

# MANNA

True Jesus Church ISSUE 51 APR-JUN 2007 **Family Focus**

**The Lord Set My Heart Free**  
*Establishing a Spiritual Altar in the Family*  
**Congo Report**

# MANNA

Apr-Jun 2007

ISSUE 51 Vol 31 No. 1

## Family Focus

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



Dear Reader,

In this issue, we bring you a range of topics as shared by writers approaching lives of faith from different angles. As we read about how others are inspired by God's power, may we be assured that He who has done great works for others will surely do the same for us when we trust in Him.

As children of God, we should aim to lead our lives with God's kingdom in mind. That is really the most valuable purpose of our existence. Whether it is the betterment of our spiritual state or in contributing to the work of the gospel, may God guide our directions, that each day of our lives is purposeful and well-spent.

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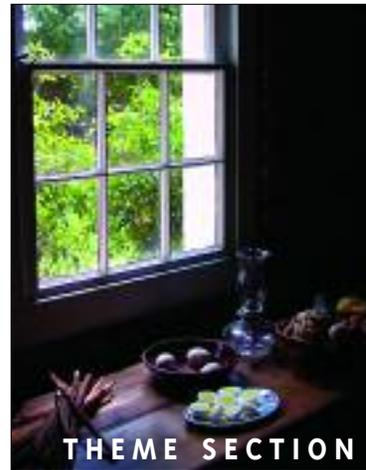
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## Family Focus



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# The Lord Set My Heart Free

Crystal Jing—Canoga Park, California, USA

## A Hard Time Letting Go of Past Beliefs

I did not believe in God's existence before I married my husband in 2002. But since my mother-in-law was a Christian, we started to go to church. My initial feelings toward Christians were that everyone was very loving. Nevertheless, I couldn't feel the presence of God.

One month after we were married, my husband left China to start a Ph.D. program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). At UCLA, he met a member from the True Jesus Church in Canoga Park who brought him to seek the truth. I joined him in the United States a year later and started to attend service too.

Praise God, He gave me the Holy Spirit just three weeks after I began going to church. That was my first personal experience of His wonderful grace. A week after that, my husband and I were baptized in the name of the Lord.

Knowing that my sins were washed away, I sought to begin a new life. However, some of the ideas that stuck with me through ten-some years of education in China did not allow me to transition into a new life that easily.

For example, the Bible teaches that wives ought to submit to their husbands. To me, that was a concept applicable only in the days before the Chinese Revolution. I was a strong proponent of the idea that

there should be no talk of submission in marriage. Women should have their own careers and be on par with men.

Even one year after my baptism, many unresolved biblical issues still remained in my heart.

## Graduate School and My Ambitions

Before I came to the US, I was a graduate student in China. I had two more years left of a five-year program. Not wanting to be separated from my husband for too long, I quit the program and came to the US on a spousal visa.

Although it was a real pity to quit graduate school, I actually had my hopes

up because I had been accepted by another graduate program at UCLA. I believed I could obtain a degree very quickly.

It was not until I arrived in the US that I found out my professor had very limited funding and couldn't give me a scholarship. That meant I would be unable to start my studies right away because I would be incapable of paying the tuition. That came as a big blow to me.

My education was my career. If I didn't have a career, then I had nothing. I couldn't even work because I was on a spousal visa.

I began to volunteer in the lab of a renowned professor at UCLA. I would help him in doing some research while I waited for the chance to be readmitted. Since we believed in God, my husband would put this matter into his prayers.

At first, we had a lot of faith in God because many brothers and sisters told me that the Lord must love me greatly to have given me the Holy Spirit so quickly. They encouraged me by telling me that our God is a merciful God and that He would surely listen to our prayers and requests.

### **A Dwindling Faith**

But as time passed, I heard no news of any scholarship and my heart became entrapped in doubt. Why doesn't God listen to my prayers? Is it because He does not love me anymore? Maybe He only loves those whose faith is strong.

Another three months passed and by October 2003, I felt that my chance of receiving the scholarship was probably close to zero. At that point, I considered applying to other schools.

My friends back home encouraged me to go ahead but my husband strongly disagreed. He felt that the possibility of me being accepted by other schools in

California was very small. If I got accepted by a school in the East Coast, we would be forced to separate again, and he didn't want this to happen. He told me the Bible taught that the husband and wife were

**I began to doubt God. My friends were not even believers but they had the success that eluded me. I thought that surely God did not love me.**

one body, and it would be best if we did not separate.

He continued to encourage me not to lose faith, for the Lord would listen to our prayers. But, having waited so long, I could no longer hold on to my faith in God. I decided that I had to use my own might to fight for myself.

Not surprisingly, my husband and I quarreled a lot.

Around that time, my husband had to prepare for his Ph.D. qualifying exam. I didn't want to stir up too much trouble so I finally gave up on the application process. Nevertheless, in my heart, I was torn apart with worry. I figured that if I didn't receive this awaited scholarship from UCLA or receive other scholarship offers, I would have wasted a whole year doing nothing.

Such vexations further aggravated my existing bad temper. It affected my husband so much that he couldn't prepare for his exam. A month later, my husband received notice that he failed his exam. Because each Ph.D. student has two chances to pass the exam, he had only one more chance. The pressure was intense.

I began to realize that I had been very selfish and had caused him to fail the

exam. I tried to behave more maturely and to tone down my temper.

Every Sabbath I would go to church with my husband but I was still very troubled. I felt no tinge of joy in my heart. I tried to pray and read the Bible, only to end up helplessly frustrated. By May 2004, my temper had become out of control. There was bitterness pent up inside me.

A lot of my college friends had received scholarships to come to the US to study, but I had nothing. When I compared myself with them, I felt small and started to regret not applying to other schools the previous year. Had I applied then, I could have been attending school with a full fellowship!

I began to doubt God. My friends were not even believers but they had the success that eluded me. I thought that surely God did not love me.

Confused and uncertain about the future, I became moodier. I quarreled with my husband over many trivial matters. It was not as if I didn't want to control myself. I did wonder what had become of me, but that failed to help me change. Sometimes, I would simmer down for a day or two but I eventually lost my temper again.

I feared that if I continued like that, my husband would fail his second attempt at the qualifying exam. Not only would I not be able to go to school, my husband wouldn't obtain a degree. Perhaps he would despise me and our marriage would disintegrate.

### **The Turning Point at NYTS 2004**

Around that time, a sister spoke to me about the National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS). She said many people who went to NYTS changed a lot. So I registered for the seminar and asked the Lord to take away the burden in my heart.

## TESTIMONY

I was tired of being troubled; I wanted a joyful and content heart.

At the NYTS, many brothers and sisters showed their concern and prayed for me, and I felt the warmth of the brethren in the Lord. Through one sister's testimony, the Lord opened my heart and I felt my prayers heard.

In that testimony, the sister testified how she came to church with her husband after her son's suicide. The rest of their family blamed her husband for it. When something happens, it is so easy to put the blame on one person. When I heard that, tears fell from my face, and I felt that it was the Lord moving me. I thought of all the bitterness I had against my husband in my own situation.

### Looking Deep Within Myself

I wasn't thrilled when he came to the US to study. And because I didn't want to be separated from him I had to withdraw from school. It was stressful, as the school did not simply allow withdrawals. It took me a year to complete the withdrawal process. I blamed my husband for the difficulties that I had encountered. I felt that I sacrificed so much. I also blamed him for not allowing me to apply to other schools where I could have received a scholarship.

There was much resentment in me. I said many things that hurt my husband and I became completely callous. When he got sick, I didn't take care of him but wondered why he always got sick. Looking back, I realized I was always sour-faced with him and my words were like daggers waiting to pierce him.

But my husband always had compassion and embraced my shortcomings. Even when he failed his qualifying exam, he didn't say a single word of blame. On the other hand, he kept comforting me so

**It dawned on me that it wasn't that God didn't love me or didn't hear my prayers. Actually, He loved me a lot and gave me the most precious thing in this world—a wonderful husband and marriage.**

I wouldn't feel so bad. It dawned on me that it wasn't that God didn't love me or didn't hear my prayers. Actually, He loved me a lot and gave me the most precious thing in this world—a wonderful husband and marriage.

If not for the Lord's preservation that my husband had a heart of compassion, my marriage would have been destroyed by my ambition and vexations. I began to realize that putting one's career before the family was a ridiculous concept. It is God's true will to place Him first, our family second, and our career last.

This is the best way of life for us.

I thank God for the prayer after the testimony. He took away all my troubles, low self-esteem, and all the things I worried about. What was left was a thankful heart, for I know now how good it is to be in the Lord.

### A Renewed and Thankful Heart

Upon returning home after NYTS, I felt very blessed the moment I laid eyes on my husband. My heart was filled with thankfulness. Of course, the problem with my school did not resolve itself right after NYTS, but my troubled heart had been replaced by feelings of peace and joy.

My attitude towards church also changed. I started enjoying services at church, whereas before I felt it a burden to spend a whole day on Saturday for Sabbath. Thank the Lord for transforming me so I could enjoy service.

My husband and I also began attending services on Friday evenings. We never went before because I didn't want to go. Although we now get home late on Fridays, I feel very joyful at heart. We also feel more inclined toward attending church activities. The Lord truly is a very good Shepherd. Through NYTS, He brought me back as a lost sheep to His fold.

I also began to see God's blessings in my daily life. In January 2005, UCLA awarded me a scholarship so I could begin my studies. My advising professor happened to be a brother from church.

The Lord also blessed my husband so that he passed his second attempt at the Ph.D. qualifying exam. I know that I can continue to trust in Him for what comes next in my life! ★



# Transcendental Peace from God

Patricia Chen—Irvine, California, USA

## The Unsettling News

*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." (Jas 4:14-15)*

This passage resonates loudly for me, and I am thankful for this opportunity to share an amazing blessing from God.

I have often thought that it is a wonderful grace to be able to do God's work, and I treasure every opportunity that I am given. So when I was assigned by the church to go to Australia to assist in the Religious Education Teachers' Seminar to be held in April 2003, I took hold of

that opportunity and made the necessary arrangements in December 2002.

That same month, I also went to see my physician for a routine physical. Upon examination, he found a small lump in my left ovary, which prompted him to schedule a second ultrasound in three months' time. Dutifully, I returned for the second ultrasound in March 2003.

During the second round of check-ups, the physician informed me that the lump had grown and was now the size of a kiwi. That would explain the tingling pain I had been feeling in my left abdomen those past few months. To be on the safe side, the physician urged me to undergo surgery within the next few weeks to remove the tumor.

I struggled greatly in my heart when I heard the news. What about my plans for Australia next month? What was I going to do? If I went through with the surgery, I would have to be confined to bed rest for at least a week, and I would have to cancel the church assignment.

## The Inner Struggle

Although it was not a matter of life or death, it was a tough dilemma for me. Should I rely on God and ask Him to have mercy on me so that I could have the faith to attend the seminar and undergo the surgery after I returned? Or should I heed the doctor's advice and have the tumor removed?

I have often told my religious education students that they should trust in God

and rely on Him. The question was how much? I felt myself challenged to face the truth about my own level of faith. Was it just a theoretical understanding or did I, with true conviction, believe that He could help me?

Each trial we face could well be the beginning of God's renewing grace. But before we can learn this lesson, we first have to trust that God's grace is sufficient. As these thoughts went through my mind, my little faith soared.

In my heart a small voice was telling me not to be afraid but to face my trial with courage. God's grace would be sufficient for me. After a few minutes of pondering, I told the doctor that because of my trip, I would not be able to do the surgery until the beginning of May. He asked me if that was my final decision. I firmly replied, "Yes." He scheduled another check-up for April 28 and a surgery on May 1 at 8:30 in the morning.

After I left his clinic, I sought the advice of another doctor and a medical professional. They both warned me that if my tumor enlarged over the next few weeks, there was a chance that it could rupture and I would bleed internally—causing major complications.

When I heard this, I felt a chill run down my spine. What if I had made the wrong decision? My inner struggles returned once again.

Should I go or should I stay? The church had already bought the plane ticket. There were teachers from different churches in Australia who were eagerly awaiting this seminar. These were teachers who worked tirelessly for God, never expecting any compensation. Only the love of God could effect such dedication. Compared to all these volunteers, shouldn't

I, as a full-time worker of God, all the more fulfill the work He has entrusted to me?

### **The Peace from Entrusting Him**

The inner turmoil slowly began to subside. I was brought back to the memory of my mom when she had surgery years ago. Coincidentally, at that time, I had also been sent away to do holy work.

What God wanted me to learn was to give all my burdens to Him. Through prayer, God will give us unexpected peace just as it says in Philippians 4:7, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

It was a hard lesson. But I knew I needed to submit myself to God all the more, for that was the way to receive strength from Him.

With the prayers of my family and colleagues behind me, I set off for Australia. Thank God, I once again experienced the joy and value of working for Him. Throughout the seminar, I soaked in the words of God. His presence was greatly felt when I prayed together with the teachers at the seminar. One could not reap such joy from any work in the secular world.

Each day, I asked God to guide me and to help me accept the trials He put in my way. However, a part of me did not dare to ask for Him to remove the tumor. I felt small and insignificant and did not deserve God's grace and mercy. I only asked Him to guide me back to the US safely and that the surgery would be successful.

### **The Power of God**

I returned safely to the US on April 26. On the 28th, I went to see the doctor as scheduled. I remember the doctor asking me if I was ready for the surgery the

following Monday. He reminded me that I needed to arrange for post-surgery pick-up from the hospital.

As the doctor was talking to me, a small voice inside me urged me to request another ultrasound and see how large the tumor had become. Because this powerful urge came over me, I boldly asked the doctor to have another ultrasound done.

Thank the grace of God, he agreed. Miraculously, the doctor could not find the tumor. He searched for a long time, but he just could not locate it. In my heart, I knew what had happened and could not stop repeating, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" The doctor was bewildered and said that the tumor had disappeared completely. In the end, he told me there was no need for surgery.

God knew very well how terrified I was of the surgery and mercifully spared me. The Americans have a saying that goes, "No surgery is a good surgery." As I walked out of the hospital, I felt lightness in my feet and I was overjoyed. I quickly told my husband and my family this great piece of news. I also called my colleagues and shared with them my overflowing happiness and peace.

I thank God for guiding my path and allowing me to experience His presence in my life. If it were not for the mercy and grace of God, the tumor could not have simply disappeared. I also thank God that He gave me the courage to ask for another ultrasound so that I did not have to undergo surgery.

John 14:27 says, "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." This verse speaks directly to this miracle. All the glory be unto God's name. Amen. ★



# Heaven and Hell Are Real

Isaac Chen—Taichung, Taiwan

*“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”*  
(Joel 2:28-29)

*Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right.*  
(Prov 20:11)

My daughter Chen Jia-Yin was born in 1996. To me, she is a special heritage given by our Lord Jesus. Her liveliness has been a constant source of comfort and joy for me.

As a concerned father, I have often fretted over her faith, her studies and

other areas of growth. I especially wished that she would receive the Holy Spirit. I would be much more at ease if she had the Holy Spirit to help and to guide her into God’s truth (Jn 16:13).

From my experience as a full time minister, I feared that, with my daughter’s level of focus and zeal towards prayer, it could be years before she would receive the Holy Spirit. But the love and the grace of God extend beyond the imagination of man.

During a prayer session for the Holy Spirit, Jia-Yin saw a vision. A few days later, she received the precious Holy Spirit. I felt very comforted knowing that she would have the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit for her life.

I now recount the vision she saw and her experience of receiving the Holy Spirit.

## The Vision of Two Paths

*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Mt 7:13-14)*

On Friday, April 23, 2004, during a spiritual convocation at our church in Northern Taichung, Jia-Yin went to the front of the chapel to pray for the Holy Spirit.

As she continued saying “Hallelujah, praise the Lord,” there appeared before her a sudden darkness. She felt her spirit being lifted, and then floating in the air, she saw a vision.

Jia-Yin saw souls of the dead rising up from their bodies and proceeding to walk on a road. Not long after, they arrived at a junction where they had to choose between two paths.

There was a broad road that led downhill, and it became narrower and darker as they walked. The other was narrow and full of stones, going uphill, but as they walked the road became brighter.

### The Road to Destruction

She saw that those who chose the broad road huddled together as the road became smaller. At the end of the road was a beautiful and magnificent bridge.

Those who walked this road thought that heaven lay beyond this bridge. Hence, they chose this road. Shoving and pushing, each blindly followed the person ahead.

At one point, the bridge came to an abrupt end and they fell, one by one, into a bottomless pit. No one had time to warn those behind them. The people trudging behind thought that those ahead had crossed the bridge to paradise, having no inkling of the imminent bottomless pit.

The bottomless pit was filled with skeletons and corpses. There were also worms that would not die and fire that could not be quenched.

### The Road to Heaven

As the vision continued, Jia-Yin looked to the other path. Although it was narrow and stony, the longer someone walked along it, the brighter it became. Those who walked on it eventually arrived at a large and magnificent golden gate.

Jia-Yin descended in front of the gate and stood among the crowd. Suddenly, from the top of the gate, a dove carrying an olive branch in its beak appeared in the air, becoming larger as it approached.

**Suddenly, Jia-Yin could see what was in the book of life. It was filled with names. Next to each name was recorded some fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

At this moment, a bright and glorious light surrounded the gate.

### Who Can Enter Through the Gates of Heaven?

#### Baptized in Accordance with the Bible

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (Jn 3:5)*

Three angels flew from behind the gate. Two angels flanked each side of the gate as the third angel said in a loud voice, "Have you been baptized?"

Some of the people looked shocked. They did not know why they had to be baptized in addition to believing in the Lord Jesus. They did not believe in the efficacy of baptism and had not been baptized. These people were turned away towards the road that led to destruction.

There was another group of people who received baptism that was not performed in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. So, the heavenly gate appeared to them as if it was the gate of hell, and they angrily turned towards the broad road.

They ended up falling into hell like those who first chose the bridge.

### Received the Holy Spirit

*...having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession . . . (Eph 1:13-14)*

To those remaining at the glorious gate of heaven, the angel asked a second question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

A force pushed back those who had not received the Holy Spirit, and they slid backwards to the road of destruction. Two other groups suffered the same fate: those without the Holy Spirit who refused to leave, and those who mistakenly thought that they had the Holy Spirit.

### Named in the Book of Life

*And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. (Is 4:3)*

After the questioning, many still remained by the gate of heaven and the bright gate of heaven slowly opened.

Two angels guarded the gate and another angel brought the book of life and came before the people. The angel then took the roll call. Those who were called immediately passed through the gate of heaven.

Suddenly, Jia-Yin could see what was in the book of life. It was filled with names. Next to each name was recorded some fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

God used many different symbols such as ○ × △ to record each person's daily life, in terms of whether one had lived a

**“Today you are all able to enter the heavenly kingdom and to be seated here. Look not only to preserve yourselves. You have the duty to preach the gospel and to offer your abilities. Let the Lord bless and guide, and let Him finish the salvation of God.”**

life filled with good deeds and was full of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Those who were called to enter the gate of heaven were not necessarily those who were perfect and made no mistakes. Rather, these were people who in their lives always repented and confessed their wrongdoings. They were people who relied on the Holy Spirit's rebuke and humbled themselves.

Through prayers, they repented and removed the impurities of faith. They manifested the fruit of the Holy Spirit abundantly and led lives that glorified God and benefited mankind.

Those whose names were not called were those who, in spite of having received the Holy Spirit, did not value the Holy Spirit. They did not rely on the Holy Spirit to watch and pray, nor did they apply righteousness and judgment to examine themselves (Jn 16:8).

They lacked faithfulness, humility and a repentant heart. They neglected their faith and wasted time given to them on earth. Some among this group realized their mistakes and resolved to repent. But it was too late. There was no longer an opportunity for repentance.

At the completion of the roll call, those who qualified had all entered and the gates were shut immediately. The impact of the gates closing shut was so strong that those remaining outside were flung into hell.

### Scenes of Heaven

The ground in heaven was paved with shining gold. Even the flowers were singing!

As the qualified people passed through the gate of heaven, their clothes were immediately transformed into bright white garments. Regardless of age and gender, each person's face and appearance became like that of angels: young, tall, and beautiful.

In the spirit, everyone recognized each other, including the twelve apostles. There were Peter, John, James and more.

Saints who were called earlier lined horizontally in front of those who were called later. Everyone stood in line, holding one another's hands and singing hymns joyfully as they marched forward.

On both sides, many angels accompanied them and sang with them. The language used was not of this world. It was the language of heaven. Everyone sang and matched in beautiful harmony.

These people arrived at a majestic and beautiful church building. One after the other, they entered the chapel. On both sides, the angels welcomed the congregation with beautiful tunes on flutes, violins and harps.

At the front of the chapel, an angel was playing the harp. There was another person present. In the vision, Jia-Yin knew He was the Lord Jesus, who was about to deliver the sermon.

First, He spoke of the calling of the first four apostles, Peter, Andrew, James and John, to be fishers of men. Then, He

spoke of the miracle of the five loaves of bread and two fish where, through the offering of a small child, five thousand were fed (cf. Mk 1:16-20; Jn 6:9-13).

As to why there was a need for sermons in the kingdom of heaven, Jia-Yin heard the Lord Jesus say, “Today you are all able to enter the heavenly kingdom and to be seated here. Look not only to preserve yourselves. You have the duty to preach the gospel and to offer your abilities. Let the Lord bless and guide, and let Him finish the salvation of God.”

The Lord Jesus' sermon served to remind believers who were still on earth about their life commission.

### Jia-Yin Received the Holy Spirit

Throughout the time when she saw the vision and heard the Lord Jesus' sermons, Jia-Yin was praying fervently. Her heart was touched and she cried joyfully.

It was at this time that a deacon patted her shoulder and encouraged her: “Jia-Yin, pray harder, you will receive the Holy Spirit soon.” Jia-Yin opened her eyes and the vision disappeared.

Although she did not receive the Holy Spirit at that spiritual convocation, as Jia-Yin was saying “Hallelujah, praise the Lord Jesus,” during a bedtime prayer a few days later, she began speaking in tongues, thanks be to the Lord.

She was filled with the Holy Spirit and she prayed loudly. After a while, we said “Amen.” I told her, “Jia-Yin, you have received the Holy Spirit.” ★



# A Hug from God

Chuny Chin—London, United Kingdom

## A Liberating Heart-to-Heart Talk

It was Friday March 3rd, 7:30 a.m. As the stone from my heart melted away, so the sun rose and shone a fresh ray of hope through my bedroom window. In the early hours of that morning, my brother and I had a heart-to-heart talk that will remain indelible in my heart.

It began when I heard my brother cry tears of what sounded like anguish and desperation. He later expressed to me he could not understand why God had not yet bestowed on him the Holy Spirit. He had in his heart a fire to do great things for the Lord, but why was God taking this long to give him what he so desired?

Impatience or a lack of trust, perhaps. Nevertheless, my brother was desperate to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that he could be empowered and tell his truth-seeking friend firsthand about the precious Holy Spirit.

Touched by the zeal with which he thirsted for God's spirit, I reflected upon my own obedience, whether I had

cherished God's priceless promise fully. We continued to share our deepest thoughts, aspirations and worries. For the first time, I opened up to him about a burden I had carried for what seemed like forever. Although I knew God was a merciful Father, I was unable to forgive myself for the wrong path I once pursued.

I had fluctuated between glimpses of hope and a heavy conscience. There were times when I would be optimistic and immersed myself in church work, university, and friendships. Yet there were many sleepless nights when I cried over my foolishness, and moments when the past would haunt me, leaving me paralyzed and practically incapable of doing anything. My remorse deterred me from a deeper relationship with God.

I kept this buried in my heart. Despite being surrounded by friends, this part of me felt very alone. But in His mercy, God kept knocking and did not give up on me. By His providence and meticulous timing, He placed my brother and me in a situa-

tion where He could comfort us through each other, and for the first time, I felt true relief from this struggle.

*Two are better than one,  
Because they have a good reward for  
their labor.*

*For if they fall, one  
will lift up his companion.  
But woe to him who is alone when  
he falls,*

*For he has no one to help him up.  
(Ecc 4:9-10)*

Initially I was worried about revealing such personal struggles to a single soul for fear of being judged or condemned by others. But since the love of Jesus is able to blot out our imperfections and bestow on us peace and comfort, should not our brothers and sisters in Christ also bring us comfort when we open up? Furthermore, when we give Jesus our broken dreams as well as our hopes, we will realize how

blessed we are to be in the hands of a loving and merciful Father.

### A Brand New Day

The following day, I was awakened by my brother praying. My brother was speaking in tongues! At first I was unsure whether it was my tired mind playing tricks on me. But when I joined him in prayer, I felt God truly amidst us, sitting with us in our living room as we knelt before Him.

I am incapable of describing this feeling aptly, but I could imagine God had His Holy Spirit hose on full blast, showering us with His comfort and blessing. His presence was glorious, overwhelming, and at the end of the prayer we were both speechlessly elated and overflowing with tears of happiness.

It was then that my brother confessed he, too, shared the same struggle I had confided to him about the previous night, yet God reached down and comforted him. Thus, I further felt this was God's way of telling us not to worry or be anxious over past troubles and mistakes: He is still in us and we in Him. At this moment, I felt even lighter than before, for God had unmistakably relieved us of our burdens once and for all, and I felt great confidence, not in my own character but in Jesus' enduring power to heal.

It is no coincidence that God gave my brother the Holy Spirit during this time of need, and it was never clearer: God is merciful and loving. Nothing seemed to matter anymore, for God had given us a brand new day.

### Satan Launches a Counter Attack

A little while later, my brother prayed again to confirm the Holy Spirit's abidance. However, perhaps due to a slight ounce of doubt within him, he did not speak in

tongues—it was not the same sort of joyful prayer as the previous one. My brother sensed that Satan used his physical fatigue to make him feel hampered and anxious.

I, too, sensed Satan attack. When we prayed together again, I longed to pray more zealously but my throat suddenly became sore, preventing me from praying louder and distracting me from communicating to God with the urgency that was needed. Both feeling dispirited and confused, we lost concentration and ceased the prayer.

Satan gets anxious when God is changing us for greater things. During pivotal moments in our faith, he is naturally attracted and drawn to us to fight God with all the vigor he has. Although we were both somewhat disheartened and anxious, we remembered that our hearts are the battleground for God and Satan; how we choose to focus our lives and the effort we exert, physically as well as spiritually, will determine the outcome of the battle. It is our choice.

After the prayer, we comforted each other, and a Bible passage I had read the previous day sprung to mind. I've learned that when we make the effort to read and meditate upon the Scriptures, God will bring to remembrance His word in that hour of need.

*Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet 5:8)*

This often-used verse led us to reflect upon daily renewal. While we pondered over the battle in which we were fighting, we realized that being victorious in Jesus is far from merely not crossing the line that divides us from sin.

Imagine a game of "catch." God can represent "home," our shelter in times of need and our hiding place. We must constantly and daily pursue "home" (the safe ground) because darkness does not stand still; if we are stagnant in pursuing God, Satan will eventually catch up to us.

Complacency with only not crossing the line can eventually lead us to veer dangerously outside the barrier enclosing God's grace. Thus, we should run away from the barrier, not just for fear of punishment and Satan's traps but also to delight in and look forward to what God has in store for us, for it is far sweeter, greater and glorious than anything sin has to offer.

### A Slice of Heaven and a Peace Not of This World

After meditating upon God's word, my brother and I prayed again—this time for peace. My brother did not pray in tongues again, but God granted us the peace and the calmness of which we were in dire need.

In this prayer, I felt an intimacy and closeness with Him on a level I had never experienced before. A fountain of happiness gushed out with full force from inside me. I felt as light as a feather and I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Whenever I had a deep prayer in the past, I did not think it could get deeper, or at least my limited imagination prevented me from believing it was possible. But during this prayer, I appreciated the meaning of "perpetual." The attainment of satisfaction and peace in communing with God is continuous and infinite. It will only continue to get better and brighter, far beyond what the human mind can conceive because nothing in this world can gratify the way Jesus does.

### Is Your All on the Altar?

During Sabbath service the following day, we sang the hymn “Is your all on the altar?” I was sure God was strengthening my brother through the hymn. Doubt had crept into his heart and prevented the Holy Spirit from filling him completely, and this was a message never to doubt.

It reminded me of my similar experience when I received the Holy Spirit. When I first spoke in tongues, I wanted some reaffirmation of the Holy Spirit, and whenever this notion of doubt arose in me, I would cease speaking in tongues.

I’ve learned that if we do not completely yield to God our body and soul, He cannot take full control, so it is our responsibility to lay our all on the altar.

Later that Sabbath, my brother shared these experiences with other brothers and sisters in church and drew advice and counsel. He again prayed in tongues and was filled with the Holy Spirit. We were all encouraged and extremely happy for him to be able to rejoice in God’s promise. Praise God!

For a period prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, I saw God refining my brother’s attitudes. When one’s outlook on life becomes God-focused and an aspiration to serve Jesus develops, God will further stir up and awaken our love for Him. Now, I cannot help but be amazed at the timing in which my brother was granted the Holy Spirit.

### And It Only Gets Better

As if God had not blessed me enough, He further assured me through a sister on the Sabbath day. This sister (with whom I had not shared my problems at the time) told me of a vision she received during a Friday evening prayer.

In the vision, she saw herself dancing a spiritual dance under a bright white light.

As she turned to her right, she saw me in a beautiful, white silk-like garment, also dancing a spiritual dance (and playing a tambourine!). We were dancing joyfully with all our hearts with many angels around us, and she felt we were dancing at the feet of Jesus.

The sister was at first surprised, not only because of the nature of the vision but also because she had not been thinking of me but praying for her father. She also felt a sense of fulfillment and peace in her heart. At the end of the prayer her heart was beating very fast, as if she had physically been dancing.

Needless to say, I was slightly shocked to hear about this vision, and, although we cannot interpret specifics from the symbols, I know that God loves me so much as to comfort and reassure me through such an experience.

I praise and thank Jesus for blessing both of us on that Sabbath with His abidance, this vision, and His encouragement through fellowship.

### A Kiss I Will Never Forget

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—*

*For your love is better than wine.*  
(Song 1:2)

There are a number of memorable instances in my life in which I tasted God’s kiss. I thank God He used this series of events to impart to me so many wonderful teachings. God reminded me of His comfort and support in mutual fellowship, His merciful and paternal nature, and His irreplaceable and everlasting joy.

He also taught me the importance of wholehearted dedication in prayer, the freedom in forgiveness, the blessing in

understanding others, the dangers in complacency, the need to fully rely on Him, and the joy from trusting in His will for me.

There are so many more things I have learned, but it would be impossible to finish typing if I were to list them all. God’s grace is a never-ending fountain, and literally every day I have pondered over and discovered even more perspectives in which I have been blessed.

I pray my lips will remain clean, ready to receive more of His kisses:

*So I said:*

*“Woe is me, for I am undone!*

*Because I am a man of unclean lips,*

*And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;*

*For my eyes have seen the King,*

*The LORD of hosts.”*

*Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken*

*with the tongs from the altar. And he*

*touched my mouth with it, and said:*

*“Behold, this has touched your lips;*

*Your iniquity is taken away,*

*And your sin purged.”* (Isa 6:5-7)

May we incessantly remember God’s mercy and atonement for our sins that we will never grow weary or become disillusioned. God has cleansed my lips and kissed me for a reason. As yet, I do not know the finer intricacies of God’s plans in my life, and although the way ahead may at times be foggy, Jesus will always be my absolute source of reliance. Whatever comes my way, whichever path I take, I look forward to gladly glorifying Him for the rest of my life. ★

## English Writers Retreat

Edinburgh Church, UK • June 24-30, 2007



Grasp this opportunity to take part in the literary ministry! You don't have to be an experienced writer to join the retreat. Even if you have **never** written for church before, we welcome your participation. During this one-week retreat, you will be able to withdraw from the cares of your busy life and focus on writing for the church. Through collaboration and discussions, you will also draw inspiration and encouragement from fellow writers.

If you're interested in the retreat, and would like to receive event updates by email, please write us at [LM@tjc.org](mailto:LM@tjc.org). The event registration will begin on **May 1st, 2007** at <http://events.tjc.org>

# EWR 2007



# A Joyful Heart

## *Reflections on the African Voluntary Missionary Workers Training Course 2006*

Chuny Chin—London, United Kingdom

*When leaders lead in Israel,  
When the people willingly offer themselves,  
Bless the LORD! (Judg 5:2)*

The opening lines of Deborah's song celebrate the heart of the volunteer and the delight and blessing in being a willing instrument of God. They highlight the genuine need for frontline workers of God to lead His people in battle. These are the people who gladly offer themselves in service.

Deborah's victory song expresses my sentiments as I recall the zeal and fervency of the participants during the Africa Voluntary Missionary Workers Training Course (AVMWTC) last year. The profound love and affection of these full-time workers for the church in Africa were unforgettable, as was the fervor of the volunteering trainees. Their gifts of love will surely be acknowledged by our LORD.

From January 8-13, 2006, 30 volunteers from the UK, US, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Europe, and five full-time pastors long experienced in the African ministry assembled together for an intensive training course.

The glimpses of the African ministry led me to understand better the needs and the challenges faced by the Africa Ministry Committee (AMC). Most importantly, I felt the desire to cultivate myself so that, in some way, I could play a part for His glory.

### **Immersed in His Grace and Edification**

The 7 a.m. prayer sessions and 9 p.m. lectures might have been somewhat of a challenge, but admittedly, we were afforded the luxury of hearty meals and relative comfort at the London Church.

Although the mental and physical hardships of African life were not quite simulated, ninety hours of lectures, prayer, assignments, and fellowship over those six days certainly helped sharpen our spiritual swords and cultivated our hearts for future service.

The syllabus included 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, Homiletics, Revelations, and Basic Doctrines. The words of wisdom from the pastors were deeply inspiring and applicable for many areas of our spiritual lives other than the African ministry.

Amongst many precious teachings, we learned that the value of our service is measured by how much love we show in our service. Love is what makes our offering pleasing and beautiful in God's sight. It is important to love our sheep as our own children, not only as teachers and leaders but also as fathers.

We learned about methods of sermon preparation and delivery, with ample time provided for practical sessions and personal feedback. There were also lessons on doctrines and their spiritual significance to salvation. It felt like we were priests who had the privilege to enjoy a direct and intimate relationship with God. Oh, what blessing!

Through the testimonies of our preachers and volunteer workers, we received insight into the lives of our brethren in Africa. There is so much we can learn from them—their dedication and eagerness to receive the true gospel, the magnanimity of preachers who work without salary, and their simplicity of heart. We marvelled when we heard

about the impulsively joyful outpouring of songs of praise they sing to Jesus.

The passion and joy exuded by the pastors and African brethren reminded me that, unlike secular occupations, the work of God is far more precious and worthwhile. Although Jesus promised challenges and struggles when serving Him, we will certainly reap the delights and blessings when we serve voluntarily.

It was not only the formal lessons that edified me; the fellowship and examples set by the participants and workers taught me a lot, too. During breaks, I would see participants quietly studying the word of God, eagerly tapping into the pastors' experiences and sharing with one another their hopes and aspirations for God.

Such zeal and diligence touched me deeply. The unity among the brothers and sisters was evident, and I was invigorated through the sweet fellowship and laughter we shared.

### The Fire within My Heart

Although at times I felt unworthy and inadequate to carry out His work, I was repeatedly comforted by the enthusiasm of these brethren and the zeal of the pastors. The prayer sessions always brought me strength.

A constant humbling reminder was that I am in fact nothing and that only by the power of Christ in me did I have the hope of being a vessel ready for His use. It was indeed a refreshing thought to know that God does not actually need me, but, by His grace, He allows me to have a part in His work and will on earth.

Some of us took time off from work and school to attend this seminar. I believe that neither the time nor effort we invested was in vain. God gladly made His presence known, and we found ourselves experi-

encing the sentiments of the psalmist in the phrase: "[A] day in your courts is better than a thousand" (Ps 84:10).

From a very young age, my father has told me countless anecdotes and testimonies of God's grace in Africa, and, though in some strange way I feel I already know them, I have always longed to meet the brothers and sisters I see in the photographs. The enlightenment and joy I felt at the AVMWTC have deepened this longing to personally experience the hand of God in the African mission.

In 2005, seven volunteers, three being first time visitors, were given this chance to experience God's hand in assisting the preachers on missionary trips. Brother Tony Kwok Wing Ho and Brother Johnny Liu accompanied Pastor TK Chin to the pioneering areas of Dar es Salem, Tanzania, and Kenya. Praise God, many truth seekers received the Holy Spirit where they travelled.

Pastor YM Yang was accompanied by Brother Amos Jao and Deacon Lee on trips to Congo, where they truly felt the presence and grace of God. In Kenya, Sister Elaine Shek, Sister Lok Sze Chan, Brother Patrick Wong, and Pastor Timothy Yeung led the first AMC-directed student spiritual convocations in Africa.

Praise the Lord, ninety-nine of one hundred four students received the Holy Spirit at the convocation for twelve to sixteen year olds. In the convocation for those aged sixteen and above, forty-two of sixty-four students received the Holy Spirit.

*My heart is with the rulers of Israel  
Who offered themselves willingly with  
the people.*

*Bless the LORD! (Judg 5:9)*

What does it mean for one's heart to be with the rulers of Israel who willingly offered themselves with the people? To me, this entails loving the workers of God and the cause for which they fight on the frontline.

We know well that love is true only when it manifests itself in action. Action is exhibited through training ourselves for service, supporting our workers in prayer, and sacrificing our time and effort for God's kingdom.

Do we have the longing and hope in our hearts to see the kingdom of God advance in Africa? By God's power, we can turn this hope into action. And willing action—no matter how small—is never wasted.

Let us stand on God's truth and fight with His strength until He brings the victory.

And when we have volunteered to go wherever God sends us, we too, like Deborah and Barak, can shout with a joyful heart, "Bless the LORD!"

### Looking Ahead

Currently there are three work groups under the AMC: the missionary group, the RE textbook preparation group, and the prayer group. In the future, we sincerely hope that more brethren will volunteer to join the first two groups.

It goes without saying that the prayer group is an essential part of the ministry. In our prayers, may we always remember all our missionary workers, brethren, and those awaiting salvation in Africa.

May our LORD direct and guard all His workers and His church to victory—that He may have ever-increasing glory in Africa. Amen. ★



## Family Focus

Most of us lead very busy lives today. The demands of our careers often distract us from giving our children as much time as we would ideally like to. As far as their religious education is concerned, we tend to assume that the teachers at church are solely responsible or that religious classes and activities are enough to see them through a complete spiritual development.

In reality, however, the amount of time our children spend in church and religious activities form merely a meager fraction of their time. Parents who care about the spiritual growth of their children need to be aware that building a reverent atmosphere at home is an indispensable component.

The theme articles in this issue highlight to us the reasons why we must establish day-to-day religious education for our children at home and what benefits there are to having regular worship services within the family. Suggestions for establishing good home-based religious education are also provided. May the tips shared inspire us to build up a strong family-based spiritual altar.

# Setting Up the Altar

Translated from *Holy Spirit Monthly*—Issue 318

**“In the name of our Lord Jesus, we begin this service. Let’s sing hymn ...”**

Bible-reading, textual analysis, sharing of thoughts...for the past twenty-some years, at least one evening per week, the house of my in-laws has been livened up by sounds of hymn-singing, Bible-reading and prayer. Specifically, every member of this family knows that Thursday night is our “family altar” time.

My mother-in-law used to be a caretaker for one of our church chapels. Twenty years ago, our churches in Taiwan held services every night. When this was no longer practiced, my in-laws gathered family

members for worship on the evenings when the church did not have services.

Over the course of this long span of time, this tradition has seen much relocation of family members and change in the content of the worship sessions. Nevertheless, the practice of holding services never once stopped. Such robustness of practice can only be attributed to God’s mercy and abidance.

## **Sweet Aroma of Our Offering**

In the past, I had only heard about family services. After more than six years of marriage, I finally saw with my own eyes the

## THEME

benefits that come with building the family altar, for I truly experienced the love of God and His blessings for those who obey the teachings of the Bible.

### **Building Blocks of Children's Virtues and Reverence for God**

*I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. (2 Tim 1:5)*

After becoming a mother myself, I realized the difficulties in educating children. Deuteronomy 6:7 states that we have to be “diligent” in imparting God’s love to our children.

The responsibility of a child’s religious education cannot be simply left to teachers in church, because the child spends a far greater amount of time at home with his parents and other family members.

In ancient times, Job placed great emphasis on the family altar, rising early in the morning to offer sacrifices for fear that his “sons [had] sinned and cursed God in their hearts” (Job 1:5).

In this day and age, where all kinds of information can be readily accessed, young minds are especially prone to influences of dubious nature. Parents cannot but pay due attention to the spiritual growth of their children. Attempting to take remedial actions after their children have sinned against God may be too late.

The weekly family service serves as a good opportunity for me to be updated with their thoughts and happenings in their lives, and to provide guidance based on the words of God.

Sometimes, we have discussions of current world events, and the Bible is used as a point of reference for exchange of

ideas. This has been shown to help develop a child’s analytical abilities.

Surely the best gift that a parent can ever give to a child is a firmly-rooted understanding of God’s teachings—that children may have God’s abidance and protection all their lives.

### **Establishing the Foundations of Faith Through Intergenerational Sharing**

Over these past twenty years, our family service has seen many changes in faces. After the death of our great-grandmother, three generations remained.

A considerable number of us have gone to China due to job commitments, but we have had newcomers. Babies have grown up, bringing a breath of newness to our group.

Having regular gatherings, we reap many spiritual benefits from sharing across generations and extended families.

### **Different Age Groups Contribute in Different Ways**

My father-in-law (Elder Chen Heng-Tao) was a former full-time minister. He has a lot of spiritual insight and experiences to share. Whenever we hit a point or issue in the Bible that we don’t understand, he is the best candidate to turn to for explanation. What is amazing is his ability to cater to various types of audiences and edify them accordingly.

The teenager at home often defies any objective evaluation of her faith that one may use. But through her questions and sharing during the family services, I

received glimpses into her life of faith and, through time, managed to bond with her.

Little toddlers may not appear to have much to contribute. They even need adults to keep them under control during services. However, their simplicity and obedience are a form of edification, for the Lord Jesus says, “whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” (Lk 18:17).

### **Bonding Between the Generations**

Each family service is followed by fellowship, where snacks are served. The warmth of the conversations is always accentuated by the fragrance of the hot teas and snacks.

Sometimes, we have special birthday cakes for the birthday boy or girl. Such celebrations convey the care and love of the family members and generate many beautiful memories for all present. Scenes like these are reminiscent of what is depicted in Psalms 128:3: “In the very heart of your house, your children [are] like olive plants all around your table.”

During fellowship, we often use the time to make phone calls to connect with those in the family who have moved away due to job or family commitments. As each person takes his turn to be on the phone, we can all feel the warmth that binds us to those who are miles apart.

Even for those who have left us, the memories linger. My grandmother passed away two years ago, but she is always remembered—where she used to sit, her

**Surely the best gift that a parent can ever give to his children is a firmly-rooted understanding of God’s teachings, that the children may have God’s abidance and protection all their lives.**

**While some would say investing one's time in other things can bring greater benefits, I would say these people have no idea what blessings come with worshipping God.**

favorite hymns, and scenes of her surrounded by the great-grandchildren.

### God's Blessing is Definite

*"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Mt 18:19, 20).*

The shortest route for a Christian to receive God's blessings is simply to obey and hold fast to God's promises. By holding family services, one makes Christ the Lord of one's house. God will strengthen family ties and grant peace and blessings to all in the family who fear the Lord.

### The Altar and I

My grandmother-in-law and my in-laws have played a big role in the progress of my faith. Their diligence in attending services, come rain or shine, always inspires me to never stop worshipping God.

There are times when the attendance at family service is poor. Even when only two or three people show up, these elderly members enthusiastically sing hymns, pray and worship. I have gradually become influenced by their zeal for attending services.

While some would say investing one's time in other things can bring greater benefits, I would say these people have no idea what blessings come with worshipping God. My wish is for my children to keep up with this tradition.

An important component of our family service is the sumptuous meal that comes before. My mother-in-law has been the self-designated chef for more than a decade. We, the younger generation, have tried relieving her of this heavy task by volunteering to host the family services at our homes.

However, it has proven too much for us, as we all have our jobs in the day. Cooking for a big party is not at all easy, but my mother-in-law has relentlessly taken this task upon her own shoulders. I wonder when I will ever be able to take over this wonderful service of love and endurance. May God bless her for her labor.

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Rom 12:5). The progress of the church is built upon the prayers of all the believers and their efforts at evangelism and service to one another.

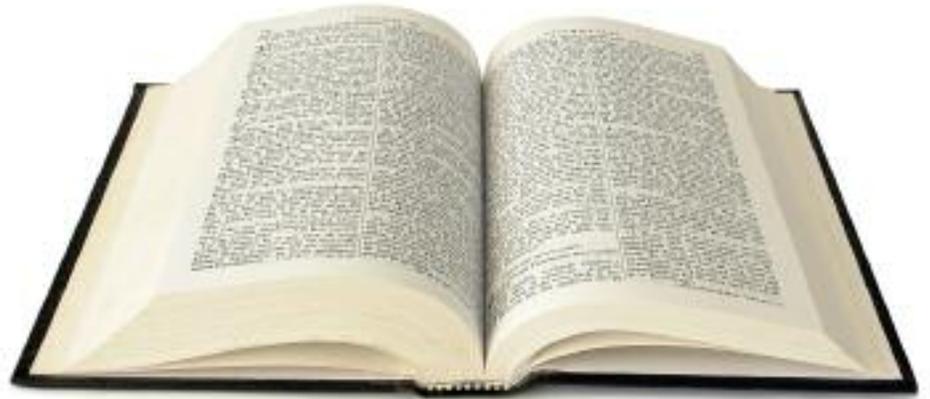
The family is the fundamental source of influence for any believer. As the Bible says, "if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim 3:5).

When every household places the Lord Jesus as the Lord of the house, every believer can be built up through the family altar so as to be better vessels for God's use.

### Keep the Altar Going

Setting up the family altar definitely brings only benefits to our lives and faith. I wish for everyone to establish a family altar and to let the Lord be the Lord of their home. May our gracious and loving God bless

every family that loves Him with strength, joy and grace unbounded! ★



# Establishing a Spiritual Altar in the Family

Translated from *Holy Spirit Monthly*—Issue 318<sup>1</sup>

## Inadequacy of Church Religious Education

In many families today, parents and children are emotionally distanced from each other. Parents are busy at work, and children are busy with school or after-school activities. Parents and children hardly see each other, let alone establish a close relationship. Under such conditions, parents can hardly lend timely help when their children run into problems.

There are cases where children have been arrested for a crime, and the parents are in complete disbelief when informed by the police. How could their well-behaved children possibly break the law? Some persist in total denial that the arrest was nothing more than a mistake.

Criminals are not made overnight. Parental neglect and failure to empathize can lead to children going astray. It may be too late for any action once the

children make some grave, irreparable choices.

In the church, we see less of such phenomenon. But, undeniably, we have seen youths losing their faith after going off to college or military service where they are too far from church or members to congregate for services. It may seem unbelievable, but a couple of years away from church have the potential to completely undo some twenty years of religious education.

A few hours of religious education (RE) classes in church per week do not quite make the cut for educating a developing child. While religious education in church is necessary and essential, home is, after all, where children spend most of their time. It is their parents, who live with them every day, that have the most profound influence on them.

The passing on of faith is not something that can be accomplished merely in the classroom. Faith is not just knowledge—it entails much more of real life experience. As such, parents must take up the responsibility of nurturing reverent children.

## Teach and Nurture the Child Early

Biblical history has seen some parents who failed to keep their children under control, which ended with dire consequences. Samson's mother was originally barren, but by God's mercy, she gave birth to a son. God specifically instructed Samson's parents that he was to be a Nazirite, consecrated to God from the very day of his birth. He was not to drink any form of wine or touch or eat anything unclean.

When Samson desired to marry a gentile woman, his parents dissuaded him to no avail. He even hid the truth from his

parents about eating honey out of the unclean carcass of a lion. By not even inquiring about what he did outside of the home, his parents indirectly contributed to his sin (Judg 13, 14).

The two sons of Eli the priest were evil men. When Eli learned about their sexual immorality with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle, he tried to admonish them:

*“Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD’s people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?”*  
(1Sam 2:23-25)

But apparently, Eli’s words were ineffective. His children persisted in evil-doing.

Developmental psychologists emphasize that life experiences in infancy and childhood are the key elements that shape a person’s character and affect his or her development throughout life. In a similar vein, the Bible also teaches us, “Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction” (Prov 19:18).

Eli and Samson’s parents failed, not because they did not discipline their children, but because they tried to teach them when it was too late. They failed to fulfill their responsibility of teaching their children when they were still young and while they could still be molded. Consequently, by the time their children entered adulthood and their characters had been shaped, they no longer took their parents’ admonitions seriously.

Timothy was Paul’s good helper. Paul recognized that Timothy’s faith could be attributed to his mother and grandmother.

*I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.* (2 Tim 1:5)

Timothy’s mother must have established a good religious education while Timothy was young—resulting in Timothy’s strongly rooted faith.

Moses was cared for by his mother, Jochebed, in his childhood. Jochebed took hold of this opportunity to teach and nurture Moses and to establish his faith. That is why, after Moses returned to the palace to be trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he was still able to keep his faith. He “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb 11:24-25).

After Samuel was born, he was cared for by his mother, Hannah, at home. It was only when he was weaned<sup>2</sup> that he left his parents (1 Sam 1:23) and served the Lord before Eli. The good education Samuel received must have been the primary reason that preserved him from the evil influence of Eli’s sons and kept him in God’s favor.

**When children are still young, the parents should start to teach their children diligently to know and fear God.**

*Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.* (Prov 22:6)

When children are still young, parents should start to teach their children diligently to know and fear God. Trying to do so when the children are grown up would not be nearly as effective.

### **Balancing Sacred Work and Nurturing Our Children**

*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.*  
(Ps 127:3)

It is the responsibility of the parents to take care of this heritage. Just as it is wrong for parents to be so busy with their jobs as to neglect their children, it is also wrong for parents to be active in sacred work for God at the expense of time with their family.

Samuel served as a judge over Israel. He anointed the first king of Israel and inaugurated the period of kings and prophets. Throughout his life, he never faltered in judging the people of Israel (1 Sam 12:3-5). But sadly, “his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice” (1 Sam 8:3).

Perhaps Samuel was too occupied with judging the people that he did not have time for his children even when he was home.

*And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD”* (1 Sam 7:15-17).

## THEME

Even for a faithful servant of God, God did not guarantee that Samuel's children would automatically grow up to be God-fearing.

The family forms the basic unit of any society. In the spiritual kingdom, the family is all the more the foundation for feeding the Lord's lambs and strengthening each other.

After many years in his ministry, Paul also felt deeply the importance of the home. He mentioned in 1 Timothy that to qualify for the work of an overseer, the person must not only have good personal conduct but also needs to "rule his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence" (1 Tim 3:4).

In reality, true service should begin in the family. "For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim 3:5).

When we try to repay the Lord and serve fervently in church, we must be careful not to neglect our families or overlook the education of our children. We must do our job of teaching and nurturing our children that they may grow up in reverence.

### **The Benefits and Importance of Family Devotional Time**

It may be common knowledge that we need to train our children in the habit of reading the Bible and prayer. It is true that Bible reading and prayer serve as the basis of our faith. But how are our children reading the Bible? Do they understand what they read? Do they focus when they pray? Is the content of their prayer correct?

If we want to help our children in their faith, having a family devotional time is a very good way to do that. Family devotional time uses the family setting as a place of worship. Worship and drawing

close to God should be incorporated into our family lives.

During the devotional time, if our children are still young, we may use Bible stories as teaching tools. From that, we can gradually build up our children's habit of Bible-reading and prayer, as well as preparing them to stay quiet and orderly during service.

When they are older and are able to think and ask questions, we can study the Bible with them and share personal testimonies. Further along, we can have longer prayers, discuss doctrines, and share reflections.

The entire family can care for the work of the church together. By encouraging one another through serving the Lord, praying for each other, and working hand in hand, a fine Christian family is thus built up.

Besides worshipping God, family devotional time also serves as a channel of communication between parents and children. Parents can get updated on recent happenings in the lives of the children—in church, at school, and in general.

Faith is intertwined with and inseparable from daily life. We should seize hold of every opportunity to educate our children. Often times, our children observe how we handle a situation. Through such opportunities, we can share our life experience with them and offer them advice. Such guidance can be a great help to their life of faith.

The family devotional time is an opportunity for the children. Parents should hold themselves back from interrupting what their children have to say. One problem to look out for is an urge to turn the family devotional time into lecture time. Otherwise, the children might dread having family devotional time, hence defeating its purpose. "You,

fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the LORD" (Eph 6:4).

Parents should treat the family devotional time as a channel to getting to know the children better and convey our care and concern. If we do not respond positively when they tell us little things in their lives, we may unintentionally be shutting off the channel of communication. To attempt re-opening such a channel later will take much more effort.

### **Setting Aside a Time for Family Devotions**

Now that we know the importance of family devotional time, we must remove every obstacle in the way and set aside a time for drawing close to God. We need to give first priority to family devotions. We should never allow daily activities to deprive us of the benefits of family devotions. In the midst of busy schedules, we must set aside a family devotional time.

We might have the erroneous idea that our children are already so busy with school that we could not possibly have the time for family devotions. Even if everything revolves around our children's studies, it will not guarantee that they will do well in school.

*Unless the LORD builds the house,  
They labor in vain who build it;  
Unless the LORD guards the city,  
The watchman stays awake in vain.  
(Ps 127:1)*

Nowadays, evening church services have a lower attendance rate. If, for work or other various reasons, we cannot be at church during service time, it becomes all the more important to set aside a fixed time for family devotions.

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We must not allow ourselves to draw away from God for reasons of being busy with secular matters. Such neglect of our spiritual lives can cause us to fall prey to the devil's snare.

## Conclusion

It is the responsibility of every parent to lead their children through this chaotic and sin-filled world. Besides praying for God's protection, parents need to examine themselves to see if they are teaching and nurturing their children. The most practical way to establish our children's faith is to establish a spiritual altar in the family.

Family devotions can help parents and children grow together through worship and family religious education. For religious education to be effective, the family has to play a dominant and active role.

Religious education in the family is a life-long endeavor. If we can establish and maintain a spiritual altar in the family, our family will be blessed and filled with Christ's fragrance.

*Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,  
Who walks in His ways.*

*When you eat the labor of your hands,  
You shall be happy, and it shall be well  
with you.*

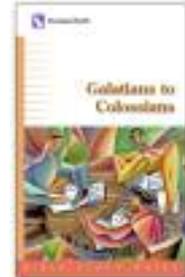
*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine  
In the very heart of your house,  
Your children like olive plants  
All around your table.*

*Behold, thus shall the man be blessed  
Who fears the LORD.*

(Ps 128:1-4) ★

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.joy.org.tw/holyspirit.asp?num=1329&word=%AEEa%AEEx%B2%BD%BE%C2>

<sup>2</sup> Jewish children in those days were weaned at the age of three.



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# As Fiery Red as Molten Lava

*Reflections on the Fourth Missionary  
Trip to Congo, November 16-30, 2005*

YM Yang—Paris, France

By the Lord's grace and the faithfulness and diligence of the workers, thirteen churches have been established in the year and three months since the gospel first reached Congo in August of 2004. Over 900 people have come to the Lord, forming an army under the Lord's banner!

On a typical day during this trip, I would return to my lodging place after dark. Going against the pleas of a body worn with fatigue, I would kneel down by my bed and offer a lengthy prayer of thanksgiving and praise, for I knew that anyone who came on such a trip would have experienced the grace that I experienced. I was but a man of little faith. Yet, I received the Lord's mercy over my weakness and have been blessed with the grace to witness His marvelous deeds.

It is impossible to pen down all the marvels that touched me on this trip. I only aim to recount some highlights, that readers may join me in praises to God and prayers for our brethren whose faith and zeal burn hot as lava.

### Loyal and Self-Sacrificing Workers

I flew to Kigali, Congo, from Paris via Johannesburg, with the flight scheduled to arrive at 12 noon on November 16, 2005. Delays and re-routing pushed the arrival time to 5 p.m. Upon arrival, three brothers were awaiting me enthusiastically.

Brother Jean-Claude, who came from Butare, Rwanda, on a two-hour car ride, had waited at the airport since 11 a.m. with no food or drink. Pastors Ben and Baraka of Congo, who took a train from Goma, had also been waiting since 1 p.m.

Throughout the next fifteen days of this trip, I was to witness more of such resilient, long-suffering spirit.

### Faithfulness in Little Things

On the third pioneering trip to Congo in July, we had requested Ben to start bookkeeping for all expenses of the church. Initially, he was rather sad and commented to his fellow workers that he was quite hurt that we did not trust him. I had to give him much explanation that if a project expense was not clearly recorded, it would be difficult to request funding again next time.

Seeing him again this time, I found that he not only understood the benefits of bookkeeping and auditing, he even went beyond our expectations and voluntarily submitted all the records from as far back as February.

From big projects like expenses for typesetting *Les Fondements du Salut (The Essential Biblical Doctrines)*, which had been translated into Swahili, and subsidies for hospital fees for two pastors (our pastors in Congo currently do not receive any living allowance from the church) to small purchases of office supplies, all accounts were kept up to date, with each expense accompanied by a receipt. Such attention to detail reflected an honest and reverent attitude towards the things belonging to the house of God.

### Offering of Oneself—Christ Above All Else

Many others workers similarly touched and inspired me with their hearts of purity towards God. Some of them converted to the Truth even though it meant forsaking salaries and respectable positions in their former churches. They even dedicated themselves to unpaid and unacknowledged evangelical work as pastors in our church. They maintained the simplicity they had always had.

On this trip, I helped some workers with the purchase of a house to be converted to a chapel. In order to ascertain his sincerity in looking for a chapel, I actually tested one of them—Pastor Paul from Mugunga-Edosho, who was converted from another church.

I told him that if we decided to purchase a chapel, he may have a room to stay, but his family would not be able to move in with him. They would have to find a place to rent on their own so as to avoid opposition from other members. His face showed some initial perplexity and anguish. But, after a moment of silence, he replied, “I would still move! I would rent a place next to church so I could take care of the church!” The way Paul loved the Lord this much and was upright in character truly moved me.

That same evening, I learned why I did not see Paul's wife when I was in Mugunga-Edosho for service that morning. Because of financial hardship, she had gone back to Rubaya to work as a farmer in order to support the whole family back in Mugunga-

**The workers were admirable not only in terms of their spirit of service. In the matter of upholding their beliefs, they proved themselves to be of true faith as well.**

Edosho! This has been a persistent problem for the pastors in Congo. Having no income, they have had to rely on themselves or their spouses to work to support their families.

For the past twenty years, Paul had served in a church that paid him a living allowance. But for the sake of the truth, he left the former church without regard for his livelihood and joined our ministry without financial support. What is even more admirable is that these pastors' wives devoted themselves entirely to supporting their husband's ministry by working to earn a living!

#### **Upholding the Truth Against All Odds**

The workers were admirable not only in terms of their spirit of service. In the matter of upholding their beliefs, they proved themselves to be of true faith as well. I had a discussion with one of the workers on whether to erect a cross for the new chapel. (I knew from my August visit that the church in Congo decided against putting up a cross.)<sup>1</sup>

For the sake of argument, I insisted on a view different from Pastor Ben's. I wanted to see if he would sacrifice his desire to keep the truth for the sake of some personal interests. When he was at the point of losing the debate, Ben told me in tears, "Pastor, I have never spoken with you so vehemently. I have fully accepted the common beliefs of the True Jesus Church, and I have dedicated my life for this cause. But concerning erecting a cross, I cannot understand why we should, and I cannot accept it. I know that it is not my ministry as a pastor that would save me, but my obedience to the truth. I would rather lose my office as a pastor. But please don't ask me to erect a cross on the church. I would not be able to do so with a clear conscience."

I have known Ben for over a year, and we've waded through many difficulties together. This was my first time seeing this mighty man in tears. The loyalty of these workers in Congo toward the Lord, their insistence on keeping the truth, and their hope of salvation were laid open before me. My relentless heart was deeply moved and filled with thanks that the Lord had blessed me with such faithful workers to labor beside me to expand new territories for the Lord.

#### **Refreshing Life of Faith amid Harsh Living Conditions**

The members in Congo lead a hard life. Yet, they maintain a cheerful spirit and their zeal for the Word of God is simply amazing. Their hearts are genuine and thankful towards God. It is heartening to see God's power working mightily in this new territory of the gospel.

### **Cherishing the Sabbath Services**

Sabbath services throughout our churches in Congo are usually from 9 am to 3 pm without interruption. Sometimes, services run from 9 am to past 5 pm, except for one hour of lunch time. Their level of endurance is phenomenal!

At one of the services in Goma, the entire congregation left their seats and fell prostrate in reverence, singing repeatedly, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. O, Jesus! We thank you!" The voices in harmony rang in my heart and moved me continuously.

When I thought of the harsh environment they lived in and how they, as emaciated as they were, could still thank God with such reverence, I couldn't hold back my tears. What a wonderful way to begin a worship service!

### **Appreciating Every Morsel of Food**

What I found most difficult to bear every time we came here were the meal times. Eight to ten people would sit around a long bench, and a large plate of rice topped with red beans would be served. They ate with their hands, and, within three minutes, all the food would be consumed.

On this occasion, those who cooked set aside a small dish that had some type of meat especially for me. When I saw that, I told them I needed to lose some weight. Then I gave the meat to the seventeen-year-old lead choir singer who had been adopted by Ben after her father had died and her mother had left her. She looked at me in disbelief and was too shy to take the meat.

Ben told her not to be shy but to take the entire plate. Instead, she brought the dish over to the exit of the chapel and handed it to her adopted mom, Ben's wife, who also did not eat it. Then, she took it back to the group of young sisters she was sitting with and set the plate down. Instantly, before I could notice who ate the meat, the plate had become empty! My heart ached.

In reality, every time I went to Congo, I would take the opportunity to lose some weight. Also, because I really needed to give myself some quiet time before and after each day's work, I tried to minimize my material needs.

So, I would try to fill my stomach with only three pieces of crackers that I brought from France and some water. This helped me stay very alert physically and mentally. Compared to them, I felt ashamedly obese.

### **Every Cent Counts**

On a car ride to a church, Pastor Ben asked the driver to stop the car saying that he spotted the wife and daughter of Pastor Bangoye and thought we could give them a ride. I learned that this mother and daughter had to walk 2 hours to Shasha, a town more than 10 km away, to buy peas to sell in Sake in order to earn some income for the family. I asked Ben how much the bus fare was from Sake to Shasha. "40 cents!" was his reply.

When the mother and daughter pair squeezed into the car, Bangoye's wife held my hand tightly after getting into the car and would not let go. It was as if we were long-time friends. Her face glowed with joy.





## God's Power Was Evident to All

### Many Received the Holy Spirit and Saw Visions

I learned that Goma church has organized themselves into three teams, each of which fasts and prays for two days between Sunday and Friday. These teams are led by Pastors Ben, Baraka, and Safari.

Team members who have to work during the day (while fasting), come to church after work to pray, fellowship, and stay at church until about 4 am, at which time they get up to pray again. After the fasting is over, they have a meal together. Each team consists of 4 to 12 members, including brothers and sisters.

When I was there this time, a middle-aged sister who was formerly a member of another denomination and a recent convert received the Holy Spirit. She testified that, in her prayer, she saw the Lord Jesus Christ in white, wearing a splendid crown, holding a cross, and standing in front of her.

She kept speaking to the Lord in tongues and received the Holy Spirit. Although she did not know what she was saying, she felt immense joy in the Spirit. She was so joyful that she was in tears as she shared the testimony.

It was reported to me that the Sake church was currently the most prosperous church because a few deaconesses had dedicated themselves to full-time ministry. They had the gift of healing and casting out demons.

I visited this church, which was 30 km outside of Goma. The main objective, like that of other visitations, was to have deeper conversations with the local members to further understand the level of their faith and to conduct prayer sessions for the Holy Spirit.

Praise the Lord, more than ten people received the Holy Spirit during the 2 prayer sessions. Seven or eight people saw visions and the glorious light. The visions were mainly two types: 1) Seeing bright light, after which the individual receives the Holy Spirit; and 2) Seeing the appearance of the Lord in white, who imparted the Holy Spirit.

One person saw the Lord giving him water to drink, and at that precise moment, he received the Holy Spirit. Another person received a white garment from the Lord and was brought into an assembly of people in white.

Yet another person, when he received the laying on of hands, felt that his body became very light. He received great power and saw the appearance of the Lord, who was surrounded by many people dressed in white, singing and praising.

### God's Guidance in Chapel Purchase

In the purchase of land and building for one of our chapels, God's hand was visibly present to guide us. When we arrived at the venue to meet the owner, we found out that what was supposedly 17 x 30 sq. meters turned out to be only 17 x 27 sq. meters.

We asked the owner to either lower the price or increase the area to 19 x 27. The owner said that it was short by 3 meters because the government had occupied it for conversion into a street. The 5 x 27 piece of land they had reserved was for their own residence. He insisted and did not compromise.

This property was less than 20 meters from a major street, and the price (including a construction cost of US\$2,500, the house could immediately be used as a chapel and a pastor's room) was cheaper than empty lots farther from the street. It was also a very suitable place for church development. To pass on this bargain would be a loss.

When we saw how the owner was so adamant, I pretended to get up and leave to see if the owner would budge. The six of us got up to leave the house, but the owner did not say a word. Then, I realized the predicament we were in.

Unexpectedly, it started to rain heavily, and we were forced to return into the house. Further negotiations with the owner were to no avail. In the end, I said, "All right. We'll sign the deed." Then, the rain stopped.

### **God Personally Brought in New Converts**

Zizi was newly converted. He said that he had been to many churches in the country and had been baptized twice, but he was always discontent with the gospel message that was preached.

Recently, he dreamed that a missionary from a western country would come and bring the truth to him. He has studied the truth and understood it. He was overjoyed that his dream had come true. I let him ask the five questions he had in mind.

I responded to each question and asked him if he would be baptized if he was satisfied with the responses. By the time I answered his third question, he announced that he "must" be baptized.

When the coworkers heard that, they leaped with joy because Zizi was once their friend when they fought together for the gospel, and the gospel first reached Rubaya through him. Now that he resolved to be baptized, everyone embraced him tightly and thanked the Lord without ceasing. After this, Zizi did not even ask his fourth and fifth questions!

Another newly converted brother, Timothee, was a former missionary of another church. He was illiterate. He testified that two years ago, he dreamed that a girl brought him water to wash his eyes, hands, and feet.

Ever since then, he had been enabled to read the Bible in Swahili, and he came to an understanding of the truth through the reading of the Bible. He had come especially from Rubaya to receive baptism, and he eagerly hoped to receive the Holy Spirit.

### **May the Fiery Flame of Faith Burn Stronger Yet!**

Within one short year, by the grace of God, the church in Congo quickly reached a stage where they could preach and manage the church on their own. Financially speaking, however, we cannot deny the fact that they are still a long way from self-sustenance.

When I see them struggle under such harsh living conditions, it is always very difficult to resist the desire to lend a helping hand. But if we do not bear the pain of watching a little child learn to take his first steps, the church in Congo may never be able to experience the joy of being able to stand on its own.

Lord, you have seen all of it. We pray for your guidance!

March on, men of valor! May the Lord be with you! ★

<sup>1</sup> Some general assemblies in the True Jesus Church also do not agree with erecting the cross. The current practice is to let each country determine its own practice. The only requirement is for those with opposing views not to accuse one another.

# Songs of Homecoming

129

1 “MANY A TIME THEY HAVE AFFLICTED ME FROM MY YOUTH,” LET ISRAEL NOW SAY—2 “MANY A TIME THEY HAVE AFFLICTED ME FROM MY YOUTH; YET THEY HAVE NOT PREVAILED AGAINST ME. 3 THE PLOWERS PLOWED ON MY BACK; THEY MADE THEIR FURROWS LONG.” 4 THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE HAS CUT IN PIECES THE CORDS OF THE WICKED. 5 LET ALL THOSE WHO HATE ZION BE PUT TO SHAME AND TURNED BACK. 6 LET THEM BE AS THE GRASS ON THE HOUSETOPS, WHICH WITHERS BEFORE IT GROWS UP, 7 WITH WHICH THE REAPER DOES NOT FILL HIS HAND, NOR HE WHO BINDS SHEAVES, HIS ARMS. 8 NEITHER LET THOSE WHO PASS BY THEM SAY, “THE BLESSING OF THE LORD BE UPON YOU; WE BLESS YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!”

## *Song of Ascent, the Tenth*

**M**any a time they have afflicted me from my youth...

I had forgotten  
rumors could haunt these hills and  
the sound of words could  
whip through the temple  
like cords positioned to pounce.

Why did I forget?  
And how could I?  
– That joy comes  
in spirituality’s morning,  
but the weaknesses of men  
recur at night.

How can we survive  
with plowers pressed  
into the back and  
wounds gouged deep?

How can we survive  
in an ark that seems –  
sinking?

I stagger in my breathing  
and I say,  
*I cannot stay I cannot stay*  
*I cannot survive*  
*here.*

And Lord,  
You know,  
how I lashed out at You  
with blame, with indignation,  
with equal cords of resentment.

You know  
the sorrow that seeped into my heart  
like heavy smoke through the  
crack of a door.

You know  
my whole soul grieved  
when I saw  
how in holy places  
people still can fall,

How the stalwart-seeming crash –  
lying like the shards of  
elegant busts on the floor –  
leaving Your temple  
devastated, dismal and foreign  
to the eye.

For a moment  
I long for the wilderness,  
For a moment  
I yearn to retreat

Because I think  
getting caught in the brambles  
of the world  
are not so different  
from the thickets in here

But –  
somehow,  
in some way,  
in some unasked  
miracle of the days  
You plant my feet in  
these windy and narrow steps.

Though desire begs me  
to give this journey up,  
though sorrow obscures  
sight and sense of You,  
though I lose  
all hope of direction,

You carry me.  
You stay me.

And here on this step  
somehow,  
in some way,  
in some unasked  
miracle of the days,  
I stand.

I stand for You  
I stand in You  
I stand because of You

I don't know why  
You've stilled me,  
but I will listen,  
I will listen.

The eye sees no point  
but the soul stays  
for something deeper  
that I do not yet know  
that I cannot yet speak.

It is all right  
That I do not know  
I will listen  
I will listen.

And let us all,  
who are hovering  
between these same steps  
of belief and loss  
hope and despair  
quietude and cries

listen for You,  
for the peace of your voice,  
to stay us, to pull us  
to see as You see  
to follow You,  
You alone.

130

1 OUT OF THE DEPTHS I HAVE CRIED TO YOU, O LORD;  
2 LORD, HEAR MY VOICE! LET YOUR EARS BE ATTENTIVE  
TO THE VOICE OF MY SUPPLICATIONS. 3 IF YOU, LORD,  
SHOULD MARK INIQUITIES, O LORD, WHO COULD STAND? 4  
BUT THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH YOU, THAT YOU MAY BE  
FEARED. 5 I WAIT FOR THE LORD, MY SOUL WAITS, AND IN  
HIS WORD I DO HOPE. 6 MY SOUL WAITS FOR THE LORD  
MORE THAN THOSE WHO WATCH FOR THE MORNING— YES,  
MORE THAN THOSE WHO WATCH FOR THE MORNING. 7 O  
ISRAEL, HOPE IN THE LORD; FOR WITH THE LORD THERE  
IS MERCY, AND WITH HIM IS ABUNDANT REDEMPTION. 8  
AND HE SHALL REDEEM ISRAEL FROM ALL HIS INIQUITIES.

*Song of Ascent, the Eleventh*

**O**ut of the depths I have  
cried to You, O Lord. . .

Out of the depths  
I have cried

Sending up  
My prayers like  
lattice-winged messengers  
that fail and  
all fall flat.

Why,  
even the echo  
Of my voice  
plummets down  
like some misbegotten bird.

And I tell myself,  
You have not heard—  
You have not seen—

For why else  
Would you not answer,

When month after month  
Day after day  
I present to You

The same prayers  
The same pleas  
In the same prostrate  
posture

And there is only  
Silence – null and nothing.

Out of the depths  
I have cried,  
Out of the depths  
I have hoped.

Will You not hear?  
Will You not be near  
as once You were?

But this I know,  
I am not the master  
To dictate your coming.

If there is to be silence,  
Then let it be.

Yet,  
    Silence,  
        Speak.

Let me understand  
the message You bring.

And let me find  
a new way to pray.

Let me learn  
a new song for my lips,  
And let me possess  
a new patience in my heart.

Lord, though I cry  
Out of the depths,  
Help me to be watchful and wait.

For the night  
I know  
You will certainly scatter  
And the silence  
You will surely break.

**134**  
1 LORD, MY HEART IS NOT HAUGHTY, NOR MY EYES LOFTY. NEITHER DO I CONCERN MYSELF WITH GREAT MATTERS, NOR WITH THINGS TOO PROFOUND FOR ME. 2 SURELY I HAVE CALMED AND QUIETED MY SOUL, LIKE A WEANED CHILD WITH HIS MOTHER; LIKE A WEANED CHILD IS MY SOUL WITHIN ME. 3 O ISRAEL, HOPE IN THE LORD FROM THIS TIME FORTH AND FOREVER.

*Song of Ascent, the Twelfth*

**L**ord, my heart is not haughty  
Nor my eyes lofty...  
When the waves crash  
Down on me and  
banish all  
Thought of action.

The hero, I've heard,  
emerges in times of  
intense struggle.

And the saint, I thought,  
Was supposed to shine  
brightest during  
the darkest trial.

But once conflict came  
And the trials knotted me in,  
Neither hero, nor saint  
revealed himself in me.

– I did not even do  
As Peter did  
And cry out  
For You to save me.

Instead,  
I floundered.

And the winds  
Whipped around me  
Like a snake  
Centered on its prey

And the waves  
Arced over me  
Like a mouth  
Poised to eat.

And I did not call,  
I did not call.

I did not call  
When I needed You most.

But strangely,  
You saw, You came.

And the turbulent waters  
Then rocked soft,  
the wind whispered a lullaby and  
You spoke Your message:  
That after all you think you are  
after all you try to be,  
you are just  
My smallest child,  
Helpless and dependent,  
Curled into this very crook  
of My arms.

And now,  
after all I thought I wanted –  
to be sure, to be strong, to be a fire –  
I am content.

Just  
As I am.

So  
tuck me into yourself,  
O Lord,  
And let me say,  
thank you and  
good-night.

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1 LORD, REMEMBER DAVID AND ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS;  
 2 HOW HE SWORE TO THE LORD, AND VOWED TO THE  
 MIGHTY ONE OF JACOB: 3 "SURELY I WILL NOT GO INTO  
 THE CHAMBER OF MY HOUSE, OR GO UP TO THE COMFORT  
 OF MY BED; 4 I WILL NOT GIVE SLEEP TO MY EYES OR  
 SLUMBER TO MY EYELIDS, 5 UNTIL I FIND A PLACE FOR  
 THE LORD, A DWELLING PLACE FOR THE MIGHTY ONE OF  
 JACOB." 6 BEHOLD, WE HEARD OF IT IN EPHRATHAH; WE  
 FOUND IT IN THE FIELDS OF THE WOODS. 7 LET US GO  
 INTO HIS TABERNACLE; LET US WORSHIP AT HIS  
 FOOTSTOOL. 8 ARISE, O LORD, TO YOUR RESTING PLACE,  
 YOU AND THE ARK OF YOUR STRENGTH. 9 LET YOUR  
 PRIESTS BE CLOTHED WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND LET  
 YOUR SAINTS SHOUT FOR JOY. 10 FOR YOUR SERVANT  
 DAVID'S SAKE, DO NOT TURN AWAY THE FACE OF YOUR  
 ANOINTED. 11 THE LORD HAS SWORN IN TRUTH TO  
 DAVID; HE WILL NOT TURN FROM IT: "I WILL SET UPON  
 YOUR THRONE THE FRUIT OF YOUR BODY. 12 IF YOUR SONS  
 WILL KEEP MY COVENANT AND MY TESTIMONY WHICH I  
 SHALL TEACH THEM, THEIR SONS ALSO SHALL SIT UPON  
 YOUR THRONE FOREVERMORE." 13 FOR THE LORD HAS  
 CHOSEN ZION; HE HAS DESIRED IT FOR HIS DWELLING  
 PLACE: 14 "THIS IS MY RESTING PLACE FOREVER; HERE I  
 WILL DWELL, FOR I HAVE DESIRED IT. 15 I WILL  
 ABUNDANTLY BLESS HER PROVISION; I WILL SATISFY HER  
 POOR WITH BREAD. 16 I WILL ALSO CLOTHE HER PRIESTS  
 WITH SALVATION, AND HER SAINTS SHALL SHOUT ALOUD  
 FOR JOY. 17 THERE I WILL MAKE THE HORN OF DAVID  
 GROW; I WILL PREPARE A LAMP FOR MY ANOINTED. 18 HIS  
 ENEMIES I WILL CLOTHE WITH SHAME, BUT UPON  
 HIMSELF HIS CROWN SHALL FLOURISH."

*Song of Ascent, the Thirteenth*

**L**ord, remember David...

Though I used to view Your golden boy  
 With a perverse jealousy and pictured him  
     Sitting on a rock –  
     with his harp,  
 playing hymns and doing  
 everything too right.

I remember thinking  
 How can anyone compare to him?  
 Or, more to the point,  
 How can *I* compare to him?

He, Who even thought of  
 And ordered  
 The cedar Your temple  
 would require.

*[But] Lord, remember David...*

For all that he was,  
 a man, wholly after  
 Your own heart,

who yearned  
 And could not rest  
 Until he found a place  
 for You  
 In his life and city's center.

These days,  
 I don't try to top  
 that cherub on the rock.

– Because that's not  
 what David ever was.

For all his pastoral perfection,  
 He was human enough  
     Human  
     With desire and fears  
     pride and complacency  
     sorrow and despair.

And yet,  
 He still managed  
 To seek Your heart  
 And prepare Your temple.

He still managed,  
Despite the wreck of  
what we humans are,  
To search for You, to find You  
To Know You.

And I ask,  
*Lord, remember David...*

*Remember*  
how it was possible  
For a man in this world  
To incline his heart to You  
And hear  
the very pulse of Yours.

I ask You to remember  
And help incline my heart,  
All of our hearts,  
To forget our petty issues  
and make for You  
a temple  
In the midst of our life,  
And, to make our life  
One  
    steady  
        course  
of ascent.

1 BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR  
BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY! 2 IT IS LIKE  
THE PRECIOUS OIL UPON THE HEAD, RUNNING DOWN ON  
THE BEARD, THE BEARD OF AARON, RUNNING DOWN ON  
THE EDGE OF HIS GARMENTS. 3 IT IS LIKE THE DEW OF  
HERMON, DESCENDING UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF ZION;  
FOR THERE THE LORD COMMANDED THE BLESSING—LIFE  
FOREVERMORE.

*Song of Ascent, the Fourteenth*

**B**ehold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is like  
    Light  
        Unhinged  
From a rusted lantern,

Pure burning radiance  
Alighting the  
Cold, whalebone road.

Or it is like  
the crack  
Of an old contention,  
    bitterness,  
    a wooden nut,  
        dropping  
from its shell,

It is like the first  
breath of freedom  
once envy subsides,  
and the air is  
so much sweeter.

It is forgotten rancor  
Forgiven pasts,  
A new way of seeing.

It is like  
Trickling streams of  
Visceral laughter,  
something shared and  
Something given.

It is like the rising  
Sound of singing,  
The sound of praise  
Ushering us in  
As we step towards  
God's dwelling place.

It is like  
Life  
As we know it should be.

It is like  
Light  
Unhinged.

*Behold...*  
*For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

It is like...

It is like...

It is –

Yes –

It is –

Heaven.

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1 BEHOLD, BLESS THE LORD, ALL YOU SERVANTS OF THE LORD, WHO BY NIGHT STAND IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD! 2 LIFT UP YOUR HANDS IN THE SANCTUARY, AND BLESS THE LORD. 3 THE LORD WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH BLESS YOU FROM ZION!

*Song of Ascent, the Fifteenth*

**B**ehold, bless the Lord,  
All you servants...

Who have traveled by day,  
Kept watch by night,  
Fallen  
But risen  
And now stand  
in the house of the Lord.

*Behold, bless the Lord,*  
*All you servants...*

Who, when your legs gave way,  
Crawled to reach  
the next step and  
Clutched the ledge  
Simply to keep hold.

*Behold, bless the Lord,*  
*All you servants...*

Who continued  
On sheer faith  
When the journey seemed  
Pointless.

*Behold, bless the Lord,  
All you servants...*

Who were lost  
But suddenly found  
The arms of God  
Steady  
around you.

*Behold, bless the Lord,  
All you servants...*

Who sang a song in the night  
For the ones in doubt,  
Whose notes caught  
Those in their turning and  
Unknowingly led them back.

*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary,  
And bless the Lord,*

For who has guided us  
But our Lord?  
And who sustained us  
But the sustainer of life?

*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary,  
And bless the Lord,*

For He has led us  
In His own ways,

He has stayed us  
When we turned our steps,

He has spoke  
When we did not even  
think to ask.

*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary,  
And bless the Lord,*

For we have come  
Yes,  
We are here,  
Yes,  
We are here.

*[And may] the Lord who made heaven and earth  
Bless you from Zion...*

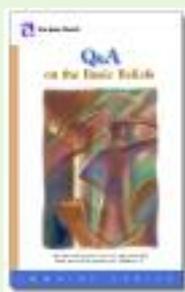
Bless you on your journey,  
Bless us in our continual ascent  
To see  
To meet  
To know  
– finally know –  
Him  
face to face.



**FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH** is the TJC weblog where you can share God-given inspirations and reflections with others for mutual edification and God's glory. Let the blessings of God flow through you to our site visitors so they can be encouraged to draw closer to God. Don't hesitate to offer your loaves and fish to the Lord today.

Visit <http://blog.tjc.org> and start reading and contributing

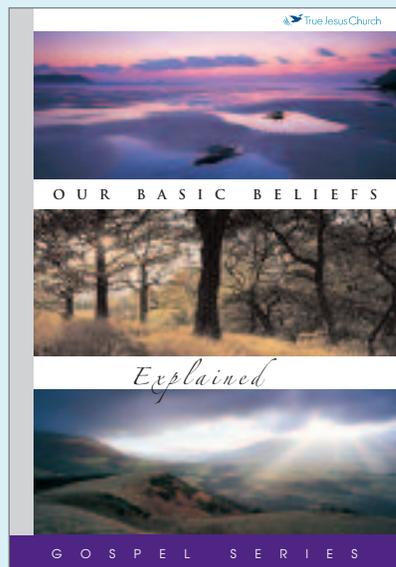
# FIVE LOAVES & Two Fish



### Q&A on the BASIC BELIEFS

*Have you run into questions you couldn't answer when you tried to share the gospel? Maybe you're still skeptical of the Christian faith and have many questions. Q&A on the Basic Belief is a handy resource that gives concise and to-the-point answers to the most frequently asked questions about basic truths.*

## GOSPEL SERIES



## OUR BASIC BELIEFS EXPLAINED

A clear explanation of the ten basic beliefs is now available in one book. *Our Basic Beliefs Explained* contains newly revised text from the Gospel Series brochures, and is a resource for personal reference and study.

<http://order.tjc.org/>



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

### **Christian Living**

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

### **Bible Study**

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

### **Doctrinal Study**

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

### **Exhortation**

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

### **Testimony**

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

### **Creative Writing**

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

#### **SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

Please email electronic files of articles (Word, Wordperfect, ASCII text) to [manna@tjc.org](mailto:manna@tjc.org), or send hardcopy and disk to:

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

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

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

# Call For Articles

## *Author Guidelines & Editorial Calendar*

### **Issue #54**

#### **Theme: Spiritual Roots**

#### **Articles due: July 1, 2007**

This theme will provide clarity and solid facts on TJC's doctrines. Some members, especially those in the younger generation, have doubts about TJC being the one true church. Articles will address why TJC is the one true church, and how the church received the doctrines of salvation from God through revelation. Articles should also explain why we are so "exclusive," what our doctrines are and why they are so different from other churches. Church history should also be covered. The importance of passing down faith and history to the next generation, and how it should be done should also be addressed. Finally, how we can each find our own faith (ideally, from personal experience).

### **Issue #55**

#### **Theme: What Really Matters**

#### **Articles due: October 1, 2007**

This theme will address what our priorities should be, according to the Bible. Articles should cover how we find God's purpose for us, and practical guidelines for accomplishing our purpose. This applies to all members, from adults to children and teens as well. Today, our lives are full with work, school and other activities. Do our ambitions cause us to compromise our faith? Do we leave God our leftovers? Even when serving God, we need to determine whether the work we do is what God wants from us. Articles should address how we can integrate God into our school-life and work-life.

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

## **GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES**

### **CONTENT**

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

### **GRAMMAR/STYLE**

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

# True Jesus Church

## Articles of Faith

### Jesus the True God

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

### Holy Bible

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

### Church

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

### Salvation

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

### Baptism

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

### Foot Washing

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

### Holy Spirit

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

### Holy Communion

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

### Sabbath Day

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

### Judgment Day

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

## TRUE JESUS CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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