomplete without a woman.

A wife is like the missing part of a jigsaw puzzle—she supplies what her husband lacks and her husband gives her what she needs. And “fitted” together, they are not two but one whole being. They are not made to compete but to complement. I am to be what he is not.

I now see the futility of women trying to compete with men, the foolishness of the Annie Complex: “Anything you can do I can do better. I can do anything better than you.”

I have seen through the cause of wrecked marriages. It is just

not God's plan that women be like men. God has made us different in most respects, and that is no accident. A wife is a fitting helper. The moment I understood that my fulfillment in life lay with helping him to be successful in what he was meant to be was the moment I began to feel the thrill of being a wife.

We do not lose our identity in the process as some hardened feminists would have us think. We, in fact, enlarge our identity. His achievements are my achievements, and his joys, mine. He knows that I am part and parcel of his success, whatever that may be, and without me his joy is incomplete.

I had an interesting insight to 1 Cor 11:8-9. I learned that "man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." The good Lord made me especially for him to be his fitting helper.

It was when I had given up the idea of trying to prove my own worth and ability as an individual in society that I became a worthier and abler human being.

## A LOVER

Then moving through to Proverbs 5:18-19, I found it written:

*Let your fountain be blessed,  
And rejoice with the wife of your youth.  
As a loving deer and a graceful doe,  
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;  
And always be enraptured with her love.*

A family is a cradle of love. Between a husband and a wife, there must be nothing but love. It is not seldom that we find many a romance started off with a sizzling effervescence but fizzling off with an empty dullness.

More often than not, they have taken each other for granted, neglecting the little deeds of love, the simple show of affection—like preparing his favorite dish and a gentle caress when he is weary after a hard day's work. Love is a fire, which has to be carefully tended. It can be dampened with a careless word, a thoughtless act; no matter how small.

There is also another important dimension to a happy marriage, and many wives are unaware of its significance, especially among Asians. It is the role of sex in marriage.

Though undeniable that sex leads to procreation, it is much more than that. It is not purely physical as it often would be outside marriage. But inside marriage, it is the ultimate expression of pure love: physically, psychologically, and emotionally. It is the closest any two persons can come together, and the total mutual giving of one's being to the other. In the words of apostle Paul:

*The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights (biblical euphemism for sex), and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another (to deny the other of sex) except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again (as in "the two shall become one flesh" in Mt 19:5), lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. (1 Cor 7:3-5)*

I then was able to see things from a correct angle. It is not true that in surrendering ourselves to our husbands we are reduced to mere objects of pleasure. In a true marriage, we derive our greatest satisfaction in giving ourselves to each other. Sex is meant to be a cohesive force in a complete marriage. A wife who tries to rule over her own body ends up destroying not only herself but the one she loves most, and maybe even that of her children. It pays to be a constant lover.

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*Love is a fire, which has to be carefully tended. It can be dampened with a careless word, a thoughtless act; no matter how small.*

## A MOTHER

After the fall of man, the Lord God cursed the woman saying:

*I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;  
In pain you shall bring forth children;  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you. (Gen 3:16)*

From then on, women had the primary duty of bearing and bringing up children.

However, some may argue that the New Testament has changed all that. They may point to the Old Testament rite of circumcision and say that women were subordinate because they were not circumcised and were in the covenant by virtue of their husbands.

But in the New Testament, salvation extends to both males and females, and both are individually responsible for receiving Christ Jesus and His baptism in order to enter the covenant of grace. Therefore, the status of women has been elevated to that of men. And, of course, with that change comes a change in responsibilities.

They are right in saying that each person is personally accountable for their own sins and responsible for their own salvation by accepting Christ. In fact, Paul said in Galatians 3:27-29, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... there is neither male nor female.” However, to interpret this to mean that there is no longer any distinction between the sexes is misleading.

The correct reading of this verse must be that with respect to our relationship with God. So, with regard to one’s standing before God, male and female are alike—they are co-heirs of salvation and, indeed, of the future kingdom, for “when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Mk 12:25).

However, the basic relationship between the husband and wife has not changed. In baptism, we are liberated from the sins of Adam but not the responsibility assigned by God; else a Christian mother would not have to suffer the pangs of childbirth. What are our responsibilities? The biblical text calls attention to the homemaking privilege of wives and mothers.

I hope you don’t think that I have passively resigned myself to the fate of being tied slavishly to the kitchen barefoot and pregnant, because I regard my God-given duty as a pleasure. Who else can create an environment conducive for the total growth of my children? Who else can provide a haven for my loving husband?

On the other hand, I am not saying that wives can’t work outside. In some cases, they have to respond to pressing financial circumstances. And in other cases, if they are specially gifted, God may call them to serve the nation directly (e.g. Deborah).

Whether we are homemakers or have careers, our primary responsibility is to nurture the family we love (Tit 2:4-5). We have to examine whether or not we neglect our wifely and motherly roles in pursuit of our own ambitions. Exactly where do we focus our time and energy? With a change of attitude, we can begin to weigh the roles that are most important in life from a biblical standpoint and start channeling our efforts in the right places.

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**We are certainly not inferior to men. Rather, the Bible commands that we obey Christ through our obedience to our husbands. The object is religious and the motive is spiritual.**

## A YIELDING PARTNER

As I have said before, I believed that a wife was a co-partner in the family in the same manner as a co-partner in business. We were supposed to be joint-heads, I once thought. What was the result? Indecision. Stalemate. Cold war at home!

I was not willing to yield to him or to wholeheartedly accept his decisions that were contrary to mine. And even if I did, I was not happy. After all why should I have done so? We were both humans, we were both equally qualified and capable, and my education was no less than his. We were unrelenting.

Yes, we did make compromises at times, but it was the other times that strained our relationship. And often the compromises were quite silly. One thing was sure, there was no lasting peace at home. A family could never be run like a business!

Then some eye-opening verses hit me. It says in 1 Cor 11:8, 9 that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband...” And in 1 Peter 3:1, it is written, “Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

*Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church; As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands... and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:22-23)*

I do not believe that this verse implies the inferiority of women. The words “as to the Lord” are significant. The primary obedience of the wife is to the Lord and through the husband. We are certainly not inferior to men. Rather, the Bible commands that we obey Christ through our obedience to our husbands. The object is religious and the motive is spiritual. This is our Christian duty. This is also the formula to a successful marriage.

It was difficult to swallow initially. It involved a total reversal of my attitude. It required a putting down of my pride. Submission means that when we disagree, I must trust in God that He will guide my husband’s decision. Therefore, it is not a unilateral giving up of one’s opinion but a mutual surrender to God who expresses His will through him. I believe this is the Christian way. And the result is rewarding. It always is when one is living according to God’s will.

In a word, being a Christian wife means joy. It also means to be a great mother and a faithful servant of God—but that is another matter; beyond the scope of our present purpose. Maybe we’ll have more of that in future. For now, God bless you and your family. Amen.

