

MANNA

True Jesus Church ISSUE 40 APR-JUN 2003 **God's Loving Anger**



At The End Of The **Rainbow**

Threshing **Wheat** In The Winepress

Internet Ministry Program Progress Report

MANNA

Apr-Jun 2003

ISSUE 40 Vol 27 No. 2

God's Loving Anger

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



Dear Reader,

We would like to dedicate this issue to all of you who have helped to improve the quality of Manna.

Thank you for taking the beautiful pictures that grace the pages of this magazine.

Thank you for reviewing the articles, scrutinizing each line, and providing feedback on the articles.

Thank you for your words—they have touched us, edified us, and inspired us to keep bearing witness to God's love.

May God remember your beautiful offering and your dedication to His literary ministry.

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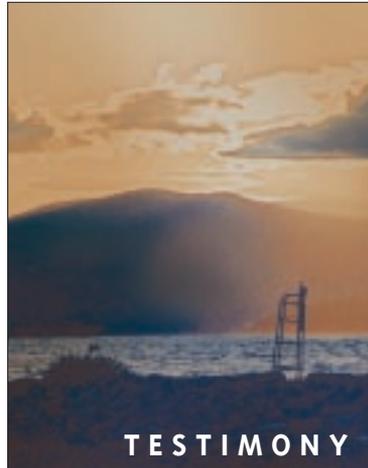
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God's Loving Anger



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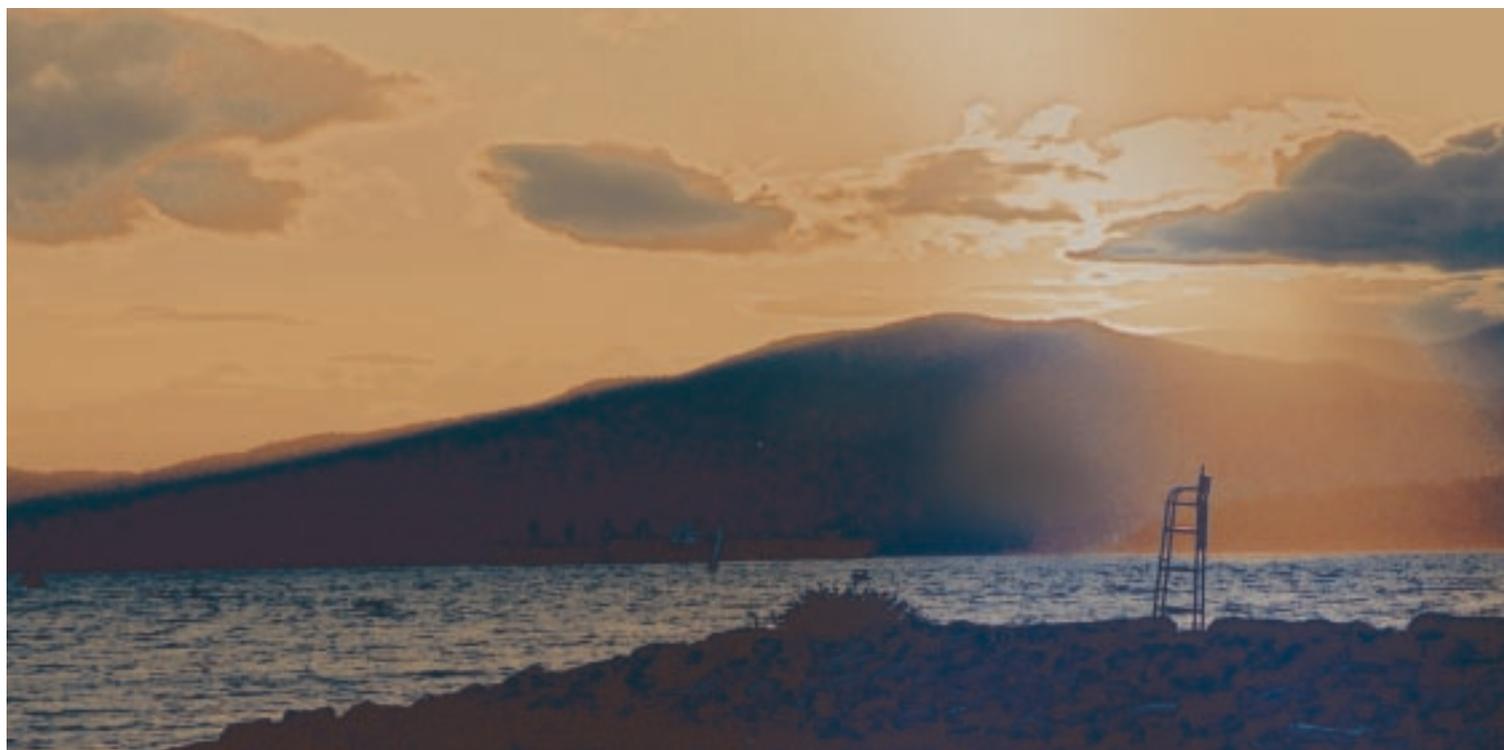
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God Works In Mysterious Ways

Joseph Liu—Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

A DEFECTIVE HEART

Jessica was born on a windy night at 10:30 p.m. in the fall of 1986. After her birth, the two doctors in attendance examined her and pronounced her to be a fine, normal baby. However, Jessica was not known to smile a lot during her infant years.

At the age of approximately twelve months, a community nurse placed a stethoscope on her chest and her eyes widened. She then stated that Jessica had a heart murmur, which appeared quite loud.

We rushed to our family doctor who confirmed that she indeed had a heart murmur. After a few visits to the cardiologist at the Children's Hospital in Vancouver, she was diagnosed with

having a hole in the junction of the four chambers of the heart and a deformed mitral valve. Her electrocardiogram (ECG) also showed that she had a loose piece of tissue inside the heart.

The decision was made to operate on her as soon as possible. Our family was extremely upset at hearing this news. Her grandmother, Deaconess Chow, had only been called back to God a few months before.

Jessica's cardiologist was Dr. Marion Tipple, one of the top children's cardiologists in Canada. She also teaches minor chest cold would leave her flat on her back, gasping for breath. Rushing her off to the emergency clinic was a regular occurrence, even in the middle of the night.

After the first surgery, the hole in the heart was patched with the loose tissue in her heart, but the attempt to repair the mitral valve was only partially successful. Another round of open-heart surgery was deemed necessary in the future.

RECURRING PROBLEMS

In 1988, Dr. Tipple decided the only thing to do was to perform the second

surgery immediately; this time, to completely remove her mitral valve and replace it with either a pig's valve or an artificial mitral valve.

Either way, because she was an infant, she would need many future heart operations as her heart and valve enlarged. Our family was totally devastated by this news. There was very little we could do but to follow the doctor's recommendation and leave our little girl's future in their hands.

Meanwhile, I had not kept up my faith for more than twenty years, and often went against my mother's teachings about Christ. Having attained higher education, I reasoned that my mother's talk of Christ was not the truth, and I often contradicted her and the Bible.

To make matters worse, British Columbia medical nurses went on strike the same year. Only medical cases that were deemed "life or death" situations were scheduled for surgery and all other surgeries were cancelled. The stress on our family was bearing down heavily.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SURGERY

One afternoon, our telephone rang and the nurse on the other end told us to bring Jessica in right away, as there was an opening for her surgery the next day. Fearing that this may be the last time we'd see Jessica alive, I made sure everyone gave her a last hug before I took her to the hospital.

Even her grandfather hugged her and refused to let her go. Jessica was two and a half years old by this time. Jessica stayed overnight in the hospital to prepare for her surgery. I stayed with her all night and cradled her in my arms until she went into surgery at 8:00 a.m. the

next morning.

The next day, Dr. Leblanc, an established and renowned heart surgeon, came into the hospital room and told me that he had studied Jessica's case in detail the previous night. He said that he would be able to repair Jessica's mitral valve without replacing it with an artificial valve. It brought some joy and relief to us, as there is no better substitute to your body than your own tissue.

After eight hours of surgery, we finally saw Jessica in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU); she was hooked up to half a dozen machines, and she had tubes inside and outside her body. She was asleep and motionless—weighing only nineteen pounds.

We expected her to be in the ICU for two or three days before she would be released to the general ward. On the third day, Jessica was still comatose but I

I asked for forgiveness for being a lost son and prayed that I would not be a stranger in the face of God.

could feel her grip on my finger. Even with her eyes shut her tears still flowed.

The ICU staff tried to wean her off the machines and drugs a number of times, but her heart couldn't handle the strain. She was then hooked up to the machines again. This went on for five or six days.

Finally, on the seventh day, Dr. Leblanc had a meeting with two heart specialists, Dr. Tipple and Dr. Sandoz, and he told us that he would perform another open-heart surgery to put in an artificial valve.

However, he informed us that he would not be able to do it immediately,

as he had an urgent surgery to perform the following day. He promised to conduct the surgery two days later.

I was very concerned about Jessica's condition, as she had been in a comatose state and had not eaten for seven days. I asked the three doctors at the meeting if Jessica could survive another open-heart surgery; given the condition she was in.

For a couple of minutes the doctors looked silently at each other, waiting for someone else to answer my question. Finally, Dr. Tipple looked at me and told me that there was no other choice. Jessica could not continuously live on life-support systems.

So, with a heavy heart I signed the letter of consent to allow the surgeon to proceed. My wife and I left the hospital thinking that surely this time Jessica would not be as fortunate as before.

TURNING TO GOD

We didn't talk much when we reached home. I told my wife to take down Jessica's photo from the wall, as it saddened us to look at it. I had not been to church for over twenty years at this point, and hadn't even prayed or talked to God during that time.

That afternoon I went into my bedroom, closed the door, and knelt down. I asked for forgiveness for being a lost son and prayed that I would not be a stranger in the face of God. I asked God to give Jessica back to me, and I asked Him not to punish my little girl for past things that I may have done wrong.

We had a solemn dinner that night, and none of us had an appetite to eat. Sometime after dinner, the telephone rang. I jumped with fear. What message would the telephone bring? Was Jessica still alive? Should I answer it?

Finally, I got to the phone and Dr. Leblanc told me that he was going to defer the surgery and place Jessica under observation. There appeared to be a sudden improvement in her condition and it seemed she was recovering rapidly.

It brought untold happiness to our hearts. We rushed to the hospital early the next morning and found Jessica awake and looking at us. We stroked her arms and forehead, and we thanked God for showing His forgiveness and mercy on us.

Within two days Jessica left the ICU and she was discharged from the hospital a week later. Before we left the hospital, Dr. Leblanc came to examine Jessica and I asked him what had happened.

He answered that he didn't know why Jessica recovered so quickly—especially without medical help. However, he requested that we bring her into his office to see him whenever Jessica was scheduled to come to the hospital for her annual check-ups with Dr. Tipple.

Dr. Leblanc instructed us not to bother about making an appointment and to just come into his office at any time. Bear in mind that it is not easy to see a surgeon without an appointment.

Jessica's health is progressing well. To this day, she continues to see Dr. Tipple for her annual check-ups, and she is very happy with Jessica's progress. Jessica is now sixteen years old, and we pray that she will always be a regular and faithful member of the True Jesus Church, as she

is today.

Our God is the God of mercy. For He works in mysterious ways and His power is over all things. Amen. ✠



My Battles With Cancer

Betty Pang—Garden Grove, California, USA

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify.

I'm originally from Sabah, which is in North Borneo, Malaysia. Now, I live in California, USA, with my husband and children. Growing up and being the energetic person that I am, I have always enjoyed good health.

Sixteen years ago, when I was in my forties, my life changed.

THE FIRST TIME

I was diagnosed with breast cancer on one of my breasts. When the doctor told me over the phone, it was pretty straightforward and matter-of-fact. He told me I must have my breast removed the following week and he would be the scheduled surgeon.

All along, even after the biopsy, it was in my mind that I was a very healthy

person. When the doctor told me I was devastated, shocked, and I couldn't accept the reality. I couldn't work for a few days because I was just so angry and disappointed. I went for second and third opinions, and the doctors confirmed that it was breast cancer.

I had a hard time accepting that because I didn't feel I could be a complete person without one breast. In those days, the only option was to have a mastectomy. I prayed to God and even though I dared not ask for a miracle to happen right away, I didn't want a mastectomy either.

For me, it was like the end of the world, so I prayed to God to open a way. When I slowly regained myself I was able to accept reality. I prayed and the family prayed with me, and all we could do was entrust this matter to God.

In those days, I was involved heavily in the publication work for the church, including other administrative works for Sabah GA and the Southeast Asia evangelical department, which could be very stressful. My own profession was also demanding. When everything added up I guess my engine broke down.

TREATMENT IN SINGAPORE

My husband and I knew a lot of members from working for the church, and news about my condition spread and many people prayed for me. I wanted to be treated in Singapore where the technology was well-advanced. I also knew this was not a possible solution because of the expenses and I wasn't being rational.

Thank God, I eventually received everything I asked for. I managed to get to Singapore for treatment, and it was all arranged by the local general hospital, which I was grateful for, as most people would be turned down. I managed to get the senior consultant to sign my papers without much hassle. He even arranged everything with the Singapore General Hospital for my treatment.

When I arrived at Singapore, the specialist said I could opt out of a mastectomy and choose to have a lumpectomy followed by radiotherapy instead. Somehow, God made everything fall into place.

The treatment was relatively painless and the radiotherapy took about fifteen minutes every weekday. After treatment, I would go visit the parks and do some window-shopping.

While I was in Singapore, I did not forget about doing holy work and was able to collect many articles from brothers and sisters there for our Southeast Asia evangelical publications.

In the end, we had an enjoyable time in Singapore for about two months. My husband accompanied me for a few weeks and had to return to work. Then my brother came, and my children came after he left. I guess God gave me a lovely vacation.

THE MOST RECENT BATTLE

Three weeks ago I was diagnosed with liver cancer, but this time I'm not as devastated. This doctor also told me over the phone. I don't know why he did that, but I wasn't shocked or surprised.

When I saw him earlier, I told him I had pains. I got tired easily and had lost my appetite, so he touched my side and felt a bulging, hard liver. He said, "Oh,

I ask God to give me courage, faith, and a peace of mind. That's all I need.

this is not good." He told me to arrange for an ultrasound. After the ultrasound, he called me and confirmed the diagnosis to be liver cancer. My response was really calm, thank God.

I came home and prayed to God. I'm in my sixties now and, if I'm to go now, I'm ready to go. I told God I would be submissive to His will—whatever it may be. Sixteen years ago, I wasn't ready to go because my children were still young.

Now, my children are grown, and the only thing I'm sad is that I'll have to leave my husband behind because we have really become one over thirty-eight years of marriage.

I ask God to give me courage, faith, and a peace of mind. That's all I need. It's now two months since the diagnosis, and I'm keeping a peace about me, and I still have my faith.

CLOSER TO GOD

And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who has been called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

This was a passage a sister in Sabah quoted for me while I was experiencing breast cancer, and recently she emailed me and quoted the same verse to comfort me.

I don't know what God has in store for me, but brothers and sisters from many churches are praying very hard for me, and local members come to visit me. I'm very touched and thankful to God for this wonderful expression of love.

All these are good things. Now I can understand and appreciate others' sufferings more deeply. I'm also more educated on being health-conscious, and I experience the warmth and care of brothers and sisters near and far.

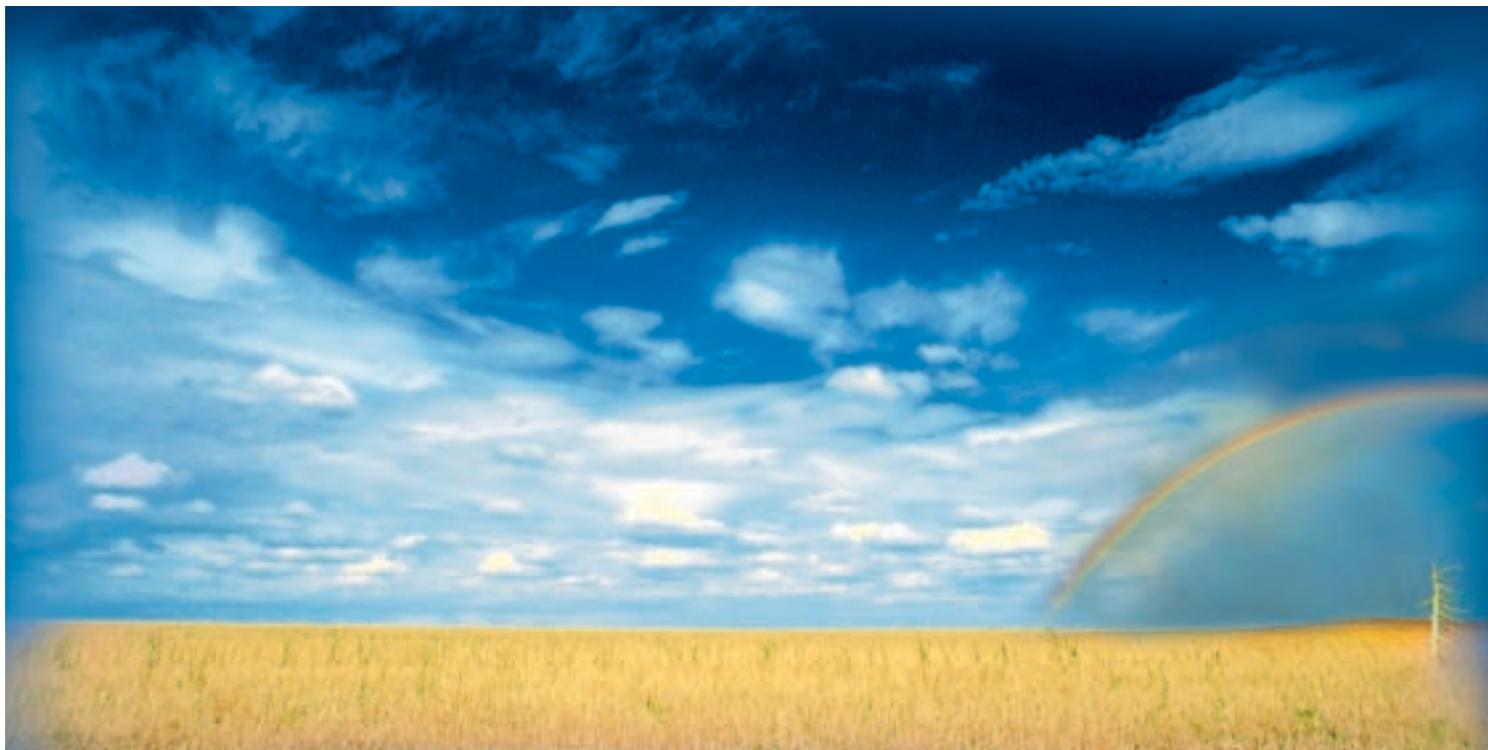
Most of all, I am closer to God.

My story does not end here; it is to be continued. I am now crossing the "valley of darkness." I don't know what is God's will for me, but I know He works in wondrous ways. I hope to be able to bear the conclusion of this testimony someday.

I pray that God will bless all those who continually show love and concern over me. In my suffering and infirmity, I believe God has a purpose. And I won't know that purpose until I get to the end of this affliction.

Thank you for all your comfort, support, and prayer. May God bless you all and may glory be unto the Lord Jesus. Amen. ★

Editor's note: Sis Betty Pang went to Taiwan seeking alternative Chinese medicine to treat liver cancer. She stayed at Taipei Church, and her condition improved under God's providence and prayers from everyone. She recently returned to Southern California after a month-long stay in Taiwan. She expresses much gratitude to everyone that is continually praying for her, and she is very touched by the love and care shown her in these difficult times. We pray for her quick recovery.



At The End Of The Rainbow

Jean Yeh—San Jose, California, USA

GOD IS THE GIVER OF LIFE

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Ps 139:13-16)

God is the giver of life, but our lot in life is different—each according to His will. Some are born healthier and some are weaker. My youngest son, Elliot, was born weaker.

My husband and I welcomed Elliot into this world on July 7, 1988, in New Jersey, USA. Not long after Elliot's birth, the pediatric cardiologist told me that there was a murmur in his heart, and

Elliot would require heart surgery at the age of four.

At the time, I had so many questions in my heart: "Why did God give me an unhealthy child? Did I sin against God? Does He still love me? God is love but how can He allow this to happen to us?"

One sister wrote a letter to encourage me that God allows us to suffer so that we will adjust our focus and follow Jesus' example. In times of distress, it is our lesson to learn empathy, so that our faith will also be reinvigorated to follow Him wholeheartedly.

I hoped for a miracle to happen so Elliot would not require surgery at the age of four, and I thought this is the only way for me to testify God's glory—to experience His miracle. When Elliot

turned four years old, and the operation became inevitable, I prayed with Elliot earnestly.

Nevertheless, the doctor told us that Elliot's heart murmur was still persistent the day before the surgery. We went ahead with the surgery the following day and, indeed, prayers were answered because the surgery went smoothly. Thank God.

Ten years later, the glory of our Lord Jesus is still so evident and poignant within the lines of Elliot's on-line journal:

Monday, September 09, 2002

Thank God, I have passed another CT scan for internal bleeding. I know this is just another trial to pass. I will not fear anything, for I

know God watches for me. God will never give you something you cannot bear. I got heart doctor to go to for a check up tomorrow and an ultra sound test to look at my liver. *sigh* so much to do..I have so much to learn so much more to face. With God beside me all of my life, I am not afraid of anything.

- Pre birth-5 weeks
- Age 4-heart ASD repair, pulmonary finding
- Prior to age 8-ear infections, sinus, bronchitis, and tonsillitis
- Age 8-ear tubes inserted to avoid infections.
- Age 13-right leg internal bleeding, main vein punctured, blood clog around bone. Discovery of leakage in the heart.
- Age 14-whole back internal bleeding, hospitalized, CT, ultra sound, bleeding time testing. Blood clog testing, liver cancer testing, and other cancer testing. Follow up CT scan and ultra sound testing.

I depended on God my whole life, suffering, trials...I remember when I was 4, I was so afraid before my operation. Everyone in church prayed for me before the operation, I prayed to God...I remember when I went to the operating table, I was not afraid. I remember Pastor Chou was so happy, the next time I saw him at church. The operation was successful. I don't know how much I have to go through, but I am happy that God lives in me. He gave me strength to pass all these things.

Elliot pursued God diligently. He frequently participated in family services and observed Sabbath every week. Even though he was physically weaker than

others, he grew up in New Jersey and experienced the growing pains of a normal teenager with all his friends.

On June 29, 2002, our family moved to San Jose, in Northern California. Elliot left his beloved relatives, brothers and sisters from church, friends, neighbors, and schoolteachers. And he was lonely.

ELLIOT'S ON-LINE JOURNAL

Thursday, October 17, 2002

No one knows how I feel about living in San Jose...New Jersey is my home, and it will always be my home. Heaven is my home and it will always be my home. ...Wherever I go it is not my home. It will never be my home. But it's hard to realize that, because you live your life with sight not by faith. So let's try to walk life, with our eyes closed, and just let Christ hand in hand guide our way, back to His home, my home. My true home forever

In his on-line journal, he was lively and naughty like any teenager but, at the same time, he expressed his deep frustrations. Although he was suffering physically, he deeply examined the meaning of life and understood the mission that God had given him.

As healthy people, we often take everything for granted and forget that God gives it. Whenever we meet trials, we feel depressed and doubt that God will manifest His glory through our sufferings.

On July 10, 2002, at the age of fourteen, Elliot went to the hospital for serious abdominal pains. After testing, the source of internal bleeding was not found and he was discharged three days later.

In August, he returned to New Jersey

for the summer Student Spiritual Convocation (SSC) and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He felt joyful and renewed. Even though Elliot had received the Holy Spirit two years earlier at the age of twelve, God took it away shortly after because he did something wrong.

This time, he repented sincerely and was filled with the Holy Spirit again. He truly understood the importance of praying often to keep the Holy Spirit with him. After the Student Spiritual Convocation, Elliot wrote down his thoughts:

Tuesday, August 20, 2002

I am thankful to God that I am living today. Remember, "give God the glory in all that you do, and watch him do GREAT things for you."

Wednesday, August 21, 2002

...I hope I don't bleed again cuz if I have internal bleeding again, blood will shoot to my brains and who knows what...I might die. I'm not ready to see God yet. I have so much to offer for Him. But God will provide a way. From now on I'm going to try to fit God into every journal entry because what I give to God just isn't enough.

Thursday, September 05, 2002

My life may not be good, it may not be happy, it may not be fun. Someday, when we leave this earth, you look back and you try to recall your happy, fun, and good times. But you find little. As you look at your past, you even cry a bit. God will look at your past, he will give you the crown of life. Because he saw your good deeds. He saw your love, he saw your driving force to win many people to Christ. He saw everything you did. Though today, you may feel that your life is meaningless. But

when you are in heaven, you will be glad. You earned more than you think. Don't be sad about your past, but be happy about your future.

Friday, September 06, 2002

...I will be glad that God was with me my whole life. "If we die with Him, we shall live with Him. If we endure, we shall reign with him." (2 Tim 2:11-12)

Tuesday, September 3, 2002

SSC this summer to me was fruitful...I learned how to love one another...I felt God's love so close..."love is patient, love is kind, it does not boast, it does not envy"...true love is from God. I have felt the power of the devil, and the power of God in this SSC, as Satan tries to pull me away from Christ...

As I think and write this on the 6 hour flight back to California, tears drop on this piece of paper I am writing on...I feel that the Lord has prepared me. I have gone through many sufferings. ..I promised myself to strengthen the church in San Jose. Just as the disciples strengthened the Galatian, Corinth. I want to touch the heart of man.

Wednesday, September 4, 2002

Lord, I want to be more like you. I want to love, serve, praise, honor, and glorify you. Lord, I want to be a better person, lead my life. Put me on the correct path. You helped me when I was sick, you helped me when I was in suffering. Oh Lord, you set me a good example, for you sacrificed your life for me, that I should sacrifice what I have for you. I shall speak your truth, your way, your life, for the rest of my life. As long as I live, I will serve you. As long as I live, I will praise you. As long as I live I will forever love you.

Sunday, September 8, 2002

Today's reflection: Give God your best, give God your all, give God His glory. Don't let Jesus die in vain...the Holy Spirit moves me...and I love Him dearly. I am going to walk with God. If you have any problems and trials you can talk to me...I will pray for you. Only if they didn't have age limit to become a pastor...I would be a pastor right now...I would rather go into theological training right now...the world is so tempting, and I need to learn how to fight it.

On September 17, Elliot was rushed to the hospital for abdominal pain, and again nothing was found. He was discharged four days after.

Sunday, October 13, 2002

You cannot change the past, but you can only control your future. Please, I urge you do treasure your time, while you can...As a person said "treasure what you have now, or it will be lost forever." I didn't get the chance to say good bye. I didn't get the chance to say goodbye to those who hated me. I didn't get the chance to love, those whom should be loved. I didn't get the chance to say goodbye to all my neighbors, whom all I grew up with. I didn't have the chance to say goodbye to my teachers, whom they have taught me...The point is, treasure, accept all things.

Monday, October 21, 2002

I don't have the luxury of living too long...I have pulmonary, and thin blood veins will decrease life around 20 years...While you guys get to live an extra 20 years, I'll be in heaven smiling down. I need to know how to learn how to treasure time. 50 years is the

approx age for how long a person with pulmonary lives...I won't waste my life...I'll make it worthwhile. But I'm still learning. Like I say, treasure things before it's too late...I have a feeling that God has placed me in San Jose, to teach me how much suffering it is, when we take things for granted. It's just another lesson. Just because people like you readers, get to live so much longer. Your life may not be as much meaning, if you put it to waste. I know I'm not going to waste my life, because of those 20 years I lose will make me strong...And I hope you won't waste life. Every breath is a step closer to death.

Wednesday, December 11, 2002

Today is my worst day of my life. And also the happiest.

When I was playing basketball today, I went to do a lay-up and when I landed, my tendons ripped. And I need surgery most likely, blah! Pray for me—it takes around two weeks to recover, but I'm coming for SSC on Friday!! I only need a miracle...

THE FINAL HOURS

Monday, December 16, 2002

(Last journal entry)

Ouch... my stomach hurts! I am so tired...I think I'll give up on my math homework...

On the Tuesday morning of December 17, I saw Elliot praying on his knees, and it was obvious that his knee injury was improving. His father took him to see an acupuncturist in the morning and later I took him to the family doctor in the afternoon.

The family doctor diagnosed Elliot with appendicitis and that he should

have surgery immediately. On the way from the medical office to the hospital, Elliot calculated that he will be discharged the next day and should be able to return to New Jersey to attend the SSC on Friday.

Around nine o'clock that night, before Elliot was sent to the operating room, I told him to repeat "Hallelujah!" in his heart and God will surely be with him. At that moment, I strongly sensed the existence of God. I kissed him, and his father said "Bye, Elliot".

No one knew that this was the last time we would see him. Nearly five hours of surgery, at 2:10 a.m. on December 18, the doctor announced that he had done everything he could to save Elliot's life.

Due to the congenital weakness of his blood vessels, the aneurysm in his abdomen had burst and caused internal bleeding. The general surgeons discovered that a section of the large intestine was damaged when the doctors attempted to stop the bleeding. At this point the surgeons called in a vascular specialist to help with the operation.

The doctors gave him blood transfusions throughout the operation until his heart stopped beating. Elliot had lost a hundred percent of his blood and as a result the doctors pumped back a hundred percent. This was repeated five times throughout the operation.

We feel comforted that Elliot did not have to go through any pain from the beginning to the end of the surgery since he was under full anesthesia. He peacefully returned to the arms of our heavenly father. This is God's mercy and love.

A MOTHER'S REFLECTIONS

As autumn passed and we entered the

month of December, I had the melody of one particular hymn fill my mind whenever I was in solitude. The hymn "Does Jesus Care?" sung in my heart and gave me much strength and comfort.

On the early morning that Elliot died, my husband called two brothers in San Jose Church and they came to the hospital immediately. They accompanied us back to the operating room. When I saw Elliot, my heart was at peace because I knew he was resting in God's arms and God will take care of him.

Around four o'clock that morning the two brothers accompanied us home. I was reminded of that particular hymn again, and I asked everyone to sing it together. Every word of the lyrics touched me—especially the last verse:

*Does Jesus care when I've said "good-by"
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches
Till it nearly breaks,
Is it aught to Him? Does He care?*

*O yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary,
The long night dreary,
I know my Savior cares.¹*

Yes, the Lord Jesus always takes care of us. He took Elliot to a more beautiful home so he will suffer no more, and He used this hymn to strengthen me so I may be comforted.

That same night, Elliot's good friend had a dream about him. This is what his friend had to say:

Last night I had a dream. It was about Elliot. Elliot was kind of standing there and then there was this light glowing in him.

The light grew larger and brighter and kind of devoured him. In other words, it shone so brightly it covered his body. I noticed that he wasn't sad at all, in fact, he was rejoicing. He was actually pretty happy. When I woke up I found this feeling I've only felt once when I received the Holy Spirit and I found tear stains all over my pillow.

During Elliot's surgery I prayed: "Lord Jesus, please give him more time on this earth so he can pursue spiritual perfection. I have not seen him bring anyone to believe in You, thus, please give him the opportunity to serve You in order to receive rewards in heaven."

I felt regretful that Elliot will not have the opportunity to serve God because he passed away at such a young age. It wasn't until after his death that I came to know about the thoughts he wrote in his journal, and his words touched me and made me realize that, all along, he had already been working for the Lord.

In his limited time and energy, his words to us are his beautiful service to God. Most importantly, the love and aroma of Christ permeated through his journal.

On the day of the funeral, I suddenly realized that Elliot's birth, his fourteen years on this earth, and even his departure, were all glorious acts of God. The glory of God was manifested not merely from Elliot's faith, hope, and love, but also from the impact his life left on people.

THE GLORY OF HEAVEN

Elliot had big eyes and thick eyebrows and he was a little shy. He was not eloquent and not very attractive. His life was short and filled with physical

suffering, but just like the widow with the two coins, he was willing to offer what he had. He knew that he was not perfect, but through the wonderful power of God, he was able to preach the sweetness of His grace.

Even in suffering and pain, Elliot was brave, optimistic, and always thankful. He truly believed in the heavenly kingdom as promised by Jesus and his hope was not wasted. This is the glory of heaven.

I used to not know how to start a conversation about the gospel with my friends. But through Elliot's words and personal experiences, I am now able to talk about the love and the faithfulness of God when talking to friends and relatives.

They are all willing to listen and I am able to grasp this opportunity to preach the word of salvation from the true church. It is true that God uses different ways to manifest His heavenly glory.

Even though Elliot has passed on, God has strengthened my faith more than ever. After Elliot passing God led me to this verse:

*I will praise You with my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You.
I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name
For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word above
all Your name.
In the day when I cried out, You answered me,
And made me bold with strength in my soul.
(Ps 138-1-3)*

Now, I desire more of His words and pray with more strength. The Holy Spirit continues to move me, and I was able to encourage our relatives and friends at the funeral and also flew to New Jersey

Church to testify.

On December 26, 2002, the flight attendant saw me reading the book of Job during the flight. He asked me, "Are you reading a Chinese Bible?" and I replied, "Yes." I took the opportunity to introduce him to the Holy Spirit and I also gave him our church's website.

Before Elliot returned to his heavenly home, he wrote a poem to his good friend in church to express his wish:

*I wanna go home
A place where there's no worries
There are no dreams
Because you're living it
The home is not a house
It is a place of peace
a place of praise
A place that gives an ever contentful heart...
a place that I thought I known forever
A place I can almost see, almost touch,
almost feel...
This place has everlasting happiness
Everlasting love
There's never hope
You don't need hope
A place where we don't need faith,
because we can finally see, finally after
our whole life we can see our Lord
The Lord that we believed with faith
in our life.*

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

In May 2002, while we were preparing to relocate from New Jersey to California, I saw two beautiful rainbows in the sky shine through after the rain. The next day, I commented to Joshua, my oldest son, how much of a miracle it was, and the hymn, "Heaven Came Down", came into my heart.

*Heaven came down and glory filled my soul.
When at the cross my Savior made me whole;*

*My sins were washed away
And my night was turned to day—
Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!¹*

After reading the lyrics, I felt that God was comforting me through this hymn. I asked God to guide me in helping me to understand His teaching and His will.

The week of the funeral was blanketed with heavy rain. But after the Sabbath service, the day before the funeral, we saw yet another beautiful rainbow. The next day, when we opened our door to leave the house that morning, we were greeted with a bright clear sky. Now, my memory of Elliot's funeral day will always be a glorious one.

It was all the assurance and comfort I needed that God had prepared everything for us beautifully. It is as if God is reaffirming with me that His will is in my life and His glory will always fill my soul.

Afterwards, when I discovered Elliot's on-line journal, I realized that the mystery of the rainbow is something that we both share:

Friday, September 6, 2002

*Trials are to be passed, obstacles are to be finished. Races are to be won...
Someday, I will see you at the end of the rainbow.*

Yes, after we fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith, we will not only meet Him at the end of the rainbow but also enjoy the heavenly glory with all the saints. Hallelujah, amen. ✨

¹Hymns of Praise (True Jesus Church, 1993), No. 336.

²Ibid., No. 482



The Search For The Truth

YM Yang—Paris, France

VISIBLE WORKS VS. INVISIBLE TRUTHS

In any quest for knowledge, devotion to the thorough study of the subject guarantees success. The truth contained in the Bible, however, is unlike any field of learning on this earth.

[Human] eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the [mysteries] which God has prepared for those who love Him. (1 Cor 2:9)

For they far exceed the limits of human wisdom. Regardless of how vast and profound mankind may presume its knowledge to be, it is an irrefutable fact that “the world through wisdom did not know God” (cf. 1 Cor 1:21).

Yet, neither can we assume that those who are guided by the Holy Spirit gain complete understanding of the truth if it is not the will of God.

Moses did not know the name of the Father was Jesus; king David, an anointed of the Lord, did not know that God would descend in the flesh to save mankind; nor did the prophet Jeremiah, who knew the temple of God would be rebuilt 70 years after its destruction, ever suspect that the true church would rise from its very foundations in the latter days.

The truth comes from God and is understood through revelation. God gradually reveals the truth in His own

time, depending upon man’s worthiness (cf. Rev 5:1-10). Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the path to the truth would lay hidden.

Not all who have received the Holy Spirit will receive all the mystery of God’s truth. Even for the apostle Paul, much of his deep understanding of the doctrine was gained mainly through his suffering for the Lord and through the trials and tribulation he encountered during his ministry because God called him worthy to proclaim the gospel.

Therefore, when the Spirit works powerfully to open the way to the truth, it is not an assurance that believers in Christ will naturally comprehend all the mysteries of salvation.

And when the work of the Spirit takes a downturn, believers should not eliminate all possibility that the truth will be revealed—the prophetic books, for instance, were written during the decline of the chosen nation, and Revelation was completed as the early church began to stray from the truth.

CONFLICT OVER CIRCUMCISION

According to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit worked mightily in the early church, and the Apostles performed many wonders and signs.

However, the facts show that, in the years spanning the descent of the Holy Spirit to Jerusalem, the apostles must

have heard about Peter’s ministry to Cornelius’ family (Acts 11:1) and their acceptance of the gospel, but they did not address the necessity of circumcising gentiles.

For over a decade, the Gentile churches, which had been established through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, dealt with the issue of circumcision locally because policies were never established.

It also took over ten years for Paul, since his conversion from persecutor to an apostle serving the Gentiles, to come to a true understanding of why “the Gentiles who [were] turning to God” were freed from the Mosaic laws. Apparently, even Paul, though filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), did not immediately understand the truth behind circumcision.

Circumcision is like any other profound teaching in the Bible (e.g., baptism, footwashing, holy communion). If the steps 1) believe in the Lord, 2) abide in His word, 3) become His disciples, 4) know the truth, 5) be made free (Jn 8:31, 32) are followed, what starts out inexplicably as “knowing what to do but not knowing why” will evolve into total understanding in complete accordance with the Bible.

REASON THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The details of how the Jerusalem council resolved that Gentile believers were free from the law, recorded in Acts 15, provide readers with an infallible method of seeking the truth. Paul and Barnabas were the first to understand Gentiles did not need to keep the law of circumcision, but they were unable to support their claims using the Scriptures.

Consequently, their debates in the Gentile region with the men from Judea were inconclusive. The church finally determined that Paul and Barnabas and several of the men should go up to Jerusalem and bring the question before the apostles and elders.

At the council, even the apostles and elders, all of who were filled with the Holy Spirit and loyal servants of God, held different perspectives and were unable to reach an agreement after long hours of debate (though pillars of the church and moved by the same Spirit, the level of understanding received by each apostle and elder varied).

When they reached an impasse, Peter reminded them of how the Holy Spirit had worked at Cornelius's house and reasoned whether circumcising gentiles might be a form of testing God (Acts 15:10,11). The multitude kept silent upon hearing Peter's words, though he did not support his views with verses from the Scriptures.

Then, Paul and Barnabas declared how God worked through them among the Gentiles. Finally, James spoke to the men and brethren gathered at the council using a passage from the Bible and declared what he "judged" they should do.

Since his view of the matter agreed with the words of the prophets, the apostles

Beyond the words and phrases of each verse, the Holy Spirit, a power so great it can bring people to life, must be present in the search of the truth.

and elders set aside their differences and agreed that "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to [them]" the Gentile believers could remain uncircumcised.

James quoted the following passage:

*After this I will return,
And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David
which has fallen down.
I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will set it up,
So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
Even all the Gentiles who are called by
My name,
Says the Lord who does all these things.
(Acts 15:16f)*

No analysis of this passage would give an interpretation that the church "should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who [were] turning to God." But the apostles and elders were able to deduce from these insignificant verses the great grace of salvation and resolve that their conclusion was "good to the Holy Spirit."

Beyond the words and phrases of each verse, the Holy Spirit, a power so great it can bring people to life, must be present in the search of the truth. We must be able to determine whether or not the "reasoning" behind the interpretation of a verse is led by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 7:25; Acts 16:10).

The Bible clearly records, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain," yet Paul loudly asks, "Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?" (1 Cor 9:9, 10) Paul's argument is irrational if taken

literally, but who can argue against the power of his spiritual judgment?

"Reasoning" is a form of the Holy Spirit's guidance, which is integral to the search for the truth. This is the main reason why services, meetings, and debates involving two or more people must be held in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SAME CHURCH, DIFFERENT POLICIES

In actuality, the policies that Paul implemented in the Gentile churches were different from those observed by the other apostles serving the churches in Judea: the Gentile believers did not keep the law of Moses, but numerous believers in Judea were zealous for the law (Acts 21:20).

This was not a matter of right or wrong but of the time at which understanding of the truth was received. Because of this, we cannot say that Paul was more spiritually uplifted than the apostles who followed Jesus.

We can only go so far as to say that time and circumstances allowed Paul to gain more insight on this controversial issue. After all, the problems that Paul faced in the Gentile churches concerning the Mosaic laws differed greatly from the problems encountered by the apostles in Judea.

Circumstances forced him to think about issues that would never have crossed the minds of those living in Jewish circles. He may have understood the truth behind not imposing circumcision on the Gentiles, but he could not provide Biblical references to convince the council.

Peter and James, on the other hand, who had not had the opportunity to think about this matter due to the cultural environment in which they lived, quickly gained enlightenment and were able to settle the conflict in a way that was both suitable for the Gentile churches and in accordance with the Bible.

They resolved to “not trouble those from among the Gentiles who [were] turning to God” (Acts 15:19). The Jerusalem council may have exempted the Gentiles from “trouble,” but circumcision was a Mosaic law still observed by the Jews who believed in the Lord (cf. Acts 21:21, 22).

If, in the future, a person of the Jewish faith were to accept the gospel, should he or she be required to keep the Mosaic laws—to be circumcised? Most of us our answers would be a definite “no!” though we may not be able to find specific support from the Bible (which actually provides more evidence to the contrary that one should be circumcised).

How else can we defend ourselves from accusations that the teachings of our church exceed the bounds of those taught by the apostles than by “reasoning”?

BIBLE MYSTERIES GRADUALLY REVEALED

From the conflict over circumcision we can see how differing environments caused the Gentile and the Jerusalem churches, even though both received the same Spirit, to observe the Mosaic laws differently.

Hypothetically, within the true church established by the Holy Spirit, believers should not deny the validity of past decisions or oppose the provisions each general assembly must add to resolutions in order to adapt to its social or cultural

In our search for the truth, we need to be aware that the Scriptures become clearer as it is opened by God.

environment.

It is true different policies between the assemblies, however temporary, inconvenience the believers. But did Paul not also encounter the same problem? After the council, Paul, who firmly insisted at the council that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, circumcised his companion Timothy while they traveled through Lystra and Iconium because of the Jews in that region (Acts 16:1-5)!

Would this type of spirit and sense, if found in the true church today, also garner the same understanding and praise?

When Moses asked God what His name was, God answered, “I AM WHO I AM.” Moses, unhappy with this reply, said that the children of Israel would not believe he was sent by God to deliver them (Ex 3:13-4:1).

This incident shows that the mysteries of the Bible are gradually revealed, no matter how anxious we may be to speed up the process. Those who serve God, who love Him and seek the truth, can only make the best decision possible at the time through the guidance of the Spirit given the circumstances and how much the Bible has been revealed.

No one should judge past teachings to be wrong based on present knowledge. How can the local churches and the church as a whole mature into adults without traversing the trial-and-error stage of childhood?

Paul very clearly states: “the [imperfect] law was our tutor to bring us to [the perfect] Christ” (cf. Gal 3:23-25). The law is far from the grace of salvation, but it is a necessary step toward understanding God, just as a child lacks understanding but is

a stage that all adults must go through.

Just because Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and was the Holy Father in the flesh did not mean that He could skip the learning process and wait for revelations to drop down from the sky.

After Jesus Christ fulfilled His purpose on earth and returned to heaven, Luke, in his letter to Theophilus, wrote: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature” (Lk 2:52). What message does this convey to us?

UNITED IN ONE FAITH

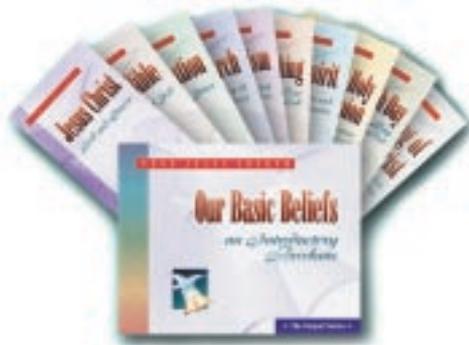
In our search for the truth, we need to be aware that the Scriptures become clearer as it is opened by God. If the church is making a concerted effort to unify our faith in consistence with the truth, individuals and local churches should not cling to past decisions that were made according to the small portion of the Bible that was revealed.

Furthermore, what each individual (or region) receives spiritually may differ, but what is received usually is in the spirit of, or is founded in, the Bible. Under these circumstances, we should display the same attitude as that of Paul in his encouragement to the church in Philippi: “Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (Phil 3:15).

May the Spirit guiding us in our understanding of the truth continue to lead the true church down the path of the truth, so that we may soon be adorned and be prepared to meet the Lord of “the way, the truth, and the life.” ★

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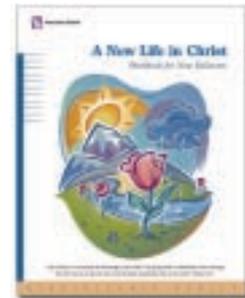
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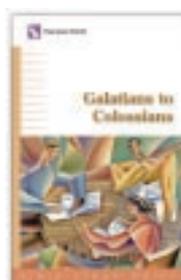
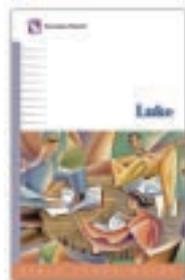
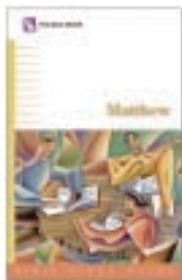
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God's Loving Anger

In this issue, we're exploring God's anger so that we can come to a deeper understanding of another dimension of God's amazing love. Although God's love for us is unconditional and limitless, we also need to regard His love in a reverential and worshipful manner. His anger and punishment keeps us aligned to His truth so that we can stay on the path to salvation.

In this section, the writers explore the stories of Gideon and David—how each experienced the wrath of God, and how they turned to God to deliver them. They also share what it means to appreciate God's love properly and faithfully. And with God's loving anger—be it in the form of a warning, punishment, or suffering—comes His saving grace. This is the best part.



Threshing Wheat In The Winepress

Jason Hsu—Baldwin Park, California, USA

GOD'S LOVING ANGER

There is a strong sense of paradox when we speak of God's "loving anger." What does it mean to have "loving anger"? Dying on the cross for us, Jesus reconciled God's justice upon sinners with God's love for the world.

Similarly, God's "loving anger" brings together the two sides of God's essence: love and justice. God's "loving anger" should not be confused with God's wrath, for God's "loving anger" is better viewed as "loving discipline."

The book of Judges is filled with stories of God's "loving discipline" of His beloved people—Israel. These stories help us comprehend what it means to live under both the condition of God's love and His wrath.

The story of Gideon is a story of one

of Israel's notable judges. And it begins with a curious verse, Judges 6:11:

Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.

Now to fully understand Judges 6:11's imagery of threshing wheat in the winepress and Gideon's story, let us examine Gideon's situation in life.

GIDEON'S SITUATION

Gideon lived in a dark period in Israel's history, called the period of the Judges (circa 1380-1050 B.C.). The book of

God's people suffered the consequences of God's loving anger because they would not follow the direction of God.

Judges says that in “those days there was no king in Israel [but] everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25).

God was Israel's rightful king (cf. 1 Sam 8:5-7); yet, God's people suffered the consequences of God's loving anger because they would not follow the direction of God. So, the darkness of the period of Judges really found its root in the unfaithfulness of God's people. But as a loving shepherd shepherds his flock, God lovingly disciplined His people.

God's discipline of His people's disobedience during Gideon's time came in the form of an oppressive tribal group known as the Midianites (Gen 25:1-4), who, along with Amalekites and other “children of the east,” engaged in regular harvest-time raids against Israel (Judg 6:2-3).

What these raiding oppressors did not take as spoil, they destroyed—leaving no source or means for sustaining life (Judg 6:4). Under these dire circumstances, many Israelites sought refuge in mountain dens, caves, and strongholds (Judg 6:1-2). Other Israelites found refuge in Baal, a storm god associated with the stormy rains needed for a prosperous harvest (Judg 6:10, 25, 30).

Gideon, however, found himself in the winepress—threshing out the wheat that would sustain both his life and the life of his family (Judg 6:11). The biblical imagery of Gideon's threshing wheat in the winepress has many spiritual teachings, so let us look at the imagery in more detail.

The Winepress

The winepress is a biblical symbol with both positive and negative implications. Materially, the winepress was usually just a pit, either hewn out of rock or lined with plaster. In this pit, harvested grapes would be thrown in and trampled upon to squeeze out the grape juice used to make wine (Isa 5:2).



In biblical times, the winepress was supposed to be a place of great joy and singing, but as God silenced this joyful song, the winepress became a poignant reminder of God's judgment upon His people (Isa 16:10; Jer 48:33).

So although wine is often a symbol of joy and blessings (Ps 4:7; Song 1:2), God's harsh judgment is metaphorically and dramatically illustrated through the symbol of the winepress (See Lam 1:15; Isa 63:1-3; Rev 14:19-20; 19:15).

This association of the “winepress” with “God's judgment” probably resulted from the image of grapes being trampled

and destroyed as a representation of being “crushed” by divine judgment. The fact that red grapes splattered red juice (visual reminders of blood) as they were trampled upon further tied the winepress with images of violence and judgment.

Threshing Wheat

Yet, Judges 6:11 speaks of Gideon threshing wheat in the winepress.

Threshing is the process by which kernels of grain from harvested cereals are separated to be made into flour.

Like making wine, the activity of “threshing wheat” had strong positive images in the ancient Near East. Grain, being a staple for life in the ancient Near East, naturally represented both provision and blessing (Gen 27:28; Ps 65:13; 78:24; cf. Ex 16:4). So during the harvest time, the open threshing floor—the usual place of threshing—was a site for family and community activity.

But the act of threshing also possessed the negative imagery of God's judgment in the Bible (Isa 28:23-29; Jer 51:33; Mic 4:11-13).

Threshing was naturally associated with God's judgment since the act of threshing involved various ways of vigorously beating stalks of grain (Ruth 2:17), so as to eventually separate out the kernels of grain from the chaff. The act of threshing, as a way of separating the kernel from the grain, further illustrated the process by which God's judgment distinguished the good from the evil (Mt 3:12; cf. Mt 25:31-46).

Understanding the imagery of “threshing” helps us appreciate the context of Judges 6:11, for Gideon's threshing of wheat symbolizes God's threshing of His people.

It is in those periods of God's "threshing" that we must even more hold fast the faith that God "threshes" His people wisely—to instruct them in the way of righteousness and not merely to mete out punishment (Isa 28:23-29).

...suffering often paves that difficult road from pride to humility, from self-reliant to God-reliant, from self-satisfied to self-examined.

LESSONS LEARNED

Respond with Repentance

As much as we'd like to stake a claim to our own righteousness, the Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one..." (Rom 3:10; cf. Ps 14:1-3). As sinners, we are all familiar with the reason for Israel's suffering: sin (Judg 6:1).

We have, no doubt, all suffered because of our own misdeeds at some point in our life. But of the many reasons God's children suffer God's discipline, one of the most important is to bring us to repentance.

Even in the midst of the Midianites' oppression of Israel, God was calling for His people's repentance. God appointed a prophet to deliver a message of repentance to His people and remind them of the great salvation He had effected for them in their past—delivering them from slavery in Egypt and blessing them with a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet, Israel forgot the Lord's grace. God's judgment ensued and His people suffered the consequences of their actions.

For some, it may seem odd that a person needs to suffer God's anger to return to His path, but, sadly, that is often the case. When we suffer God's discipline, we often cannot figure out why we need to suffer. While there are

endless possibilities for our suffering, suffering often paves that difficult road from pride to humility, from self-reliant to God-reliant, from self-satisfied to self-examined.

We must remember that God's loving

anger is actually speaking to us as God's children, for it is through loving anger that God brings us back to His path (Heb 12:5-11). Our pride and unwillingness to accept God's trials as a way of return are like spiritual roadblocks, cutting off our access to His mercy.

But like the prodigal son, who left the grace and care of his loving father to pursue his own path, God is often simply waiting for His prodigal children to return to Him so He can renew and restore the lost (Lk 15:11-24).

Seek Refuge in the Lord

When we receive God's trials, we often seek refuge in our own abilities and wisdom when we should be seeking refuge in the Lord (Deut 33:27; Isa 30:15-16). Many Israelites sought refuge in mountain strongholds and false gods, like Baal, in their time of trial (Judg 6:2; Rev 6:15-17; Judg 6:10, 30).

Human wisdom will never be the answer to divine discipline, for it directly contradicts what God intends to teach to those He disciplines. God disciplines us to learn lessons of faith—not self-reliance.

During our times of trial, we, like Gideon, must find our refuge in the Lord—not ourselves. By threshing wheat in the winepress, Gideon was accepting God's discipline rather than excusing himself from it.

Most likely, it was for this very reason that God chose Gideon as the vessel through which to reveal His glory. Nobody ever really enjoys being in God's winepress, and it requires a rare wisdom to stay and learn the lessons it has to offer, when it is so much easier to hide from it.

Don't Give Up Hope

Like most people faced with oppressive circumstances, Gideon must have often felt like giving up hope. It is all too easy to be discouraged in the face of intolerable situations.

But Gideon was undeterred by the Midianites' continued raiding, and he continued to push forward—threshing wheat, sustaining life—until God's reprieve arrived.

When we find it hard to see God's love or hear His voice, we, too, must continue to thresh wheat, which simply means we must not give up hope when we are under God's discipline.

Like a woman who is in labor, we cannot rest halfway in the trials of labor—for to do so would be to forfeit the joy of holding a newborn baby in our arms (Jn 16:21).

Broken to be Used Again

Often our heart and sense of self-worth are "broken" in times of distress. Though Gideon did not give up hope in his trial, his self-confidence and pride must have reached a breaking point as he threshed wheat in the winepress.

Yet, that is exactly the day God called Gideon to his most important work. God often uses those who are weak and broken to accomplish great things; God does this so that the glory may be His own and not that of man (Judg 7:2).

As we continue to strive forward under God's trials, we must accept the Lord's lessons with humility and faith.

Humility often comes through the rigors of trials. God uses trials to humble us to face our limitations so that He can effectively use us. When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, He said, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (Judg 6:12)

Gideon’s “brokenness” is evident in Gideon’s reply to the Lord’s remark, which essentially confirmed Gideon’s belief that he was thoroughly unqualified. An objective observer who heard Gideon’s self-deprecating response would never envision Gideon to be one of Israel’s great future military leaders. So what did God see in Gideon that others could not?

God saw a person that was broken and ready to be used, which is all that the Lord really ever requires. Not everyone can be broken by God and still be useful for the work of His kingdom. How many Israelites, broken by God’s discipline, were perhaps still hiding in their caves when the Almighty God called Gideon? And why would they hide?

Gideon’s faith was strong enough to continue to thresh wheat when others had resigned themselves to a life in deserted caves, but he was broken enough to surrender his self-confidence and pride to be used by God.

God can use this type of person because this type of person has learned the lessons of faith that can only be taught in God’s winepress. Those who have surrendered their self-will in God’s winepress, like Gideon, will be prepared for God’s abundant use, for God’s power is perfectly revealed in weakness (2 Cor 12:7-10).

As we continue to strive forward under God’s trials, we must accept the Lord’s lessons with humility and faith. After we are broken, God can use us for great things. We need only to wait upon the Lord—for our strength and grace are found in Him.

REMEMBER GOD’S LOVE IN HIS ANGER

When God disciplines us, we must realize that His anger is temporary (Isa 57:16; Jer 3:5, 12). And when we are under God’s disciplining hand, we are also under His love.

Though it is hard to perceive God’s love in His “loving anger,” we need to remember that His “wrath” often covers the depths of His love (cf. Jon 1:4, 17; 2:6). Just as the act of Gideon’s threshing of wheat in the winepress hid God’s great love for Israel, God’s loving-kindness is often hidden—like the abundance of life hidden in a small grain of wheat.

Israel’s situation was very bleak when God called Gideon to save His people. This illustrates just how hard it is to see God’s “love” when all we feel is God’s “anger.”

There in the winepress, Gideon was faced with a test of faith as God told him, “The Lord is with you...” (Judg 6:12)

Gideon questioned this, saying, “God, are you really with me? Are you really with your people? Why have you forsaken us to our enemies?” But then Gideon recalled God’s love for His people. “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” (Judg 6:13)

Maybe Gideon could not see God’s love all that clearly, but Gideon still remembered that part of God that many

people may have long forgotten by then—that God loved His people. However distant that message was, Gideon remembered stories, however long ago it may have seemed, of a God who saved His people from a life of slavery. And soon God would again save His people—using a man He found threshing wheat in a winepress.

For those unfamiliar with Gideon’s story, God delivered His people after calling Gideon, who led a small army of three hundred men and defeated Israel’s oppressors (Judg 7:1-25).

So look for God’s love when you are threshing wheat in the winepress, for it is often there—in the winepress—that the Lord will appear, just as He did to Gideon, to confirm that He will restore His people and answer their cries. Amen. ★

For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made.

For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart.

I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. (Isa 57:15-18)

¹Leland Ryken et al., gen. eds., Dictionary of Biblical Imagery (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 954.

²Ibid., 867.



Appreciating God's Love

FF Chong—London, England, UK

The most profound issue for Christians is God's love, which is biblically the most powerful force to bind us together in Him.

When we first came into the faith, His word moved and changed us. Never had we been so determined before that we wanted to live for Him. Or, for some, it was His merciful and miraculous healing that made us feel empowered by His wonderful love.

However, life goes on, and circumstances do change after conversion. Whenever we face adverse situations, we long for God to intervene so that things turn out the way we want them to turn out. This is a natural response. When things fall short of our expectation, it can be painful.

The prospect of looking for solutions in time of sorrow can be

daunting—especially when the understanding is not illuminated (Ps 73:16). Understanding comes from knowing that God is faithful; His love for us remains the same.

There is so much to learn about love. Appreciating divine love demands a personal knowledge of God's will and His involvement in our faith. Since He is our creator, His way for us is the best.

KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

Nowadays there are many who utterly despise the commandments. Flouting these divine laws has become a captivating norm. In every action-packed movie, the word "Jesus" is one of the most recurring swear words.

There is a constant increase of people flooding bars and clubs and engaging in businesses in every nook and corner.

Breaking every restraint on morality forms the fabric of society, and these are only a few sinful examples of appalling perversion.

Even genuine Christians are being assimilated. The commandments are increasingly a burden for them in this world, where the norm is a desire for a total break from all restraint.

However, the teaching of the apostle John is contrastingly opposite: "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn 5:3). Clearly, there must be some concrete reasons for the giving of the commandments.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex 20:2). The affirmation of His position and work for the Israelites in their lives, prior to stipulating the commandments, disclosed God's

God, in His love, does the work for us as He sees best, that we may be partakers of His holiness (Heb 12:10).

ultimate purpose for His people.

He, being their Lord and Master, set them free from the bondage in the land of Egypt. He alone was capable of such deliverance. The people of God were required to distinguish themselves from the pagan world.

The commandments were given to remind and guard them against forfeiting the privilege of belonging to the Lord, for this was His loving intention. Should they fall back to any form of bondage, their distinct identity as God's people will be erased (Ex 19:5-6).

Wherever corruption exists, it clouds our vision of God. The truth fades into oblivion; making us struggle to make sense of the greatest promise to inherit His kingdom. Slowly, we drift away from the Lord and lose the freedom that He once traded His life to gain.

Keeping the commandments puts us in a right relationship with God. This relationship knows and sees His will from His perspective with clarity. Then, we will know who Jesus is, what He requires of us, and His love will be perfected in us (1 Jn 2:3-5).

ENDURE GOD'S CHASTISEMENT

Sometimes, we encounter sufferings, which are the direct result of our disobedience. These are the design of God. They may seem painful but the motive is out of love.

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves

He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. (Heb 12:5-6)

Chastisement is beneficial to us on two counts. First, if He corrects us, then we are His legitimate children (Heb 12:8). Next, there are stubborn aspects of our character, which we are unwilling and incapable of correcting.

We may stumble and lose our salvation if they are not rectified. God, in His love, does the work for us as He sees best, that we may be partakers of His holiness (Heb 12:10).

His Higher Purpose

There is an inclination to associate all misfortune with wrong choice or sin. Even the disciples were guilty of such misjudgment of others (Jn 9:1-3). They questioned Jesus about the source of the wrong doings, which had caused the man whom they met to be born blind.

The answer from Jesus cleared the air of such an inaccurate interpretation of the event: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the work of God should be revealed in him" (Jn 9:3).

Misfortune in the eyes of the world can be a blessing in disguise for those who trust in the Lord. More often than not He brings to pass His higher purpose in human weaknesses.

In receiving God's first answer to the sins of Judah, Habakkuk was in a state of complete shock. How could God, being righteous, utilize Babylon, a nation more sinful than Judah, as an instrument of wrath to punish His own people?

Overwhelmed by confusion, he questioned the very core of God's attributes (Hab 1:12-13) in a desperate attempt to clear his doubts over God's incomprehensible initiatives.

Upon hearing the second answer, Habakkuk knew that God had a right to do anything He contemplated to do. God was righteous, and He would execute judgment upon the wicked—including His own sinful people.

Habakkuk comprehended an all-time important truth: the just shall live by faith. When he was given insight into God's surpassing will, he could not help but rejoice in Him who truly was his strength (Hab 3:18,19).

Undoubtedly, out of love, the Lord guided Habakkuk out of confusion into trust in His sovereign decision.

His Mercy and His Will

Difficult situations may not be all bad for us, and they can be channeled to our benefit.

Living with difficulties and enduring trials, without succumbing to them, qualifies us for the heavenly kingdom: "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mt 24:13). "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Moreover, enduring long-term illnesses or terminal diseases are also reminders of our need to trust and abide in the Lord. Inheriting eternity takes precedence over physical livelihood.

This conviction comes through constant training, trial, and refinement in our spirituality. Viewing plights with such understanding lessens the pain of the soul and flesh, and it presents a window of opportunity vital for us to see the love of God.

Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. (Jas 5:11)

It is always a blessing to endure, and especially for those who love Him. Sometimes, God place us in challenges against our will, and in situations where we have to face our fears. The blessing comes when we see God's grace and His will unraveled before us at His own dispensation.

How did God reveal His compassion and mercy to Job? Was allowing Satan to destroy all of Job's possessions a mark of love? Was not loosing Satan to take away Job's children the trait of a heartless God?

Did inflicting Job with boils reflect an act of mercy? Did allowing the prolonged interrogation from Job's friends in his moment of extreme suffering prove His compassion?

After listening to the lengthy exposition of God's deeds and works in the universe, Job realized that God had the right to do everything He willed, and His purpose could not be withheld (Job 42:2).

Job's submission had grown to perfection. This was reflected in his strength to pray for his friends at the instruction of the Lord in spite of the fact he was still in great suffering.

Surely, accepting the decision our Lord makes is a life-long lesson we all have to learn, even if it means continuing in faith at the expense of all that we have in this world—including our physical lives.

His mercy is not merely about how He meets our desperate requests; rather, it is His guidance, regardless of what we may have to endure, that unfolds the

higher purpose He has for us.

FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE

The key facet of God's love is the salvation that He has provided for us at the cost of Jesus' life: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

Appreciating Jesus' love involves our active response to His love: "We love Him because He first love us" (1 Jn 4:19).

A Sense of Sacrifice

The immeasurable value that the Lord Jesus places on eternity over life in this world is clear, for He traded His physical life for our eternity. Although He does not in any way neglect any aspect of our

Appreciating Jesus' love involves our active response to His love: "We love Him because He first love us" (1 Jn 4:19).

lives, His most fervent desire is for us to obtain eternal life.

The love of Jesus that we seek to emulate is one that does not expect reciprocity. "But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

We should not love others for the purpose of having that love returned. The catalyst of our love is the sacrifice of Christ.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 Jn 3:16)

By putting ourselves in Christ's shoes, we realize the immensity of His love towards the church and us. What is

deemed foolish by the world—to lay down one's life—is the best way to experience how much Christ loves us.

Sacrifice is the key to the source of love. To achieve this divine and yet emotive standard, we should commence by caring for our brethren in their daily needs:

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 Jn 3:17-18)

Love One Another

The more we give in love, the deeper our experience of God's love will be. Sometimes, a simple and kind gesture tells us a lot about what love really is.

Our appreciation of Christ's love is proportionate to our level of love shown.

Loving one another, moving beyond merely providing for the needs of others, deepens our experience of love. Coming together as a church, it is inevitable that at times misunderstandings occur.

When we love someone who has offended us, we begin to comprehend how much Christ loves us despite our constant rebellion. Seeing His love in our love for the offender propels us all the more to put the commandment of love into practice (1 Jn 4:11).

We will find purpose and meaning in loving others, for it will deepen our relationship with Christ—confirming for ourselves that we are born of Him. When we knit together in love, we reveal the mystery of His will (Col 2:2-3), and our

What His love can achieve for us who believe is something that the world cannot understand.

knowledge of Him will grow in leaps and bounds (Col 1:9; 1 Jn 4:7-8).

Rely on the Holy Spirit

In the process of growing, the Spirit plays a pivotal part in providing the full extent of His knowledge. It works in us simply because we abide in loving one another (1 Jn 3:23-24; 4:12-13).

Our motivation to love is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who works mightily within the community of believers by pouring out the love of God unceasingly in our hearts (Rom 5:5), so that we also may not lose hope and become discouraged.

Imagine how compelling it can be when the Spirit works! Here, we are talking about the same Spirit that created the universe and raised the Lord from the dead, and who continues to work within us today.

Without a shadow of doubt, our conviction in Christ and His word grows ever stronger, and we are convinced that Christ's love is powerful. There is nothing comparable to it, for His love surpasses all knowledge (Eph 3:19a). What His love can achieve for us who believe is something that the world cannot understand.

God's spirit empowers us to love one another with mutual reciprocity even though we may be ethnically different. There is a clear sense of oneness in the Spirit amid diversity. In every endeavor we make there is an absolute respect for God and care for others.

Knowing what manner of love the Lord has given us; we purify ourselves just as He is pure (1 Jn 3:1-3). There should not be any loose living, or willful violation of the commandments, nor senseless twisting of the truth, and taking the grace of God for granted.

The love overflowing the church reflects the love of Christ for us, and the church is then filled with the fullness of God (Eph 3:19b). We must become beacons of love and extend our care and concern attractively to the loveless world through the gospel.

This prospect is appealing because people can really see that we are the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The unbelieving world will be awestruck at the emanation of love among us, and more lost souls will be drawn to Christ. When this happens, the church could only give thanks and praise God for His miraculous love. ✨



David's Repentance

JYL—Garden Grove, California, USA

It was springtime—a time for war. King David had sent the entire Israelite army off to battle against the Ammonites. All the able men had gone and left their women at home.

Instead of going off with the rest of the men, David stayed behind in his palace. It so happened that one fateful evening, as he was strolling on the roof of the palace, he saw a woman bathing.

And she was breathtaking—a lovely vision. Taken by her beauty, he asked about her and found out that she was the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Bathsheba was her name. David sent for her and took her into his bed.

If Hollywood was to remake the story of David and Bathsheba, how wonderfully romantic it would be. Two beautiful people falling in love on a warm spring evening. Imagine that. Throw in an exotic place like the Middle East, and

it would probably be a box office hit, too.

But this wasn't a movie, and God's wrath was real. Human standards do not reflect the standards of God. And God was angry.

DAVID'S WEAKNESS

Everyone struggles with his or her own weaknesses, and David's weakness was women. Handsome and charming, it is not hard to see why women loved him. Being the king of God's chosen people, David could have anything he wanted. Anything.

That night, catching a glimpse of Bathsheba, he wanted to have her for himself. So much that when he found out she had conceived, David sent word to Joab, his commanding officer at war, to put Uriah in the frontlines so that he would fall at the hands of the enemies.

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 Jn 2:16)

Giving in to the lust of his eyes, David coveted another man's wife. He committed adultery to satisfy the lust of his flesh. Taking advantage of his authority and power, he sentenced a good man to his death.

In a whirlwind of sins, David broke three of the Ten Commandments and stirred up the wrath of God. He did not even realize that he had done such an evil thing. Not until the Lord sent Nathan, a prophet, to rebuke him.

Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel. (2 Sam 12:10, 12)

God's punishment of David was fierce and quick, and His wrath cost David the life of his baby son. No matter how much David mourned and fasted in front of the Lord, God's rod was unrelenting. No more Hollywood ending for this love story.

Blinded to His Own Sins

When Nathan told David the story of the rich man who took the little ewe lamb belonging to the poor man instead of offering one of his own, David was furious. He immediately judged the rich man harshly for his mistake (2 Sam 12:1-4).

The reason David did not realize that he had sinned against God was because he thought his decision to send Uriah to his death was the best way to solve his own problem.

We take matters into our own hands because we are impatient to wait for God's timing. And for some of us, we probably learn this lesson the hard way, just like David.

Our transgressions always carry consequences, and even when it seems we've "gotten away with murder," God remembers and will hold us accountable.

God saw that David was a boy who sought to delight in Him, whose heart was after God's own heart.

The problem with getting away with murder is that we think we are clever enough to pull it off. It is also an indication that we have misplaced God in our lives and forgotten that we can hide nothing from Him.

And in the process of pulling it off, we probably will hurt others. There is

always a high price to pay in self-protection because selfishness comes to the fore.

A KING AFTER GOD'S HEART

And when He had removed [Saul], He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all my will." (Acts 13:22)

When God first chose David, he was only a boy in his youth. But from his youth, God saw that David was a boy who sought to delight in Him, whose heart was after God's own heart.

Throughout his entire life, David never forgot that God was the center of his faith. In whatever circumstance, good or bad, he rejoiced in the glory of the Lord and praised Him with the praises of his lips in song, in Psalm, and in prayer.

Make no mistake that David had done a terrible thing, but God would be forgiving because He saw David's heart—a heart that sought after His delight and His mercy. As a father loves a child, God did not refuse David when he humbled himself.

David Confessed His Sin

As soon as David recognized his sin, he was not afraid of what people might think. Immediately, in front of Nathan, David said, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam 12:13).

Almost as immediately as David pleaded for forgiveness did the Lord blot

out David's iniquities, because he held steadfastly onto the Lord and sought Him first. For to David, to lose God was to lose everything.

David faithfully held onto the love and mercy of God because he knew that life would be meaningless without Him. For that, God loved and blessed him. Just as immediately as God's anger came upon David, His forgiveness and mercy followed.

When we confess our sins before the Lord, there must be a sense of urgency. No one seeks to dwell under the wrath of God because this is much too unbearable.

Recognizing our sins helps us understand that we are weak individuals who need the guidance and mercy of the Lord. It is a form of self-examination and humility that we must often exercise, so that we do not stray too far from the true path of God.

The closer we are to God, the more we are attuned to His presence in our lives. We are aware that following His commands please Him, and we know that the transgressions we commit prompt His rebuke.

Confessing sins is an important practice for a Christian. By asking for forgiveness, we take the time to reflect upon our mistakes and to purify ourselves in front of God. In doing so, we are also taking refuge in Him.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise. (Ps 51:17)

David meekly reflected upon himself, and his repentance has touched many of our hearts through the fifty-first Psalm.

Pressing on with a determination to put away sin, to repent and correct our wrongs and hold firmly onto God's commands, is a sign that we are growing in the grace and knowledge of God (2 Pet 3:18).

Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the Lord loved [Solomon], and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, [beloved] of the Lord. (2 Sam 12:24, 25)

After David's relationship with God was made right again, he was able to go to Bathsheba and comfort her. She later conceived Solomon, whom God loved and through whom He reaffirmed His promise and covenant to David (2 Sam 7:12-16).

This is the pattern of God's anger, mercy, and grace—the complete depiction of His love. God's way is beyond our understanding, and how He disciplines us only goes to show the greater capacity of His love.

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to
our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy towards those who
fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions
from us.
As a father pities his children,
So the Lord pities those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame
He remembers that we are dust.
As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.
But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting
to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,
To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His
commandments to do them.
(Psalm 103:8-18) ✦*



Internet Ministry Program Progress Report

Imagine if you met a church member who tells you about his local church. “Every day of the week,” he says, “over 700 people knock on our chapel’s front door, asking us to let them in. Once in, they all tell us they have been looking for the true gospel.”

Sound far-fetched? It shouldn’t. In fact, it’s happening today.

Every day of the week, the www.tjc.org Web site has more than 700 visits. Most of these are first-time visitors. Many of these visitors click on a link to contact the church. Praise and thank God, since the Web site first went up in 1998, there are several who became baptized after first hearing about the True Jesus Church on the Web. And while these numbers are encouraging, they are still considered very small when compared to the full potential of the Internet.

The Internet

Since the first Web site went online ten years ago, the Internet has become the church’s greatest enemy. Like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it can be a temptation that threatens to open even our children’s eyes to the vilest and most perverse sins that man has even devised.

But at the same time, the Internet may be the greatest ally for furthering the gospel since the printing press. At the click of a mouse, God’s true gospel can be brought to hundreds of millions of households, and even to the most remote corners of the world. According to the Pew Research Center, last year, over 25% of all Internet users searched for spiritual information online. That’s over 154 million people. And that number is sure to increase in times like these, of global insecurity and anxiety.

We are standing at the crossroads. Even as our church must begin to contend with the dangers of the Internet, we are at a point where we also can begin to tap the potential of the Internet for preaching the gospel and tending Christ’s sheep.

The Internet Ministry Program

At the World’s Delegate’s Conference in 2003, the world’s churches officially established the Internet Ministry Program (IMP) as a permanent division in the International Assembly (IA). Its missions in a nutshell:

- To provide a consistent global strategy and work with True Jesus Churches around the world, helping ensure that Web sites are consistent with the church’s global identity, yet still completely meet the needs of their constituents.
- To promote communication and collaboration among the world’s churches
- To enable IA, GAs, and local churches to establish effective and professional Web presences



The IMP held workshops in Taiwan and Malaysia in early 2003. Thank God, the workshops were attended by many very talented brothers and sisters around the world. It was a wonderful time for workers to get to know each other, and provided an invaluable first step for us to “launch out” as a team, with a spirit of unity.

IMP Priorities:

The following are the IMP’s immediate priorities for 2003 and beyond:

1) The Awareness Site:

This will be the primary “face” of the True Jesus Church to the world, replacing the current www.tjc.org. The goal of this site will be an evangelistic one: to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

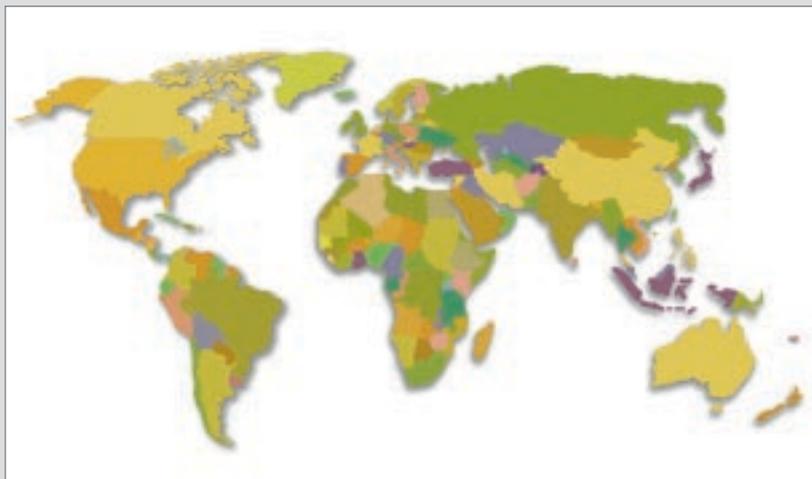
The Web site will be available in any language in which the True Jesus Church has an active ministry. Each country will be able to customize the site to suit its own society’s needs (e.g., provide national events listings, provide local testimonies, etc.)

This Web site will be a very simple Web site. Like an evangelical service, it will lay out the basic truth preached by the True Jesus Church and will answer basic questions that a truth-seeker might have. The goal of this site is that seekers will choose to contact the church, either through the online e-mail form or by visiting a church. Development of this site is slated for 2003.

2) Community Outreach Volunteer (COV) Program:

The Awareness Site, like any Web site, is only a tool. A Web site can never take the place of a live human being in personally guiding people to understand the truth or helping them to experience the power of Christ. This is where the COV program comes in.

The goal of the COV program is to recruit live human beings who will be



equipped to answer inquiries that come in to the Web site. Ultimately, COVs should be at the local church level, ready not only to respond to inquiries, but also to provide personal love and care for the inquirer. Training for COVs will be offered to GAs around the world starting in 2003.

3) The Participation Site:

This will be an “internal” site available to support members’ needs. Ultimately, this can be a place where members can view schedules online, view national and local church announcements, register for special events, submit prayer requests, receive spiritual nurturing, and more. Development for this site is slated to begin in 2004.

4) Tools and Systems:

Each of the three priorities listed above will require a substantial amount of underlying tools and systems to support them. For example, a global Knowledge Base will be established, an electronic “library” that will allow all local churches around the world to pool together sermons, publications, and other information that can be leveraged around the world. Development of these tools will be ongoing.

How You Can Help

The plans for the Internet Ministry are extremely ambitious. If the Lord wills, working together as a worldwide church, we can put together systems that truly support the church’s fundamental missions: to preach the gospel and to help all the members. It cannot be done without support from around the world.

Here’s how you can help:

1) Answer the call to volunteer. The goal of the Internet Ministry Program is to assemble teams and “virtual teams” around the world who can contribute to this vital ministry. People with these skills are vitally needed:

- a. Those who preferably have managerial and technical experience working in an online / interactive setting. This includes project managers, architects, programmers, system administrators, testers, usability engineers and interface designers.
- b. Those who have a gift for producing quality written content, including skills in writing, editing, and translating; as well as graphic art, design, illustration, and photography.
- c. Those who have a gift for evangelizing and counseling through e-mail or discussion forums.

If you feel a calling to serve God in these areas, please contact the IMP Program Manager at imp@tjc.org.

2) Financial donations will be critical to ensuring that operational costs such as infrastructure, back-end and front-end systems, marketing, and support are all provided professionally and are of enterprise-caliber. While commercial organizations can rely on large IT budgets to get these systems up and running, the church will depend solely on the generosity of church members around the world. Once you have fulfilled your obligation to your local church, please consider a one-time or a recurring tax-deductible gift to this important ministry.

3) Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. More than anything, please pray that the Lord will send workers to the important “mission field” of the Internet, and that He will grant wisdom to all who are involved.

Your financial contribution to the IMP fund is urgently needed! In order to meet our IMP short-term and long-term goals, we need your continued support. Over the past few years, we have witnessed the effective means of spreading the gospel through the Internet—a medium that reaches out to every corner of the earth. However, the longevity of this project can only be made possible with your freewill donations. Please give generously.

Please make your money order or bank draft payable to the True Jesus Church, specifying the ‘Internet Ministry Program (IMP) Fund’, and mail it to the address below.

Thank you, and may the Lord bless you richly.

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Love And Covenant In Marriage

Yao Jia Qi—Taiwan

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

In the process of God's creation, all that He created was deemed good. God created Adam, the first man, on the sixth day, but He reckoned that it is not good that he should be alone. So God created Eve, the first woman, to be a helper for him.

The purpose of marriage is for the purpose of life. Thus, in Gen 2:24, the Bible says, "Therefore, a man shall leave his mother and father and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

The three verbs in this passage illustrates the three significant aspects of marriage:

- To Leave: Man and wife must become an independent entity.

- To Join: They must come together not just in a communion of two lives but, more importantly, to be in unison their entire lives.

- To Become One: What started out as two separate lives can find completion and fulfillment in one body under Christ.

We have just defined the purpose of marriage. But how do we live out this purpose?

Most love stories talk about the process of falling in love, and the story often ends after the couple say, "I do." But we know that this is only the beginning. After a man and a woman come together "happily ever after," another story begins. And this is the story about love and covenant.

LOVE

Love is the most important thing in a marriage. It is something into which all of us who enter into marriage must put effort. Love equips us for marriage, and marriage is nurtured by love. Only then can the bond of husband and wife be strong.

We must understand that love in itself is a form of enjoyment, and this is to fulfill human needs. To catch a glimpse of love, we can look at how Adam reacted when he first saw Eve (Gen 2:23).

He deeply felt that she was the bone of his bones and the flesh of his flesh. And by his words, we can see that they were truly joined together as one. To each other, they became the other's joy.

The Chinese say that marriage is made in heaven. In other words, this is

So sincere and honest was his confession that many of us turn to his words in our own repentance.

As ageless as David's sin with Bathsheba was, so was his intimate and beautiful relationship with the Lord.

GOD'S GRACE AND RESTORATION

God did not send Nathan solely to punish David. Yes, God was angry, but His anger was the result of His disappointment and grief (2 Sam 12:8, 9).

While Jesus was on this earth, He addressed the issue of sin and restoration. To those whose sin were great and small, He warned them saying, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13: 3).

The Lord Jesus warned us that we are all sinners and that we must all repent if we want to receive His salvation. This is not a choice but a commandment. It's not just in the big things that we must pray for forgiveness—it is also in the little things that we do that displeases God, which we need to seek after His mercy.

When we sin against God we pain His heart. If He did not love us so deeply, our sins would not grieve Him. And He patiently teaches us His love by showing us His grace, through which we are restored (Eph 2:7).

*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
(Ps 51:12)*

Our sins cause a divide in our relationship with God, and we are aware of this divide because our sins strike us with spiritual turmoil and unrest. To be restored to Him—to have the reassurance of His salvation—is the

source of our joy.

This is a key element of repentance. If we examine ourselves regularly and bring our sins before God, His forgiveness allows us to move forward as Christians, so that with this continual hope of salvation we might be filled with spiritual joy (Ps 139; 2 Pet 3:9).

We are not deserving of God's great mercy, and it is by His grace that we are able to strive onward in our Christian path—even with all our weaknesses.

*And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me...For when I am weak, then I am strong."
(2 Cor 12:9, 10)*

To be restored to Him—to have the reassurance of His salvation—is the source of our joy.

MOVING FORWARD

The Lord forgave David, but He did not let David's sin go unpunished. In His wrath, God took away the baby that Bathsheba conceived. Devastated, David fasted, mourned, and prayed before God for the life of his baby son.

He held tightly to the grace of God because he knew that God was merciful and compassionate. But when his tears and prayers went unanswered and the child died, David accepted God's way and moved on.

And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now that he is

dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2 Sam 12:22, 23)

Moving forward is a necessary step in our repentance. It shows that we recognize that God is the director of our lives and that His larger will is something we have to yield to with submission.

Though God may have forgiven David of his great sin, the study of this famous story by no means encourages that committing adultery is tolerated by God. Do not put God to the test when His commandments have been clearly set before our conscience and ascribed in Scriptures.

In fact, the Bible warns that those who do such wicked things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-

21). Rather, this is a story about sincere repentance, so that we might all learn to return to God when we recognize that we have sinned against Him.

In 2 Tim 2:25, 26, it says that repentance leads us into the truth, and it will bring us to our senses so that we might escape the entrapment of the devil. If we continue to return to our past wrongs, we still are not free of the devil's snare—leaving him footholds to corrupt us.

More than ever, we should be determined not to make the same mistakes again, for the fear of incurring God's wrath. This is part of appreciating that God's anger and His punishment is an expression of His love.

the best gift that God has prepared for human beings. We must all treasure our marriage and be filled with sweet love.

*Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.
As a loving deer and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
And always be enraptured with her love.
(Prov 5:18, 19)*

LIVING TOGETHER

The Early Years

When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken. (Deut 24:5)

According to God's instructions, a man who has just taken a new wife does not need to go to war or be charged with any business, just so that he can spend that first year of marriage and bring happiness to his new bride. This is the wisdom of God.

In the early years of marriage, both husband and wife must deal with many changes because they have entered into a new lifestyle. Many couples will tell you that the first years are when many conflicts will arise.

There must be a period of adjustment to one another, and it is a time to nurture a deeper love, to resolve conflicts, or to iron out issues. This is a key step in establishing a solid bond with our spouse.

There is a trend in society where the husband and wife work in different places and are separated for a long time because of their career pursuits. Even though they are able to find happiness

Husbands and wives ought to change one another, to be submissive to one another, and to attract each other with a gentle and quiet spirit.

with this arrangement, they have yet to build a firm foundation.

And since they are more often apart than together, their communion with one another is mostly physical, and their communication on the emotional or intellectual front suffers.

If the marriage bond is not established in the early years, the couple will discover that they clash in many areas. This is because they have not taken the time to grow together or to resolve their conflicts. Living and bonding with one another is a key factor to resolving marital conflicts.

The Growing Years

We ought to learn to understand one another. Everybody has weaknesses. 1 Pet 3:1-7 tells us to dwell with our wives with reason and understanding. Not only husbands but also wives ought to put this to practice, which will lead to mutual respect.

The essence of love, as beautifully scripted in 1 Corinthians 13, should be the guiding principle in how we love our spouse. Both should take the initiative to show care and concern.

Learn not to be jealous, boastful, self-seeking, or calculating of each other's weaknesses. Whenever conflicts arise, return to the Bible's teachings to resolve them, for conflicts will always be there, and we need to train ourselves not to be easily provoked.

Husbands and wives ought to change one another, to be submissive to one another, and to attract each other

with a gentle and quiet spirit. And even if the other party has wronged us, we ought to use a gentle and quiet spirit to touch the other person.

The Lasting Years

If we look at the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah, we can see how much Isaac adored his wife:

When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. (Gen 26:8)

This passage records Isaac's love for Rebekah, which was apparent even to the king.

Today, we also ought to show endearment to one another in this way, so that in our daily lives, we are able to experience the sweetness of marriage. This is indeed the bliss that marriage brings. It is a form of joy, and it can satisfy all our needs.

I'm often very touched when I see senior couples holding hands and growing old together. If you notice, they move in unison and there is often no need to discuss or plan every detail. If we can make it this far, then advice and counseling are often no longer necessary.

SERVING TOGETHER

We must understand that our marriage is not just for ourselves. It is also for our entire family and the greater family of the church. We must therefore be very cautious in selecting our partner.

Serve One Another

Sometimes, it is easy to marry non-believers because we do not place enough emphasis on our faith. But such a marriage will end up sapping the strength of the church. Many people become weak in their faith as a result of their inter-faith marriage, and they lose the zeal to participate in church work.

When we marry in the Lord, we can encourage one another to walk this heavenly path together and to help one another live a life of faith. Marriage in itself is a form of service and partnership, allowing us to use our lives to be a good influence to others.

Today, we must not attempt to fit our relationship into the conventional “one plus one equals two” equation. Although politically correct, equal partnership in marriage is not about equal status between husband and wife. Rather, our mentality should be “one plus one is greater than two.”

This explains why the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 brought unequalled blessings to the family. She

When youths who truly love the Lord come together, it is a great blessing to the church.

took very good care of the family so that the family was joyful and her husband and children were greatly blessed. Even the poor and needy received the extension of her hands (Prov 31:20, 28).

Serve the Church

Marriage is also a testimony and witness to itself, and the people around us also participate in our joy. It is not just the coming together of two people but more like the coming together of two families.

It may even be the coming together of two churches.

In a wedding ceremony, two people testify that they are willing to take each other as husband and wife. They say their marriage vows in front of many people, making an open and public acknowledgment.

We must understand that marriage is not a two-party event. Through our marriage, we enter the communities of church and society to bring more blessings to the people around us.

Non-resident youths often came to the local church I attended because their studies brought them to the area. After graduation, they married there and settled down. Gradually the church grew because of their faithful involvement.

The newlyweds served God together, and many of them committed to taking care of new students. While they found love and marriage within the church, they also set an example and encouraged others to do the same. They became a very strong force in nurturing the growth of the church.

Many years later, this small church grew into a church with over six hundred members. Through their example, we can see the strength that a blessed marriage can bring to the church. When youths who truly love the Lord come together, it is a great blessing to the church.

Let us learn to manage our marriage so that we can, in turn, manage the house of God.

A LASTING COVENANT

Marriage is also an opportunity to receive blessings and grace from God. In Eph 5:22-33, the apostle Paul used the relationship between husband and wife as an analogy to describe the mystery of the relationship between the church and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe this is the same in our marriage today—that through the love we build with our spouse, we can experience the deep tie that we have with God and His church.

Therefore, we must cherish our marriage and not chose to be easily separated from one another. If this is our determination—that this is our only marriage in life and we will not give up too quickly—then let us put in our best effort to nurture our marriage.

Do Not Compromise Our Marriage

There are certain areas to which we must pay attention, areas that can cause us to break our marriage covenant with our spouse.

Very often, there will be third parties that affect a marriage. Sometimes, even friendships, regardless of same or opposite sex, can interfere in the marriage. This is impermissible. Therefore, we must use wisdom when we come into contact with others and be vigilant at all times, so that we are not enticed by the devil.

We must understand that the covenant of marriage is the closest relationship we have, and it surpasses all other relationships. It even surpasses our relationships with our parents and children.

We cannot overlook our marriage to show filial piety to our parents. We can see many examples of broken marriages

where, one spouse's relationship with his or her parents was stronger than with the partner after marriage. I'm not saying that we should not be filial to our parents, but it is important that one spouse supports the other when conflicts with in-laws occur.

After a woman gives birth to a child, she will place all her emphasis on her child. And because the husband works hard outside to take care of the family, the relationship becomes strained. Slowly, she draws further away from her husband. We must also be careful of this.

Some mothers place all their emotions on their children. And when a child grows up and gets married, they begin to compete for their child's affection. Rivalry builds up, and this can be destructive to the child's marriage.

Therefore, the proper marriage covenant is one that must surpass the relationships between parents and children.

In our life of marriage, let us esteem all aspects of love, so that our marriage might be filled with sweetness. Let us make time to spend with one another and deepen our relationship with God by serving Him together. Let us also hold fast to the marriage covenant with the conviction not to separate from one another or allow others to separate us.

Our joy comes in knowing that our walk down the aisle continues into the aisle of eternity in heaven. It is realized when we serve God together, and it is blessed as we bring up our children in the Lord. ✨





My College Experience

Jennifer Lee—Dallas, Texas, USA

HOW I GOT INTO COLLEGE

The screenwriter of a movie makes certain that the hero meets the right people, does and says the right things, and is always in the right places. That is the only way for the hero to come out triumphant against all odds.

During these three years in college, I've come to appreciate God more as I see His guidance from the big events in life to even the smallest ones. I really believe that God can be the perfect screenwriter of our time in college if we are willing to let Him lead.

The Right Place

I applied to three schools as a senior in high school: two were out-of-state and the third was the University of Texas (UT), which is a three-and-a-half hour drive away from home. I received all the documents from the other two schools but was lacking one document from UT.

Because my mom encouraged me to pray for God's will in this matter, a group of us fasted and prayed for God to clearly show me which school I should attend. Even though I preferred the other two schools, we prayed that if it were God's will for me to go to UT, then I would receive their financial package notification letter on a certain Monday.

That Monday finally came, and I stood by the window at two o'clock in the afternoon, when the mailman usually came. I waited until two-thirty—no mailman. Not willing to give up yet, I stood there until three, four, then eventually five o'clock—still no sign of the mailman.

Feeling disappointed and unanswered, I went back to my room to do homework. At six, my mom knocked on my door and held out a package—it was the notification letter from UT.

Initially, the feeling was bittersweet, because UT was not my first choice of school. However, awe and then peace quickly took over and settled in my heart. I knew that God heard and answered our prayers. I was assured of where God wanted me to go, and knowing that was the best feeling in the world.

There has not been a day that I regretted going to UT. God's will never lead you where His grace cannot keep you. I know that I am living in His blessings, because everything has been much better than what my abilities could ever have achieved. I really thank God.

The Right Time

After two morning classes on a typical Monday at 10:10 a.m., I sat in my building doing homework. I must've had massive brain failure because, for the life of me, I could not do a single problem on

that homework.

At 11:10 a.m., after an hour of frustration, I shut my book and went upstairs to the computer lab to check email until my next class at noon. Most were junk mail, so I didn't bother reading them. The clock read 11:15 a.m. and only five minutes had passed. I had nothing better to do so I went back to look at my emails—something that I have never done before.

An email with the subject “RSVP IMMEDIATELY!” caught my attention. It said that I had failed to reply to an earlier email concerning a scholarship that I had won and that I was required at a luncheon at 11:30 a.m. that day! I looked at the clock; it was 11:20 a.m. I closed all the windows, logged off, and ran downstairs.

Suddenly I remembered that I had homework due for my class at noon. Luckily, I saw my friend standing as if she were waiting for me! I mumbled a hasty, “I got a scholarship. I need to go. Can you turn my homework in for me? Thanks!” and ran off.

Sitting in the luncheon grossly underdressed in my t-shirt and jeans compared to others in business casual, I felt awestruck. Had I stayed downstairs doing my homework, had I decided to surf the web instead of rechecking my email, or had I ignored that email again, I would not have made it to the luncheon.

There was no doubt in my mind that every minute was perfectly timed by God. It was better than the movies.

NOW THAT I'M HERE, WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

Getting into college is one thing, but what we do in it is what matters. I've heard people saying that the college

To keep focus, it becomes imperative to put God in the center of a day and to touch back on His words for direction.

years are a time to find ourselves—a time to try new things and stretch our potential.

College indeed opens many doors of opportunities. However, the opportunities that come our way are not censored to be only Christian-friendly. We are suddenly immersed in freedom with the reins of life dropped into our two hands.

Unfortunately, with freedom come also the possibility of losing discipline and succumbing to the temptations that Satan devises to level our faith in God. We now have the ability to do whatever we want, stay up as late as we want, befriend whomever we want, go wherever we want, and the list goes on.

If we are not careful, we may surprise ourselves by doing things or going to places we would have shunned without flinching back when we were more spiritually sound. Slowly, whether we mindfully condone it or not, we may lose God.

The truth is, we were not meant to tear ourselves in half while we strive to balance between our academics and our spirituality. On the contrary, the spirit within us serves as a backbone to support our physical lives so that we can achieve our goals and aspirations with God as an active participant.

Faith and school are not two opposing forces in a ceaseless game of tug-of-war. Together, they actually work beautifully to fabricate the quilt of a successful life as a college student and spiritual soldier that ultimately glorifies God.

Fix Our Focus

Keeping focus on God does not come by nature. It requires an active effort, because we are predisposed to look at what is in our immediate line of vision. Schoolwork, friends, TV, and the Internet—thought neutral—may work together to drive our focus off-track.

Spiritually, we are actually really fragile and much weaker than we think. Paul warns, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Months of spiritual awareness may disappear simply after a hectic week of school. It is frustrating when the hard-won zeal from spiritual seminars evaporates so quickly with time.

Usually, we can feel when we begin to slip spiritually. Sometimes it starts innocently with watching a PG-rated movie or listening to a five-minute song. Other times it may start with our hesitation to say “no” or with satisfying our curiosities.

Regardless of what, our Bibles suddenly seem to bolt shut, refusing to open, and our legs become stiff, refusing to bend. The standard of the world is different, and at times contrary, to the standard of God. It is typically the small, subtle things that have the potential to snowball into a spiritual crisis.

To keep focus, it becomes imperative to put God in the center of a day and to touch back on His words for direction (Ps 119:105). Pastors may sound like a broken record when they remind us to read the Bible and pray.

The habit is indispensable in a successful Christian life because it keeps our steps in check; whenever we encounter a challenge, it reminds us to turn to God. We then would not chance to wander too far away from Him and then gradually lose Him completely.

We must be watchful and “resist [the devil], steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:8, 9).

Drawing closer to God and acknowledging His presence help keep our steps in spiritual rhythm.

Be Spiritually Persistent

Ever tried to diet but couldn't say “no” to a warm, moist, chocolate-chip cookie? Here is the breakthrough: if you are on a diet, then don't browse the cookie aisle. This same principle also makes sense spiritually; by going out of our way to avoid eye contact with temptation, we will save ourselves from many broken determinations.

We cannot afford to let God go without a fight! Usually, our conscience will react when we are exposed to things that will be detrimental to our faith. It then becomes our choice whether we want to try to persist spiritually or mute that voice inside. Do whatever it takes to keep God as an active participant.

The strength of my day comes in the morning when I read the Bible while eating breakfast. I have heard others starting strong with a prayer before they take on the events of the day.

Try keeping a journal of the times when God has touched your heart or dedicate a time of the day for God. Go back and read what you wrote to remind yourself of God's love. It is the small, habitual additions in the day that helps

build our faiths and instill God's voice inside our hearts.

It is impossible to detect when temptation will come, in what form, or how severe it will be. However, we know that while Satan is strong, God is stronger; and while “with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26).

Two are Better than One

It is hard to succeed alone; there must be times when we have become too depleted in energy and too weak to help ourselves. This is when God sends us help.

Good friends in the Lord can hold our hands and lead us when we suffer spiritual blindness or revive us from a spiritual coma. Attending spiritual seminars, joining Bible study groups, and praying with our family are avenues that take us closer to God.

For me, my mom is whom I turn to for spiritual guidance and help with prayer. King Solomon keenly observed, “Two are better than one, for if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls” (Eccl 4:9,10).

Even when friends can't be there, God is always there to pull us through, because He desires us to “make straight paths for [our] feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed” (Heb 12:13). Turning to God is not an abstract concept because God exists and He hears our prayers.

My mom tells me, “You will always

find the time for the things that are important to you.” The reason is simple: things that are important become a natural part of life and no longer compete for your time. Drawing closer to God and acknowledging His presence help keep our steps in spiritual rhythm (Heb 10:22, 23; Prov 3:6).

Faith that lasts is faith that slowly becomes indistinguishable from life.

GLORIFYING GOD

Many of my college friends say, “Christians talk the talk, but they never walk the walk. They are just a bunch of hypocrites.” What they say reminds us that we are God's walking advertisements, and people are looking at us as His reflection.

Through Our Conduct

Paul exhorts, “Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel” (Phil 1:27) and “seek those things which are above ... not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1, 2).

What we do can persuade or dissuade our friends from getting to know God better. Paul says, “The sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus” (Phm 6).

In a mad rush to finish a project, one of my classmates commented, “You always seem so calm!” People can see the difference because God is inside us, and we can use that as an opportunity to tell them more about Him.

Through Our Life

Another time during lunch, two of my friends were taking turns telling me all the stupid things that the other did while she was drunk the night before. Out of

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curiosity I asked them, “Why do you guys get drunk then?” They giggled, “So we can forget all the stress from school and lose ourselves!” If the point of life is to be numbed from consciousness and reality, then why bother living?

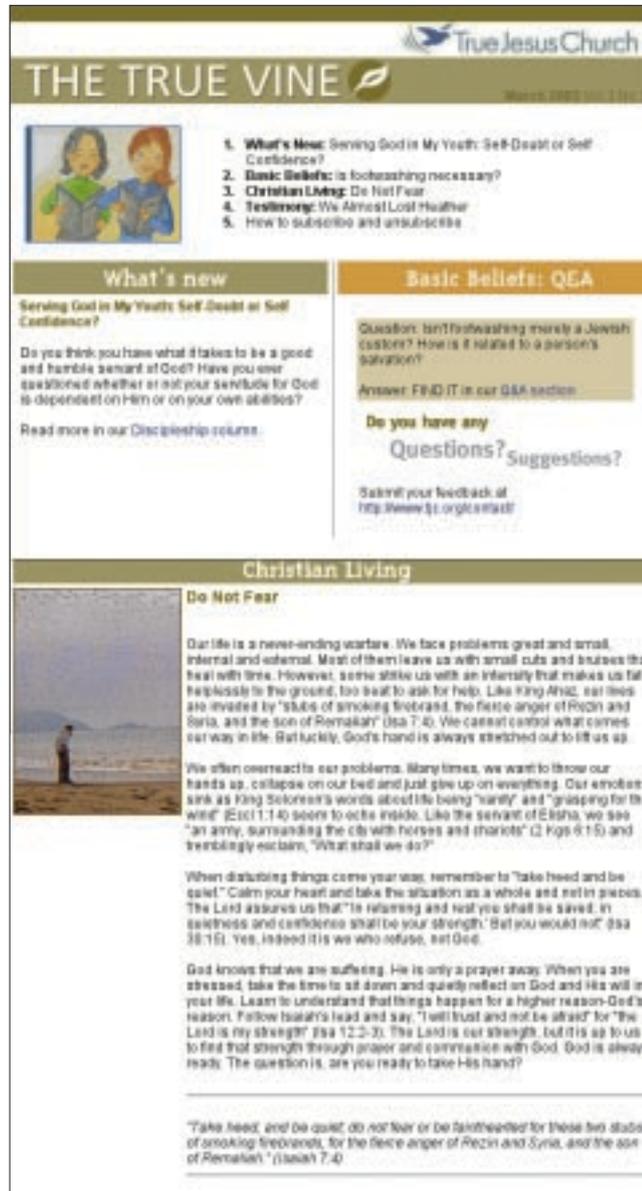
Life is meant to be lived. Jesus lived a beautiful life of love for us, and we, too, can live a beautiful life glorifying Him. The Bible says that not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from God’s will and that we are of more value than many sparrows (Mt 10:29, 31).

Each of us made it to this world despite the odds against us; God definitely has a special purpose for each of us here on earth.

These years in college sitting through classes after classes, I learned many things that will earn me a degree. However, the most important thing I learned is that I must to hold onto God and never let Him go.

God gives many priceless gifts to hearts that seek for Him and walk in Him (Heb 11:6). In good times, I experienced the quiet strength that only God can give. His peace makes a world of difference, because without it, I feel like I am doing everything alone (Phil 4:7; Col 3:15).

We need to make God an active participant and let Him be the perfect scriptwriter of our lives. ✨



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How To Rein In Your Anger

Susan Estrada—Pacifica, California, USA

I am ashamed to admit it, but I used to be both quick- and hot-tempered. One day in the distant past, God called my attention.

I was in the kitchen. My child was in the living room. Suddenly, a kitchen implement flew out of my hand. Although nobody got hurt, I needed no further convincing to rein in my anger.

As Christian parents, we are to teach our children about God and His words. The way we do this is through our day-to-day life (Deut 6:7). However, parents who let their anger get the better of them make it difficult for themselves to carry out their God-given responsibility.

Instead of bringing their children closer to God, out-of-control parents drive them away from Him. To save them and ourselves, we must trust in divine intervention and rely on divine instruction.

RESOLVE TO CHANGE

When God catches your attention, He has opened a way for you to break free from your old way of life. Anger that is

not reined in has a way of escalating and spinning out of control.

It creates a vicious cycle in the home for a family and its subsequent generation(s). Children who are born and raised in such a home become enslaved to the notion that out-of-control anger is acceptable behavior.

You can put a stop to this. Confront your problem and look it in the face. The truth will set you free (Jn 8:31, 32). If you deny that you have a problem managing your anger, you have no reason to live your life differently.

You may even be satisfied that it gets you what you want, even if only temporarily. But you know otherwise. Resolve to change. Give God a chance to help you.

I shudder to think what would have happened if our Lord had not intervened. I did not know any better, but our Lord put the brakes on what was clearly anger that was spinning out of control.

Although I had begun reading the Bible, I did not realize that giving in to anger was not a good thing. The Lord

made me aware that it was unacceptable behavior. Knowing how close I came to hurting my child was the beginning of a fresh start.

TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY

According to Paul, “outbursts of anger” are “works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19-21). He categorized these with “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...”

Paul understood that all works of the flesh are sinful, which, left unchecked, will lead to certain death and eternal condemnation.

Our understanding of sin is less clear. In a society where the difference between right and wrong is left to the individual to define, few people can understand how outbursts of anger can be placed in the same category as adultery, idolatry, and murder.

Yet the mom or dad who professes Christ knows in his or her heart that by

whatever names a sin is called, it is nevertheless a sin in God's book.

When God put the brakes on my outburst of anger that day, I screeched to a halt. However, this did not mean that my problem was fixed right away. The incident motivated me to put my mind in gear and learn to live a new life.

For example, in those early days, when I felt my anger meter rising, I would warn my children to quit squabbling before I blew up. But over time, I realized that God would not give me a pass on judgment day if I told Him that my children made me do it.

Sometimes, however, without meaning to, we may actually be making it difficult for our children to walk with the Lord.

I also did not think He would let it go if I said I was tired and cranky because I had a long day. I learned to quit threatening my children and be responsible for my conduct.

When I found myself in a jam, I tried to remember to call for divine reinforcement instead. I would say in my heart, "O Lord, I'm going to blow it again. Help me!"

PRACTICE SELF CONTROL

If we profess a Christian faith and believe in Jesus Christ, the one and only living God, we must live differently than we used to. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are now engaged in spiritual warfare for the rest of our natural life.

This is played out in the theater of everyday living where our words and actions reflect the nature of this war. Each time we give in to an outburst of anger, we have lost another spiritual battle. For example, when we are angry,

our brain shuts down and our mouth opens. Hurtful words roll off our tongue.

People in Bible times knew this. James, an elder in the early church called the tongue an "unruly evil, full of deadly poison...Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing" (Jas 3:8-10).

I know such battles. When my daughter walks to school in the morning, I make it a point to send her off with the words, "God be with you." One day, when she was running late again, I felt a surge of anger rising in my chest.

Although I walked her to the door and saw her off as usual, it occurred to

me a few minutes later that I had not done so in good faith. Immediately, I fell on my knees and begged God to forgive me.

Since then, I do my best to take my eyes off the clock in the morning and keep busy until she lets me know that she is ready to leave.

DO IT FOR YOUR CHILDREN

God has a special place in His heart for children (Gen 18:19; Deut 6:4-7). He has much to offer them, and He wants them close to Him (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17). All that our Lord asks of parents is that they bring their children to Him.

If we understand the gist of His commandments to the Israelites, we know this to mean twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, or 24/7 in our vernacular—which is all the time.

As Christian moms and dads, we want nothing better than this.

Sometimes, however, without meaning to, we may actually be making it difficult for our children to walk with the Lord.

In two letters to the early churches, Paul had some stern words for fathers. After he had reminded the children to obey their parents in the Lord, he instructed fathers to "not provoke [their] children to wrath" (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20, 21).

These fathers were apparently giving their children a very hard time. While we do not know what exactly was these fathers' problem, we can tell that it got in the way of good parenting.

The lesson we can take away from this warning is the reminder that our words and actions affect our children one way or the other.

The window of opportunity to "bring [our] children up in the training and admonition of the Lord" is very small. Little ones grow up very quickly. Mine are nearly all grown.

On looking back over the years, I am certain that if the Lord had not intervened, I would have lost my opportunity and lived to regret my folly. I thank God that He helped me make the most of this time.

Kitchen implements do not fly out of my hands, but I still watch myself and dispatch calls of distress to the Lord. I know of no more effective way to curb my anger and keep it from escalating and spinning out of control.

May God's name be forever praised. ★

Let Him Kiss Me With The Kisses Of His Mouth

YM Yang—Paris, France



There is no metaphor that more movingly expresses the depth of our longing to be kissed by the Lord than the first line of the Song of Songs. If we have never deeply tasted His love, we will feel this yearning because His is a love that tastes “better than wine.”

Had the memory of that taste not been etched permanently in our heart, our understanding of His love would be limited to hearsay and conjecture—a foundation too weak to withstand the seductiveness of wine.

God calls many in Christ His friend, but He has a distinct relationship with each believer. With a casual friend, God’s word is rare and revelation is scarce (1 Sam 3:1); with a close friend, even if he does not ask, God will hide nothing from him (Gen 18:17).

The Lord once heard Miriam and Aaron complain, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” God therefore made it a point to let them know that He treated each prophet differently.

*If there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision,
And I speak to him in a dream.
Not so with My servant Moses;
He is faithful in all My house.
I speak with him face to face, [And I kiss him with the kisses of My mouth]
Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;
And he sees the form of the LORD.
(Num 12:6-8)*

God revealed Himself to Miriam and Aaron through a medium, whereas he spoke to Moses face to face. Although each prophet received the same words of God, their reactions were utterly different. Perhaps, this explains why loving and being loved are so unequal.

In the same vein, being told through a third party that you are loved and being told “I love you” directly evoke the same message but different sentiments—the former provides an academic sense of “knowing,” the latter revives and brings joy.



In Song 1:2, “wine” represents man’s antidote for an empty soul. Wine itself is not a sin, albeit a temptation. Often, it is difficult to sense God’s love, regardless of our tears and supplication. Yet, to compare His love to the intoxicating effect of wine makes it too abstract, too elusive, and too feeble.

If we regard “your love is better than wine” as a comparison rather than a life experience, we will unconsciously seek contentment in other pursuits, such as that of art, knowledge, or physical activity, and wander away from the pursuit of a closer relationship with God. With time, the pleasures of wine will have become a substitute for the beauty of God’s love!

We lose a sense of awe in God’s power when we receive something indirectly from Him. Only through intimate (mouth-to-mouth) instruction can we understand the mysteries of His word, fathom the wonders of His love, and cast off the shackles of inebriation.

Wine removes inhibition by stimulating the senses. There is, however, a limit to the amount of stimuli the senses can absorb. The cheerfulness induced by a small glass of wine can quickly deteriorate into the excesses of drowning one’s sorrow. If we are so unfortunate as to reach this end, we will spend our days enslaved by wine, vainly attempting to fill a cup that is never full.

God’s love pulls on our heartstrings and spreads around to embrace us. To preserve this wonderful feeling, we naturally develop loftier aspirations. The simple lyrics “Oh, to be like You” becomes an expectation. When an individual’s spirit and flesh turn crystal clear, that individual will have left the world far behind them and become as one with the Lord.

For forty days and nights on Mt. Sinai, the Lord kissed Moses “with the kisses of [His] mouth,” teaching him in the Spirit and making a covenant of love with him. Moses left the mountain with such a sense of peace and contentment that he had no idea his face was shining.

Oh my beloved, how I long for You. May You return to receive and to deeply kiss Your beloved and Your church. ★



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, or send hardcopy and disk to:

**Manna
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Please direct any questions to manna@tjc.org or
+1-949-859-6818 phone/
+1-949-859-6836 fax.

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

EDITORIAL CALENDAR

Issue #42

Theme: Science and Technology

Articles due: Aug 31, 2003

This theme will focus on the recent advancement of science, and its affect on our faith. How do we reconcile scientific discoveries with our faith in God? How do we deal with recent developments in biomedicine, and where do we draw the line between relying on medicine verses relying on God?

Issue #43

Theme: Holy Spirit

Articles due: Nov 30, 2003

This theme will focus on the promised Holy Spirit. What is the nature and role of the Holy Spirit, and how do we discern between different spirits? What does it mean to submit to God's spirit?

Issue #44

Theme: The Life of Jesus

Articles due: Feb 28, 2004

This theme will focus on the character and ministry of Jesus Christ. What are the seven "I am's"? How do we imitate Christ? How do we understand Jesus in the plan of God? And what can we learn about the example He set for us?

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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THE UNVEILING

AWS–Garden Grove, California, USA

*He sends me flowers every day
And sets a banquet on my plate;
He clothes me in the finest linen,
Yet I do not know His face.*

*He welcomes me with warm embrace
And paints me sunsets without end;
His breath brings life to my soul,
Yet I do not know His face.*

*He loves me despite all my failing
And forgives me without keeping score;
He knows every facet of my nature,
Yet I do not know His face.*

*He gave up glory high above
To buy my life with His blood;
He was nailed to a tree for me,
Yet I do not know His face.*

*One day I will see the One
Who loves me with a love so strong
That death could not break its bonds;
I will see Him face to face.*

*I will see the One behind
This worldly veil and its passing life,
In all His tenderness, beauty, majesty;
Yes, I will know His face.*