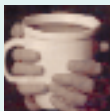


MANNA

True Jesus Church ISSUE 45 JUL-SEPT 2004 **A Life of Servitude**

Blessings Upon Blessings
Rebuilding The Wall
The Heart Of A Servant



Dear Reader,

The last time we covered the topic of servitude was in Manna Issue 29. So I decided to go back and re-read that issue, and it brought back many precious lessons and reminders. Here is an insightful excerpt from the article entitled, "Service, Suffering & Salvation" (Manna 29, pg.7):

God knows that we are weak and lowly, but that is not a hindrance to the completion of His saving work. It is exactly our weakness and lowliness as well as our recognition of them that God would use for His divine purpose. As long as we are willing to contribute whatever gifts we have received to the church community, God's work is closer to completion (1 Pet 4:10).

The author reminds us that it is because our weakness is made perfect in His grace that we are able to carry out His salvation plan. So let us not become discouraged as we strive to give our best to the Lord, for He will surely store up our rich rewards in heaven.

In support of this theme, this current issue of Manna exhorts us to build spiritual walls to guard against our faith so that we might be rooted in Him. There are also inspiring and heart-warming testimonies and reflections from writers about their personal experiences of serving God.

THE EDITOR

MANNA

Jul-Sept 2004

ISSUE 45 Vol 29 No. 3

A Life of Servitude

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

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A Life of Servitude



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The Lord took me from country to country and from one spiritual experience to another. After all these years, I am certain of whom I have believed.

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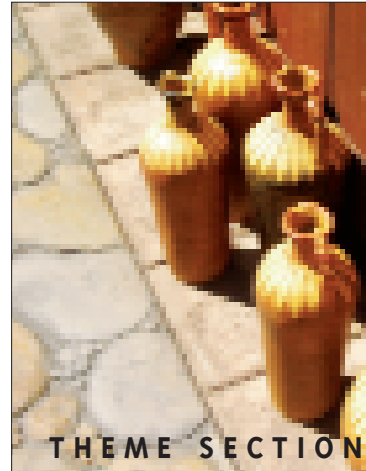
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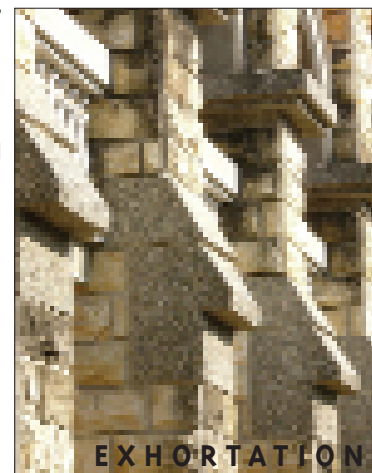
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by Wendy Leacock



How The Lord Called Me

Irene S. Lane—Irvine, California, USA

STARTING OVER IN SINGAPORE

My Buddhist grandparents left China in their youth and settled in Indonesia, where I was born many years later. My mother was a Buddhist by birth, but my dad was an avid self-believer and he was always confident in whatever he did.

I had a happy childhood growing up in my parents' home, and their only requirement was for me to study hard. They sent me to a Christian school and, occasionally, I prayed to my grandparents' portraits. Sometimes, during Chinese New Year, I would visit the temple and ask for higher grades.

Meanwhile, the teachers at school taught us the Lord's Prayer and how God is omnipresent, so we could talk to Him

anytime and anywhere.

At that time, I was nine years old and living in my little comfort zone when my uncle called my father about my future education.

My parents' generation had gone to Chinese school but, because of racial discrimination, all Chinese schools in Indonesia were closed down by the time I was in school. That is why some Chinese Indonesians can't speak fluent Chinese nowadays.

After their conversation, my dad sat me down and asked, "Do you want to be able to speak Chinese and English fluently?" I replied, "Yes," and before I knew it, my mom and I were off to

Singapore.

Arrangements were made for me to stay with a homestead mother to act as my guardian. She was about sixty years old and spoke only Mandarin and Hakka—another dialect in Chinese. Because many Chinese Indonesian parents sent their children to Indonesia to study, this lady operated a homestead business to accept overseas students.

I felt as if my life had been turned upside down. In Indonesia, a family has three servants and a nanny at home to take care of the kids. Suddenly, I was brought to Singapore, with no mommy's kisses or daddy's smile, and with no one to wait on me. I had to be independent.

I was left with a difficult course load at school and an old lady at home who could care less for the children staying at her house.

I regretted that I had agreed to my father. If only I had refused, I would have been able to enjoy my life like any other ordinary kid in Indonesia. But I didn't know that God had a different plan for me.

“JUST COME AND SEE”

*The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has
made mention of My name. (Isa 49:1)*

I didn't know God had chosen me to be one of His own, but the time came when I was fifteen years old and approaching my junior year of secondary school.

A friend asked me what my religion was, and I said both Buddhism and Christianity. She said, “How can you have two husbands? You have to pick one.” I was shocked. I was still young, why did I have to think about religion? I really didn't know how to pick. I just knew that Jesus is everywhere and that He is invisible. But according to my family, I was supposed to be a Buddhist.

That night, I prayed on my bed. I crossed my legs and held up my hand in the Buddhist prayer position. But with my mouth, I said, “Lord Jesus, I want to pray to you now. Please tell me what my religion is.”

I prayed the way a Buddhist prayed because I thought I was a Buddhist, but there were no statues related to Buddhism or pictures of my grandparents in front of me. At the same time, I was aware that the Lord Jesus is available



She said that speaking in tongues is speaking in the language of heaven. I already knew a few languages, and I wanted to learn this one.

anytime and anywhere, and I didn't want to offend any of the gods. I didn't know that there was only one God.

Exactly one month after that prayer God still graciously gave me the answer, though I was ignorant of the fact that I shouldn't pray in this way. Two older boys in that house suddenly invited me to the True Jesus Church. They hadn't been going to church for two years, and they suddenly felt like going. So they said to me, “Hey, just come and see.”

Immediately, I grabbed three other girls to come with me. It was a Wednesday night service, and half of the service was devoted to praying for the Holy Spirit. It was the first time I had ever stepped into a church, and there was no introduction about speaking in tongues.

An amazing thing happened that night, though. The speaker used almost twenty-five passages and I had never turned to the Bible before. But that night, every time I had to flip to a verse, the pages seemed to turn for me. I was always on the right page, the right chapter, and the right verse. It must be God helping me, I thought.

I had learned in school that when you pray, you should never peek at your friends. But when it came time to pray I couldn't stand it, so I apologized to God and bravely opened my eyes. What I saw

shocked me. Everyone was praying in a loud voice, and they were vibrating in an orderly manner. I couldn't understand at all what they were speaking. I turned to my friend who was beside me. When I looked at her, she said, “Shhh...just see.”

After the service, a sister from the church came to answer my questions about the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. She said that speaking in tongues is speaking in the language of heaven. I already knew a few languages, and I wanted to learn this one.

The second time I came, there was a hymnal evangelical service. I was moved to tears. It seemed like the words sung by the choir were so real and were sung straight from their hearts.

Introduced to the Truth

Despite my experiences, I still had my doubts and started to shop around for other churches. This time, I narrowed down my options. I knew I was attracted to Christianity, but I didn't know which church I should go to.

I tried a charismatic church. Their singing was great, but as soon as the preacher started to preach, I immediately fell asleep. I told God, if I go and I fall asleep again, I won't come back. True enough, I went back a second time and fell asleep. I felt the sermons at the True Jesus Church were more appealing and had more depth. Still, I struggled with some confusion, gave up, and didn't go to any church after that.

Three months later, the sister who had sat next to me called me up and said, “Hey, our church is organizing a badminton competition. Do you want to come?” That was my third contact with the True Jesus Church.

Some members at the competition were playing badminton, and some were playing basketball. I thought to myself, “How come all these people call themselves brothers and sisters? Are they related? How come they seem to be one big family?” My curiosity made me investigate the truth.

That day, the first person who sat down with me referred to John 3:5, which states: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” It was very direct and hard for me to swallow. I also had many questions: “First of all, do I even want to enter into the kingdom of heaven? What is the purpose anyway? Is it to be able to speak in an unknown tongue?”

Despite my uncertainties, I knew that this church offered something really extraordinary. This church had the abidance of the Holy Spirit.

TOUGH BEGINNINGS

From then on, I actively searched into the church. I asked many questions. I learned how to pray to Jesus. I kept encouraging those three girls who had come with me that first time to come back to church. Out of the three, one of them accepted the truth.

I thought, since I was the one who had brought my friends, I should receive the Holy Spirit before them. I thought God’s principles are the same as ours: First come, first serve. But it turned out to be the other way around—the first would be the last, and the last would be the first.

As we prayed together, I could only repeat “Hallelujah” loudly. But those three girls began to experience the movement of the Holy Spirit. One of them immediately spoke in tongues.



I thought God’s principles are the same as ours: First come, first serve. But it turned out to be the other way around—the first would be the last, and the last would be the first.

I was shocked and disappointed at the same time. What’s wrong with me, I thought. Was it because I hadn’t mastered the Bible well enough?

So I bought a simple NIV Bible and was determined to read through it. At six o’clock every morning before I went to school, I would read one to three chapters. Before long I had finished the whole Bible.

I was going to church four times a week, reading the Bible everyday, and praying loudly in my room daily. Each time there was a spiritual convocation, I would pray until I lost my voice. I did all I could to pray for the Holy Spirit. Yet, I still didn’t receive it.

I still had to learn that God has His own time for everything. All I needed to do was to wait and to keep on praying.

Apparently, my homestead lady became unhappy because a few of us were praying loudly for the Holy Spirit. Secretly, she called my parents and told them that I was going to church everyday, wasn’t studying, was wasting my time, and believed in something very weird. But it was not true. I studied till late every night, and I only went to church four times a week; not every day.

That was the beginning of the persecution of my faith. I was fifteen years old at the time. My parents called and said they were very upset even though I tried very hard to explain to them. My mother said to me, “If you plant a watermelon seed, it will grow

into a watermelon tree. If your mother is a Buddhist, then you are a Buddhist for life, and shouldn’t believe in some Western religion.”

My parents became very angry and said that if I went to church one more time, they would buy me a one-way ticket back to Indonesia, even if school wasn’t finished. Thank God for giving me the strong will to keep on searching for the truth. In those days, I went to



church secretly and prayed for God to open a way.

Going to church on Sabbath was not easy for me. Two times a year, I would go back to Indonesia to be with my parents during the holidays. But during those happy times, I couldn't go to church on Saturdays. We would be travelling in a car and passing by the True Jesus Church building, and my heart wanted to cry out to go to church. Sabbath service might become a routine and habit for some people, but I know what it's like not being allowed to go to service when I wanted to.

Only God could hear my cries and see the tears in my eyes. My body was in the car, but my soul was worshipping God with the others at church. He trained me to stand up for what is true. When everybody else was worshipping my grandparents in the tomb site, I sat in the car by myself. During Chinese New Year, when everybody brought flowers to burn incense in the temple, I stayed at home by myself.

To my family and to everybody else, I was unfilial and foolish. To some, I was crazy. But in my heart was a burning flame. I knew what I was doing and, just as the title of a familiar hymn expresses, I know whom I have believed. I would often smile and say to God, "Lord Jesus, You said I would be blessed when I'm persecuted for Your name's sake. I should rejoice and be exceedingly glad."

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The persecution went on but I continued to pray for the Holy Spirit. By then, two years had gone by and I still hadn't received the Holy Spirit. I knew how important it was, and I was thirsting for it.

I attended the first day of a student spiritual convocation in June, 1991. The preacher asked all the students to pray earnestly and persistently. The ministers laid hands on us and, because so many students would receive the Holy Spirit during prayer, a circle would be marked on the floor in front of where we knelt, so they would remember who had received the Holy Spirit.

After we finished praying, I also had a circle marked. The minister said, "Thank God, you have received the Holy Spirit." I quickly stood up and said, "Oh, I haven't received the Holy Spirit because I know I was clearly saying 'hallelujah' and not speaking in the spiritual tongue yet."

Though the preacher kept assuring me that I had received the Holy Spirit, I kept on denying it, so I did not receive the Holy Spirit until the next year. It took me three years of praying before I received the Holy Spirit. I was foolish to doubt God.



Only God could hear my cries and see the tears in my eyes. My body was in the car, but my soul was worshipping God with the others at church.

On June 2, 1992, I attended the student spiritual convocation with my friends again. By the first prayer, I already saw a round circle marked in front of me. At that time, I was surprised but I didn't dare to deny the Holy Spirit again. Even though I knew that my tongue could clearly say "hallelujah," I did

not dare to doubt.

The same preacher told me I had received the Holy Spirit and that I should keep praying. I didn't say anything but just smiled. I knew I had been wrong the previous year, and I didn't want to make the same mistake.

During the 4:00 pm prayer, I decided to change my attitude and mindset. When the prayer began, as usual, everyone started to pursue earnestly for the Holy Spirit. I also put complete concentration into my prayer, with the same urgency, thirst, sweat, tears, and everything in me.

But this time I also did something different. With my mouth I said "hallelujah," but in my heart I said to God, "The preacher said You have given me the Holy Spirit. This time I don't dare to doubt. Thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit already."

As soon as I said the word "already," my tongue rolled away very, very quickly. I was so shocked that I opened my eyes. In front of me was a fan that was turning very fast. I thought in my heart that my tongue was rolling faster than the fan! Another difference in this prayer was that no tears fell down my cheeks. Instead I was filled with joy and a stream of happiness flowed from my belly.

The Holy Spirit is truly an indwelling Spirit. Once we pray for it, it will not leave us and will dwell in us if we abide in His word. Just as Mark 11:24 states: "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER THAN OUR WAYS

Ever since I received the Holy Spirit, God has made even more changes in my life.

First of all, He gradually changed my character. The Holy Spirit also led me to understand the truth one step at a time. Finally, in 1994, I braced myself for baptism.

The Holy Spirit had also put it in my heart to come to study in the U.S., after I had been living in Singapore for eight years. At the time, I didn't know why God led me to the U.S. through my prayers and through signs. But now I know why.

As God says in Isaiah 55:9: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Looking back, if I hadn't come to the U.S., I wouldn't have been baptized at Pacifica Church in San Francisco. Maybe I would have kept on living in Singapore. Maybe I wouldn't have met my husband nine years ago.

Around the time of my baptism, a sister was preparing to get married and she said to me, "Getting married is a very serious matter. It's as serious as getting baptized. Once you go forward, you cannot turn back. There is no other man, only this one." She told me that if I could make the big decision to get baptized, then getting married should be my second biggest commitment.

Up to that point, I was only learning how to make the first commitment, and I was already so afraid. I knew that if I decided to be baptized in the Lord, I could not turn back. I could not pray to any other God. All my life I would have to keep myself in the faith. My attitude, speech, and behavior would have to be in tune with the Lord Jesus.

Now that I have embraced the first commitment of baptism, God would also show me His way in my marriage.*

He Saved My Family

Four years after my baptism, I left Pacifica Church. My mom called me to go back to Indonesia because violent riots aimed at Chinese Indonesians broke out. Houses, cars, and properties were burned. Many Chinese and Christians were killed, but God led me to help my parents—to pray for them and to introduce the Lord Jesus to my family at the time.

Even though there were persecutions in my faith, I was moved by the lyrics of a hymn, "though others may obstruct our way, but in Jesus we will be happy all the day." And I turned to Acts 16:30-31:

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and you will be saved, you and your household...And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

The Lord Jesus protected my family and their business throughout the civil unrests in Indonesia, and they also witnessed God's miracles in their lives. During that year, my brother was baptized, and my parents started to seek the truth. One week before my wedding, my parents were also baptized in Christ.

Who could foretell that ten years after I braved myself for baptism, my parents would receive the grace of salvation and be baptized, too?

We probably hear it all the time, but I will say it again. Our God is a living God, and everything He said in the Bible is true.

After we get baptized, our lives will be totally changed. We belong to God now, and He will see us through our Christian journey. Through every circumstance and when we encounter turbulences, God will keep us in perfect



We probably hear it all the time, but I will say it again. Our God is a living God, and everything He said in the Bible is true.

peace.

Using human eyesight, it was very painful for me to leave my parents at the age of nine. But God had a more wonderful plan in my life. He chose me and gave me something that money cannot buy—His saving grace.

God also wanted to give my family this salvation grace; I cannot imagine where I would be now if I did not go through all that He has blessed me. God has also commissioned us what we are to do for Him. I don't think it is a coincidence that we are all here together (Acts 17:26-27). From different parts of the world with different languages we worship the same God.

Let us open our hearts, let Him control our lives, and let Him lead us. Thank God for everything.

May all honor, praise, and glory be given to His name only! ✨

*Editor Note: Indeed, God had His beautiful will in Irene's path towards marriage. You can read about her marriage journey in the previous issue, Manna 44, pg. 36: "In Jesus Christ, Dreams Do Come True!"

A New Website!

www.tjc.org



Check it out! The new site features the following sections:

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- **Follow Jesus' Way:** Discover the original truths as demonstrated in Jesus' words and example.
- **Our Stories:** Read how ordinary people experience God in different aspects of their lives.
- **About Our Church:** Find out more about the True Jesus Church.
- **Explore More:** Want to gain insight into a specific topic? Search the Bible? Read online publications? Listen to audio sermons? Go to this section now!
- We're always here for you! If you have any comments or questions, please write us by clicking on Get in Touch at the upper right column. In the same column, you can also find the church nearest you, sign up for free newsletter and request free publications!



God Will Give Us The Victory

Elaine Shek—Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

I can feel His mighty power and His grace.

I can hear the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face.

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.¹

I always look forward to going to church seminars because it allows me time to focus on God's words and to spend time in prayer with Him. This year's National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) in Baldwin Park, U.S.A, was no exception.

It is, indeed, such a great blessing to be able to leave the cares of the world for

two weeks and completely focus on the Lord. My goal this time was to truly feel the presence of the Lord in my heart.

Thank the Lord, not only did I feel His presence in my heart, but I also felt His presence in the midst of all of us. He clearly manifested His glory and power.

PRAYER CHANGES ALL

I remember going into the seminar knowing that we had a record number in attendance this year (well over 160 participants). I was truly amazed and moved to see how many youths wanted to gather together to study God's words and to develop a deeper relationship with the Lord.

From the outset, many were already determined to fast and pray. Their determination and desire to see the Lord reaped great blessings. What I found interesting was that most of these younger youths came into the seminar with many burdens weighing heavily on their shoulders. You could see it in their faces. However, after the first few days of prayer, I noticed that many people's countenance changed.

Gone were the hard, angry faces. In their place were softened expressions and a glowing radiance. In fact, like Moses, whose face shone after he had spoken with the Lord, many of these participants' countenances became more

angelic and their smiles became sweeter.

I was particularly moved by a sister's spirit of prayer. This sister was among the oldest ones in the seminar, but she never allowed her age or her fatigue to become an obstacle to her communion with the Lord.

I noticed that during each prayer, she would always be the first to rush up to the very front to pray behind the pulpit. It seemed as if she was talking to our Lord Jesus face to face. Her spirit and zeal was a great encouragement to all of us.

This spirit of prayer continued to deepen among all the student throughout the entire two weeks of the seminar. It was especially evident during the second week, when Satan began to work. It was a real test of our faith.

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

During the first prayer on the Sunday of the second week, we heard a shrilling scream accompanied by loud thumping. Initially, I didn't think anything of it and continued to pray. Immediately after the scream, however, I felt the force and power of God's Spirit. Everyone's prayer gradually intensified and I could feel the spirit of God moving among us.

Later on, some sisters testified of how, immediately after hearing this scream, they felt a rush of wind blowing from the front to the back of the chapel. They felt God's power working in our midst even though Satan was working at that time. This experience comforted us and showed us that, despite Satan's attack, God's presence and love were surrounding and embracing us.

The very next day, during the lunch hour prayer, Satan's attack was particularly evident. I remember kneeling beside the sister that was disturbed by



“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...” (1 Jn 4:18)

the evil spirit. Another sister was praying next to us in order to help her if anything should happen. As I was praying, she suddenly fell on top of me. I opened my eyes and saw that Satan was attacking her again. Two pastors had already come to cast out the evil spirit.

We were told to hold this sister up, so that she wouldn't fall and hurt herself. We continued to pray asking for the power of God to cast Satan out; in the meanwhile, we kept our eyes open to make sure that she would not keep falling over. However, it became increasingly difficult to hold her up. Eventually, a pastor told us to take her to the front bench and sit her down.

It was alarming to see how violent Satan was. When we took the sister back to the seat, she abruptly shook me off and stared straight into my eyes. I'll never forget those eyes. Satan's stare is really evil and chilling. Another sister also told me that she saw the devil looking at me with those eyes and she prayed to God to ask Him to help me.

Thank God for giving me the courage to continue to pray for and help this sister. If it were not for His power and strength, I would not have been able to continue to pray for her.

Once we had sat the demon-possessed sister down, we continued to pray. She was getting rather violent at this point and started to thump hard on the bench. By this time five pastors in

total were casting the spirit out. This evil spirit was very stubborn; each time it was cast out it returned immediately. This was my first experience of confronting the evil spirit. I had never seen anything like it.

It was heartbreaking to see the suffering that this sister was going through. She seemed to be in great torment and Satan was relentless in his attacks. I continued to pray with my eyes open and saw how Satan stared wickedly at the pastors, unwilling to allow God's power to cast him out. Eventually, though, the Spirit of God prevailed, and the evil spirit was subdued and was no longer violent.

PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

Later on that afternoon, this sister felt tired and wanted to rest, so another sister and I accompanied her to her room. I remember being very afraid, not wanting to sleep because all the images of what had happened earlier kept flashing before my eyes. It was at that precise moment that the Lord provided me with a verse to comfort me, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...” (1 Jn 4:18).

As soon as He gave me this verse, I fell asleep. It was a miracle! God was teaching me not to fear and reminded me that if I had perfect love in Him, I wouldn't fear. It was an area I needed to strive towards. How comforting God's words are to us!

During the rest of the day, we noticed that each time we talked to this sister, the evil spirit would act up in her. At any mention of praising or honoring God, the evil spirit would feel uneasy. This was evident in the sister's facial expression. That evening, during the last class, the

pastor was talking about the book of Jeremiah. He mentioned the Israelites were unwilling to return to God because of the Israelites' pride.

Each time he mentioned the word pride, the evil spirit inside this sister would make her clench up. He didn't want to hear it, because, as we know, Satan is the father of pride. The evil spirit inside the sister was one of pride, so he did not want to hear his own downfall. Later, when the pastor said the word pride again, the sister looked at me with those eyes of Satan and said in a most frightening way, "Pride."

This reaction sent shivers up my spine again! I said "Hallelujah!" It showed me that all of us, in one way or another, are proud. It's an invisible sin that is entrenched deep inside each of us. If we do not destroy it, it will eat at us and cause us to sin.

SATAN TREMBLES

During that last prayer, we asked this sister to come to pray. How amazing the next scene was! By this time, the evil spirit in her was weaker than it was that afternoon. When we asked her to pray, she went to put her Bible away, slowly. Then, as we said, "Let's go in to pray," we saw how Satan began to tremble.

She began to step back, away from the chapel. It was only when a pastor said "Hallelujah!" that she stopped walking backwards. I was amazed to see not only how Satan was controlling her, but also that Satan's power was

dwindling compared to the violent reactions we observed that afternoon.

The very next day, I saw an even weaker Satan. I was in the office preparing some materials with another sister when this demon-possessed sister suddenly ran in, shutting the door on the pastor behind her. The pastor came in very calmly and said with a peaceful smile, "Why are you running away from me? I just want to talk." As soon as the pastor entered the room, she cowered up to the photocopying machine.

I had never seen anything like it. Yesterday, the evil spirit manifested his pride and violence, but today, he was afraid! How awesome and mighty is our heavenly Father! He had been listening to our prayers all along. Praise the Lord!

After prayer, the pastor commanded this sister to walk towards him. Each step was a struggle because the evil spirit would not let her walk. With each step, the pastor told her to say "Hallelujah!" Finally, when she reached the pastor, he commanded her to sit down, and she obeyed.

From this experience I have learned a few things.

First, I witnessed the power and might of our heavenly Father. I saw how the Lord weakened the power of Satan, making him tremble at His feet. Second, I experienced the strength of unity in prayer. Many of the brothers and sisters testified of how they personally

experienced God's power in their prayers.

During the few days of spiritual battle, many people shared of how the Lord had shown them that we are His mighty army and that we are all fighting this battle together. The Lord is our commander; we are holding the banner, and we have nothing to fear. Our duty is to continue to pray for His help and strength, and He will give us the victory.

*Fear ye not to fight for Him;
He will help us all to win,
God will always give us the vict'ry;
'Gainst the might of Satan's hand,
He will help us to withstand,
God will always give us the victory.²*

God, indeed, gave us the victory. Like Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, we have fought the battle and prevailed.

I truly thank God for giving me the opportunity to attend NYTS this year and for allowing me to witness His great might and power. Often we tend to think that our faith is strong enough to handle anything, but when we truly witness and experience a spiritual battle, we realize just how weak and little we are in the presence of the Mighty One.

May the Lord's grace and mercy continue to be our strength and guide, and may we continue to strive for Him. ✨



**Our duty is to continue to pray for His help and strength,
and He will give us the victory.**

¹Lanny Wolfe

²Hymns of Praise (True Jesus Church, 1993), No. 176.



Blessings Upon Blessings

Mike Yuan—Canoga Park, California, USA

When I was preparing for this testimony, I was reminded of the story of when the Lord Jesus healed the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, as recorded in Luke chapter 8. No one was able to heal her, so she came to the Lord Jesus with the faith that if she could touch the edge of His cloak, she would be cured.

Once she touched Him, the Lord Jesus felt that power go out from Him. He immediately asked, “Who touched Me?” The woman, knowing that she would not go unnoticed, came trembling before the crowd to witness why she had touched Him and how she was instantly healed.

Like the woman, I wish to testify of how God’s power has worked many miracles in my life.

NO SENSE OF BELONGING

My testimony actually starts in 1984, when I was in first grade. I was six years old at the time and it was my first day of Chinese school. I remember I was extremely shy and terrified as I entered a room full of strangers. But in one corner of the room, I saw a boy who coincidentally went to the same elementary school as I did.

I told my mom about him and she said, “Why don’t you sit next to him?” From that moment on, we became fast friends, and we are still really good friends today. From elementary school to college, we followed each other from school to school. Some years, we would see each other every day of the week.

Having a friend like that really helped me during my childhood because my

parents were constantly fighting at home. There would be lots of yelling, sometimes throwing, and sometimes hitting. I was in third grade when my parents got divorced. I chose to live with my mom and visited my dad every other weekend.

It was very difficult growing up. It seemed like my life was never complete and I had no sense of belonging. I went through a variety of emotions: rage, loneliness, aimlessness, depression, anger, fear, and even violence. The emotional roller coaster caused me to do things that I now very much regret.

FINDING GOD AT SCHOOL

During my last year of high school, I narrowed my selection of colleges to

UCLA (University of California in Los Angeles) and UCSD (University of California in San Diego).

I had a very difficult time choosing which college to attend. There were pros and cons for each school. In the end, I told myself that I would flip a coin. If the coin landed on heads, I would go to UCLA, and if the coin landed on tails, I would go to UCSD. I determined to flip only once, and whatever side the coin landed on was the school I would go to. The coin landed on heads.

On my first day of school at UCLA, I discovered that I once again had the same math class as my friend from first grade. In that class, he introduced me to another classmate, who was a member of the True Jesus Church (TJC). I sat with him every math class that quarter, and we became friends. After that quarter though, I did not have another class with him and rarely saw him until the end of my second year of college.

I stayed in the campus dormitories the first two years of school. I was planning to stay with my uncle, who had just bought a new place near campus, in my third year. A week before school ended, he suddenly got married, and I was booted out of my next year's living quarters even before I had a chance to move in.

During the last week of school in June, while I was walking back to my room to continue studying for my last final, I saw my friend from math class, and he was moving out of the dorms to go home. We greeted each other and the conversation eventually led to next year's living situation. He told me that he might need a roommate, but he wasn't sure. I told him that I might need a place to stay, but I wasn't sure. I gave him my

number, and we went on our separate ways.

It wasn't until the end of August that I received an unexpected phone call from him. He called to say that he was planning to stay with this other guy, who was also a True Jesus Church member. They needed one more roommate, and he was wondering if I was still interested. At that time, I was in the process of searching for a roommate but hadn't found a suitable person, so I quickly agreed.

During that school year in 1999, the TJC UCLA campus fellowship met every week in our apartment, so it was hard for me to avoid the topic of church and God. I began learning about the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation, and eternal life. What role did Jesus play in salvation? What do I need to do to be saved? Why does everyone pray so funny?

Every week, I learned a little more about God, and through the help and the care of the brothers and sisters in the UCLA fellowship, I went from doubt to a point where I was praying fervently for the Holy Spirit. I believed that the Holy Spirit was necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven, and I desired to experience God the way all the UCLA brothers and sisters experienced Him.

I FINALLY FOUND MY HOME

By the grace of God, I was baptized on March 12, 2000. As described in Acts 2:38: "Repent, be baptized and you will receive the promise of the Holy Spirit." John 3:5 adds: "No one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless they are born of the water and the Spirit."

I figured I would first get baptized and then worry about getting the Holy Spirit later. That way, I would meet at



Taking a closer look into the eyes of the man that was doing the hitting; I saw a familiar rage and a familiar pain.

least half of the requirements, which was better than none at all. But thank God, the day I received water baptism was also the same day I received the Holy Spirit—exactly the way it was described in Acts 2:38.

Later that same day, I also had my first Holy Communion. I was very emotional the entire service. The pastor made sure not to leave out any details of how the Lord Jesus was betrayed and the pain that He had to endure. I tried to hold back my tears for as long as I could, but I eventually gave up—it was too hard.

I asked myself, "Did Jesus go through so much pain just for me? Did I cause Jesus so much pain and suffering? Who am I that He should care enough to be tortured, disgraced, and crucified for me?"

When we knelt down for prayer, I saw a vision. I saw the impression of two men. One of the men was beating and striking the other. He was hitting and kicking the other man down to the floor, but the other man never fought back. Every time he was beaten and fell to the floor, he would always get up just to be beaten down again.

Taking a closer look into the eyes of the man that was doing the hitting; I saw a familiar rage and a familiar pain. Then, I realized that that person was me, and it



As I look back on my life, there would have been so many times where, had I made the other choice, I would not have been led to God.

was not long before I realized that the other person was our Lord Jesus Christ.

Was I the one beating Jesus? Was I just like the Roman soldiers that whipped, beaten, and mocked Jesus? I kept watching the other man get knocked down over and over again, and every single time he fell to the floor he always got up, ready to get knocked down again. I looked into His eyes and saw His pain and suffering.

I also saw His love.

“Stop beating Him!” I cried out. Then, I turned to my Lord Jesus, “Why don’t You just stay down? Stop getting up—it’s not worth it!” But I kept seeing myself beating Him repeatedly. I kept pleading and pleading until I fell to my knees, closed my eyes, and wept bitterly.

I was the one who hurt Him; the one that caused His pain every time I pushed Him away in my life, every single time I disobeyed Him, and every time I was angry or fearful. All of these were blows and strikes I took out on Him.

While I was weeping in prayer, I felt two arms enfold me with warmth the way a father’s arms would embrace his son. It was like I had finally found my home. Then, I suddenly felt my tongue begin to roll, and, like a dam bursting open, I felt the love and power of the Holy Spirit rush to every part of my body.

As I look back on my life, there would have been so many times where, had I made the other choice, I would not have

been led to God. If I had never met my friend in first grade, I would have never met my roommate, or if the coin had flipped to tails, or if my uncle had never gotten married...

I also think of all the things in my life that had caused me pain and sorrow; if those events had never taken place, I would not be who I am today, and I might not have had a need to know God or to pursue for the Holy Spirit. I lived a good portion of my life without a father figure, but I can now value and cherish having a Father in heaven.

This was how I touched the edge of Jesus’ cloak.

BUILDING GOD’S HOUSE

When I was small my mom taught me very well about how to save money. From her, I learned to live frugally. During college, my mom paid for my tuition, but I worked two to three jobs so that I could support myself with everything else.

After I graduated and one year after I was baptized, I continued working at one of the jobs I had in college. I did not make a lot of money, but I was happy and content. The job was never in conflict with Sabbath services, Bible studies, and fellowships. I enjoyed the projects I worked on and the people I worked with, and the job was low stress with good benefits that provided for all my needs.

During this time, the Canoga Park

Prayer House was preparing to purchase a chapel, but we still lacked \$316,000. Every time I prayed, I would always have this burning desire to do more for God and to contribute to the purchasing of the chapel. I decided that I would offer seventy-five percent of my twenty-two years’ worth of savings towards the chapel fund.

At the same time, I was also haphazardly looking for a new job. I was randomly sending out my resume to various job search websites, and I was really surprised when a company called me up one day for an interview. Thank God, I got the job. The miraculous thing was that the new job offered me a forty-percent raise. This was very good timing because I could offer the extra money from the new job to the chapel fund.

On my first day of work, I found out that the company was in “Chapter Eleven,” which means that the company is in the process of re-organization. Even though the company was not doing well, it was able to stay afloat with business.

Thank God, for the two years that I worked in that company, He allowed it to avoid bankruptcy. And He gave me the opportunity to offer and contribute to the building of His house.

Give Me neither Poverty nor Riches

Through the grace of God, Canoga Park Church was dedicated to Him on May 18, 2003.

Two weeks before the dedication, I found out that my company finally ran out of funds and was bankrupt, which meant I was out of work. Around this time, another brother at Canoga Park was also laid off. We should have been in great distress, but instead, God inspired the two of us to help with the dedication

preparations, so I did not feel depressed about losing my job or worry about finding another one.

After the dedication, I spent the next two weeks trying to find work. Through God's grace, I was working by the third week. The company that offered me the position also offered a fifty percent raise from my previous job. I was reluctant to accept their offer because I was aware of the temptations of wealth and status.

Money can easily become an idol in our hearts and cause us to stray away from our Lord Jesus Christ, so I always encourage myself with a passage from Proverbs:

*Two things I request of You
(Deprive me not before I die):
Remove falsehood and lies far from
me;
Give me neither poverty nor riches—
Feed me with the food allotted to me;
Lest I be full and deny You,
And say, "Who is the LORD?"
Or lest I be poor and steal,
And profane the name of my God.
(Prov 30:7-9)*

I asked the company to pay me a little less. At first they did not understand what I was asking for and did not understand why anyone would request for something like that. In the end, they were insistent about their offer, so I accepted the job.

While working for this company, God constantly guided and protected me, and I was still able to attend church services and local fellowships. After working there for about a year, I thought to check my bank statement one day.

I never usually pay much attention to my savings accounts; in fact, I probably

check once every year. But when I did check that day, I found out that, within three years of work and what I offered to church, my earnings exceeded twenty-two years' worth of life savings. God had repaid all the money that I had offered.

Thank God that He has since helped me find another job. Even though the pay is lower, the work is more stable and brings me closer to church.



The more I attended fellowship and church services, the more my life shifted from the world towards God.

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

I feel as if my experience was just like that of Abraham. He was willing to offer to God his son Isaac, his most precious possession, on the mountain of the Lord. Not only did God give Isaac back to Abraham, He also added to Abraham blessings too numerous to count.

Abraham was able to offer his best to God because he lived a God-centered life. His decisions and actions revolved around God.

I compare my life from when I first began to attend the UCLA campus fellowship to now, and I find that the greatest difference between my past and the present is how I used to anchor my life in the world. When I was first introduced to God, I would attend fellowship or service only when I had time, when I did not have class, or when I did not have to study.

The more I attended fellowship and church services, the more my life shifted

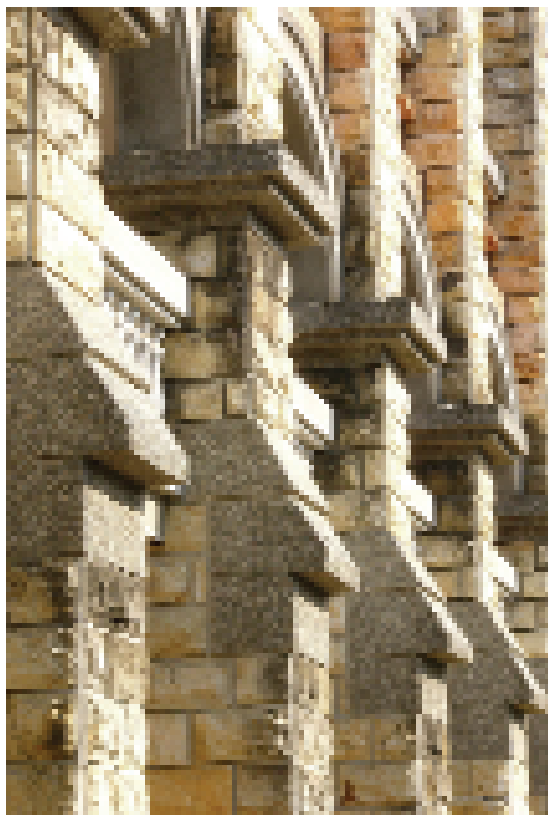
from the world towards God. Instead of missing fellowship for class, I would schedule my classes around fellowship.

When I was searching for a new job after being laid off, I insisted on finding a job that would allow me to attend every Sabbath service both Friday nights and Saturdays. I would set those two times aside so that I could focus on worshipping God and helping out with church work.

As I move towards a more God-centered life, He encourages me time and time again with Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

During the past few years, God has given me very little to worry about in my life. I find myself worrying more about church matters than my own. Truly, when we offer our best on the mountain of the Lord, God will provide and He will add blessings upon blessings.

I thank God for the opportunity to be His instrument. May all the glory and honor be unto the Lord Jesus' name. Hallelujah, amen. ✨



Rebuilding The Wall

Wendy Leacock—London, United Kingdom

In former days, cities possessed strong exterior walls to protect their people and wealth. Many cities had quite extensive defense mechanisms built in conjunction with these walls: glacis, moats, drawbridges, arrow slits, towers, gates, portcullis, etc.

Stories of castles, and fortifications, and the battles that raged before them still enthrall us.

These barriers kept danger and the enemy outside the walls. The gates and doors that pierced them allowed guards to monitor and control what came in and what went out. If the enemy breached the wall—or found a way under or over it—disaster loomed for the populace. If the wall was impregnable, the enemy often tried to lure the defenders out from

behind their fortifications. When they took the bait, the trap closed and the city could be taken.

We can learn vital spiritual lessons from these walls and fortresses. Believe it or not, building a wall is a major responsibility for God's church right now!

How carefully and strongly would we build a wall around our homes if our loved ones' lives depended on it? If we knew the enemy was nearby and intent on our families' destruction, how seriously would we consider the task of building a wall?

The book of Nehemiah describes such a time and such a wall. God has not preserved the story as mere history. He records it as instruction, as an object lesson, for us today. As spiritual Jews building God's spiritual temple, we must also be concerned about building a spiritual wall.

NEHEMIAH'S WALL

The book of Nehemiah is set during the time when a remnant of the Jews returns

from captivity and exile in Babylon (c. 445 BC). One hundred and forty years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Judah; burning its cities, razing its walls, and removing the Jews to Babylon. Persia subsequently conquered the Babylonians (530 BC), allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. Under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and others, the Jews found the land desolate, populated by foreigners, and open to attack. Though they had rebuilt the temple, it was not enough.

Nehemiah is the Persian emperor's cupbearer—a high position of trust and responsibility. He reacts with alarm when he learns that Jerusalem's walls are virtually nonexistent (Neh 1:1-4). Because there is no wall, the Jews are allowing too much of the pagan world back into their lives. Nehemiah learns that intermarriage with neighboring pagans is commonplace, and the Sabbath is not being kept holy. Worldliness is everywhere.

Support for the temple and the

Levites has all but stopped. Some of the priests and leaders have allied themselves with the enemies of the Jews. The very sins that had caused their captivity and exile are happening all over again! Realizing this, Nehemiah seeks and receives permission from the emperor to travel to Judah to rebuild its walls (Neh 2:1-10).

Nehemiah realizes some will resist the idea of having a wall at all. Such people see no danger in living unprotected and even believe that something can be gained by being open to the world. So, Nehemiah surveys the wall's condition by night, in secret, as he prepares his plans to rebuild it (Neh 2:11-13).

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the rebuilding process. Wall building is difficult, time-consuming, costly, and often boring and repetitive. Inevitably, discouragement sets in and building slows practically to a halt with the wall only half-completed (Neh 4:6).

Rubbish is everywhere. Few have any incentive to build anymore. Worse, word gets to Nehemiah that a conspiracy to attack Jerusalem is in the works, and the Jews feel that they will be overwhelmed (verses 7-12). In this crisis, Nehemiah conceives an ingenious idea to reignite the Jews' fervor for wall building:

Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." (Neh 4:13-14)

God makes each family responsible for part of the wall, probably the section nearest their home. How brilliant! How carefully would we construct a wall that would directly affect our safety and that of our families?

OUR WALL IS DOWN

What about us? Do we realize God has assigned us to build a wall as well? Notice the words of God in Ezekiel 22:25-26:

The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have violated my law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.



God makes each family responsible for part of the wall, probably the section nearest their home.

Do we have a wall to keep God's enemy out of our lives and homes? Have we set boundaries against the world, or have we torn down the wall? If we have a wall, are we leaving the gates open and unguarded? Are we willing to fight to defend our families and our church? Or do we just let the enemy stream in unchallenged? Are we willing to stand up to the world?

This particular wall is not one of brick

and stone but a spiritual wall anchored by God, designed to keep spiritual problems out. 1 Timothy 5:8 says that if we fail to provide for the needs of our loved ones—both physically and spiritually—we are worse than an unbeliever! Have we done anything to protect our families, or has worldliness hurdled over our puny walls; totally pervading every aspect of our lives?

Satan hates walls. "Let's all be one happy family," he whispers in our ears. "Walls are for the immature. You're spiritually mature now, so you can handle immorality without a problem."

Don't fall for this line.

God Himself teaches us through His example to erect impregnable bulwarks against Satan. He placed cherubim with flaming swords at the entrance to the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen 3:24), and even new Jerusalem will have towering walls and gates (Rev 21:12, 14). Similarly, the church is to be a wall (Song 8:10),

within which peace dwells and righteousness flourishes.

God supplies this spiritual wall to those who seek His way, His providence, and His will. The work of rebuilding our personal wall is the effort we put into seeking a strong relationship with Him, and He then provides the defenses for us. God becomes our wall.

David understands this perfectly. He often praises God as his rock, his high

tower, his fortress—his wall.

*I will love you, O LORD, my strength.
The LORD is my rock and my fortress and
my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold. (Ps 18:1-2)*

For a child of God, no other wall can effectively protect us from spiritual assaults: “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved” (Ps 62:2; see also Ps 144:2; Prov 18:10; Jer 16:9).

God puts a wall around His people to keep Satan at bay, as in the example of Job. Satan complains, “Have You not made a [wall] around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?” (Job 1:10). Only after God removed the wall could Satan attack Job, and he wasted no time doing so! Surely, we see the lesson in this.

If we reject God, break down the wall, or neglect our relationship with Him, what happens? “[W]hoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent” (Eccl 10:8). The Bible depicts Satan as a serpent. Many of our brethren have allowed their walls to crumble, and Satan has struck.

Sometimes God Himself tears down our walls because of our sins (Isa 5:4-5). As Paul puts it, He delivers us to Satan for the destruction of our flesh in the hope that we will repent (1 Cor 5:5). The surest way to restore the wall is through sincere and complete repentance. Goofing around at the repair job, daubing bits of untempered mortar here and there, will only increase God’s wrath (Ezek 13:8-16). Such a wall, lacking God, gives the impression of security but

crumbles at the slightest enemy strike.

We must be totally committed to restoring our neglected relationship with God.

THE GROUP WALL

Part of Nehemiah’s wall was constructed as a group effort, and so it is in God’s church. At times we must work together to keep the group strong and defend its integrity. Each individual is an important part of the entire body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27).

Sometimes just one unrepentant person, like Achan (Josh 7), can keep God’s wall from protecting the group. Every person needs to seek God, restoring the relationship for the good of all. God becomes our wall, our defense, when we seek Him individually and as a group. When we do this with repentance and humility, God heals the breach! Notice 2 Chronicles 7:14:

*...if my people who are called by My name
will humble themselves, and pray and seek
my face, and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven, and will
forgive their sin and heal their land.*

We also help keep the body strong and the wall high when we encourage high standards in one another, starting with ourselves. For instance, we can begin by showing respect for Sabbath services, where God is honored and worshiped. Our example should speak volumes. If that is not enough, we can bring it up in conversation—suggesting that improvements are in order. Those who are converted will immediately agree. How can anyone be against honoring God, unless they are not of the same mind?

If conversation after services degenerates into gossip or complaining, we can make efforts to change its course. This defends the group as well as the individual. We can encourage this brother to get back behind the wall to protect himself from Satan’s bad attitudes. In fact, it is helpful to voice our discomfort with the conversation’s immediate direction, for if it is not halted, the attitude can eventually infect the whole group. We should not be afraid to sound the alarm when we see one of our own straying outside the walls (Gal 6:1-2).



We must be totally committed to restoring our neglected relationship with God.

The Wall of Prayer

We can further build the wall with prayer for one another. Prayer built much of Nehemiah’s wall. If we see a brother or sister fighting a harmful attitude, temptation, or sin, we can pray that Satan be vanquished and that our brother be victorious. As an example to us, Jesus tells Peter, “Indeed, Satan has asked for you...but I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Lk 22:31-32). Jesus also prays for us (Jn 17:20-24)!

Fervent intercessory prayer erects this wall. Each Sabbath we hear announcements about trials, particularly health problems, some of our brothers and sisters are experiencing. We can do something about it. Pray! When God’s people know others are praying for them and with them, they become very strong.

Satan cannot prevail against a wall of godly people fighting him on their knees through the invincible power of God! “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas 5:16).

We can also pray for protection from Satan’s attacks, which can take on many forms: distractions, philosophies, temptations, major and minor calamities, and entertainment. Even normal good things like prosperity can turn us from God. We need God’s protective wall around us.

The group effort occurs when everyone nurtures and protects everybody else. Yes, we are our brother’s keeper. We should love each other enough to take the time to encourage one another with a phone call or a warm note. Even an encouraging email is a wonderful thing on an otherwise gloomy day. Speaking with and praying for one another often are characteristics of God’s special people (Mal 3:16-18; Heb 3:13).

We can see all of this in the story of Nehemiah’s wall. A synergy occurs when we work together to restore the walls, repair the breaches, and re-establish the relationship with our Master that we have let slip. With great rejoicing, Nehemiah even asks God to bless “the people, the gates and the wall” (Neh 12:27-43). Should we do any less with our spiritual wall?

THE FAMILY WALL

Beyond the group wall, we also need to be consciously putting up a personal and spiritual wall around our home, which should be a bastion against the ways of this world. The head of the house is accountable for what goes on in his home. Certain things should not enter it. It needs to be a sanctuary, not at all a

part of this world’s “house.”

We all must work, shop, and live in Satan’s world for now, but home should be:

- A sanctuary where God is honored, worshiped, and obeyed.
- A castle dedicated to holiness, to all that is right and good.
- A citadel where our children can learn to honor God and others.
- A bastion for us to pray, study, and enjoy quiet family time.
- A stronghold where Satan’s thoughts, ways, attitudes, and teachings are kept out and uninvited.
- A safe haven that is guarded actively, vigorously, and consciously.

If one’s home does not fit these descriptions, perhaps the wall has been breached or is down.

When we grasp that God is the wall, we comprehend how incompatible His presence is to what amuses and feeds the world. We should be very cautious not to be entertained by what amuses the world. We may think we have our wall up, but Satan knows ways to sneak by our defenses. How?

Our television and VCR can be electronic Trojan horses. How many times have we watched a movie on video that we would never have gone to see in a theatre? What kind of television shows do we allow ourselves and children

to view? It is becoming increasingly impossible to have the world’s entertainment in our homes and still honor God or His values.

Do an experiment while you are your watching TV: Notice how many times during any given show where someone profanes God’s name, where fighting and killing is constantly part of the plotline, where fornication and adultery attracts more viewers than the story, and so on. What do God’s people have in common with them? Keep such satanic poison outside your wall!

Music is similar to video, and, while not all of this world’s music is bad, some obviously is. Satan’s world is a tree of good and evil. Do we let bad music pervert our thoughts and emotions? Music is a powerful tool with the ability to sway our minds, which is why commercials often employ catchy tunes. Obviously, songs promoting anarchy, rebellion, and evil, performed by defiant thugs, are not something in which we partake.

The same holds true for songs promoting sexual immorality, unfaithfulness, bitterness, and defiance. We must evaluate the fruit of any music (Mt 7:16-20). The fruit of good music is peace, joy, and a desire to do good. When David played his style of music, demons left King Saul (I Sam 16:23).

The Internet is another trap that can



Satan cannot prevail against a wall of godly people fighting him on their knees through the invincible power of God! “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas 5:16).

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snare God's people in its World Wide Web. Every day, over three hundred new pornographic sites are added to the Web! This does not count the wacky, violent, perverted, destructive, and ungodly sites by the thousands. Be sure to monitor what family members are accessing, and if there is a problem, software packages can filter out objectionable and pornographic sites. The Internet is not worth one's eternal life!

The standard given in Revelation 21:26-27 should be our own: only what brings glory and honor to the King is allowed inside the wall. “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie...”

What will be the result of our vigilance? Our families will feel safer and be safer with the wall up. A schoolyard beside a busy boulevard is a dangerous place without a wall or fence. Children play in a more relaxed way with the security a wall provides because they sense they are safe. Intuitively, they know their parents and teachers care. The same will happen for us at home: everyone will feel more secure knowing that home is a safe haven where God is worshiped, His name is held in holy esteem, and where standards of love and kindness rule.

Like Nehemiah, we need to survey the destruction of the wall in the church, our homes, and our lives. It is our job right now—and vitally necessary—to rebuild our walls. We can start by restoring our relationship with our great God. 🌟



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A Life of Servitude

On the lesson of servitude the Lord Jesus taught us, “So the last will be first, and the first last” (Mt 20:16a). His perspective on how to be a true servant is not an easy teaching for most people, even Christians, to embrace. That is why only a few will receive and apply this instruction faithfully.

For those who have been serving for a long time, it could be easy to get side-tracked. It can also become increasingly difficult to accept being last. Because the more effort we put in, the easier it is to come to expect something in return. If not from God, at least from those we serve.

The theme articles remind us that there is no spiritual benefit in pride or selfish ambitions, and no glory in personal gain. Rather, a life of servitude requires self-denial, much sacrifice, and great humility. For that is how the Lord Jesus served us. It also requires zeal born out of God’s love and continual sustenance by His spirit, so that we are able to serve unto the very end.





The Heart Of A Servant

Jason Hsu—Baldwin Park, California, USA

For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Ps 84:10)

This message holds true for those who love to serve the Lord. A day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand days elsewhere, and to be a doorkeeper in God's house is better than living comfortably in the home of the wicked.

The heart of the Lord's servant is always set upon God's dwelling place, for that is where God's kingdom and people are found (Rev 1:6; 5:10). Prophet Daniel loved God's people (Dan 9:19), and he made it his practice from an early age to kneel down three times a day in prayer with his windows open towards Jerusalem (Dan 6:10).

Like Daniel, the Lord Jesus loved Jerusalem because it was the city of God's people, and He spent much time teaching in the temple (Lk 19:41-48; Jn 2:13-22).

John 2:13-22 records how Jesus once cleansed the temple as the Passover of the Jews was at hand (Jn 2:13). Some probably viewed Jesus' cleansing of the temple as an extreme and dishonorable act. If we view the act in human terms, we also might interpret Jesus' anger in the temple as a sign of over-zealousness on His part, but it was Jesus' zealous heart that was the key to the renewal of God's temple. Today, those concerned with the business of God's kingdom often wonder how to revive the church.

Actually, Jesus' actions are an example for us, teaching us what it means to possess the heart of a servant (cf. Mt 20:28). If, as servants of the Lord,

we can comprehend the Lord's heart of servitude, we too can discover the keys to reviving God's kingdom.

A HEART FULL OF ZEAL

When Jesus entered the temple, He saw many merchants selling animals and moneychangers seated for business and changing currency for the use of the temple (Jn 2:14; cf. Mt 17:24-27). But as the Lord saw all these activities going on in God's house, He became angry, made a scourge of cords, and drove all those doing business out of the temple.

Jesus took this seemingly extreme approach because of His zeal for God's house, which was born out of love for God. As His servants, we likewise should be full of zeal for God's house out of love for Him (Jn 2:17; Ps 69:9).

Zeal born out of love is like a fire, and its strength like a death from which there is no escape. Such zeal can consume a person because it is a most vehement flame (Song 8:6-7; cf. Rom 8:35-39).

In our service for the Lord's house, we must have this type of zeal born out of love. If our love remains set upon the things of this world, we will go the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet 2:15).

The apostle Paul is a good example of one who possessed great zeal for God. But before he came to know Christ, his zeal for God was misguided (Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:6). After apostle Paul came to know Christ, however, he counted as rubbish those things he could have profited from before. No longer considering his own selfish gain as a servant of God, he was zealous for the treasures he possessed as a servant of Christ (Phil 3:7-14). His example teaches

us that a true servant of the Lord will never focus his heart on material gain (1 Cor 9:7-12; 1 Thess 2:4-9, 2 Thess 3:8).

Jesus taught us saying, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24). If the zeal of our heart is set upon material gain, our heart will always be divided between two masters.

Although this teaching seems extreme, like Jesus' cleansing of the temple, it is meant to compel us to rethink our priorities. The Lord's teachings about zeal are worth pondering as we, His servants, continue in our service for Him.



Self-interests can often turn into selfish interests if we do not guard our heart.

A HEART THAT ISN'T SELF-SEEKING

The Lord's servant will never simply seek his own self-interests but His matters and the concerns of His church (Phil 2:19-22; 2 Cor 4:5; Eph 2:21-22, 1 Pet 2:5ff). That is why God's servants are found in His temple (Rev 7:15; Lk 2:46-49), and that is why the concept of a "servant" naturally implies serving something outside of "self."

Modern society today is very self-centered. So much of the media is geared towards individual development and self-fulfillment. Even in Christendom there is a tendency to focus on the personal relationship with Christ and

downplay the shared relationship between Christ and the church.

Yet, we do not just exist as community; we also exist as individuals. Therefore, the concept of "self" plays an important role in our relationships, and this includes our relationship with the Lord (Jude 20; 2 Thess 3:8-10; cf. Phil 2:12).

There is a fine line that distinguishes self-interests from selfish interests. The Bible never denies individual needs or the needs of particular groups. In fact, personal needs often provide an opportunity to serve and manifest love (cf. 1 Jn 3:17; Acts 6:1-3; Rom 16:1-2).

However, Philippians 2:4 encourages us to look beyond our self-interests, saying, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." This is an important principle to be applied in the church and in our service of God's people. John 2:13-22 teaches a similar principle—in the church, self-interests and self-motivations should not overtake the interests of God's kingdom and the people that dwell therein.

Self-interests can often turn into selfish interests if we do not guard our heart. If the heart of the Lord's servant is not aware of his own self-interests while doing the Lord's work, it is very easy to be led astray and anger the Lord in our service. Therefore, to serve God to His favor, we must be ever watchful of our own spiritual development and place a priority on our own temple (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Cor 6:15-20).

For example, in Numbers 16:1-40, Korah and others rose up in a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. They charged Moses and Aaron with taking too much authority upon themselves as God's



From Jesus' example, we can understand that the highest expression of being a servant of the Lord means a life of sacrifice.

appointed leaders over the people. They argued that all the congregation of Israel was holy and no one was over and above another.

It was true that the whole congregation of Israel was holy (cf. Ex 19:6). But the rebellion of Korah was motivated by self-interests by those who desired to undermine the priesthood of Aaron (Num 16:10).

Many self-interested motives stem from greed and a desire for personal glory and power. These can seep into the church and blemish our service for the Lord. It seems like we are doing good things by serving the Lord and the interests of God's people. In truth, however, we are simply serving our own selfish interests.

God detests selfish motivations and will cleanse them from His temple (cf. Acts 5:1-10). Therefore, even if it appears we are doing good works for the Lord, if our faith or works spring from an impure or wicked foundation, we will still not receive God's approval (cf. Mt 7:15, 22-23).

Shift towards God's Glory and Presence

A servant of the Lord will always wonder where God is (Jn 12:26; cf. Lk 12:42, 45-46). True servants of the Lord will not focus so much on their own presence and place in life as they would on God's presence and placement of them.

The movement towards self-interests in John 2:13-22 reveals a shift away from God's glory and presence. The Jewish temple authorities were unaware of this shift because they only saw the glory and grandeur of the physical temple (Jn 2:18, 20).

From the time of King Solomon, who finished the temple his father, King David, intended to build for the Lord (2 Sam 7:1ff), the glory of God's presence was known to reside at the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:11).

By Jesus' time, however, the temple's glory had faded as selfish interests tarnished the temple worship (cf. Mk 12:38-44; Jn 11:47-48). The temple merchants selling animal sacrifices and the moneychangers exchanging foreign currency made it convenient to worship in the temple, and these services appeared to serve the interests of the people. But in reality these services placed self-interests above God's glory.

If we put ourselves above God, His glory and presence will quickly leave us (Phil 3:19). So in John's gospel we discover that God's glory finds fulfillment not in the physical temple in Jerusalem but in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 17:1, 4-5).

Though many thought God's glory rested in the temple in Jerusalem, God's glory had, in reality, already shifted (Jn 4:20-24). But, as we shall see, through the Lord Jesus' zealous heart for God's house, He would restore God's glory to

the temple (cf. Hag 2:3, 9; Eph 2:21-22).

A HEART WILLING TO SACRIFICE ITSELF

The heart of the Lord's servant must be willing to sacrifice itself for God's people.

Earlier we studied how God's glory was known to reside in God's temple. When King Solomon dedicated the temple, he earnestly prayed that the Lord would heed the prayer of those who prayed towards God's temple, for it meant that their hearts had returned to God (1 Kgs 8:29-53; Jon 2:4).

Yet, Solomon, in all his wisdom, knew that the physical temple could not truly contain God's glory. Therefore, he asked rhetorically, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth?" (1 Kgs 8:27). The answer was obviously, "No."

But God did indeed dwell on the earth in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14). The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, showed us what it means to live the life of a servant.

Solomon said: "The heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Lord's glory" (1 Kgs 8:27). Yet, God took the form of a servant and came to us in the likeness of men (Phil 2:5-8). From Jesus' example, we can understand that the highest expression of being a servant of the Lord means a life of sacrifice.

So it is fitting that as the Passover drew near, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29), came to God's temple to awaken it from its slumbering state (Jn 2:19). This awakening of the glory of God's temple is the daily concern in the heart of the Lord's servants (cf. 2 Cor 11:2, 28).

Like a mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wings (Mt 23:37), the Lord understood that in order to gather

God's children, who were scattered abroad, a sacrifice of His own life would be required. This was a price the Lord was willing to pay to restore and re-gather God's people to Himself (Jn 11:49-52; 12:24, 32).

When Jesus said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple..." He did not mean the physical temple but "the temple of His body" (Jn 2:19, 21). By releasing His own temple for the higher uses of God, being obedient to death, Jesus was able to raise God's temple anew and establish it in Himself.

In this light, we can understand what Jesus said in John 12:24-26:

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

With His own example, Jesus taught us to lay down our life as a sacrifice for God's people (Phil 2:17). This is the essence of love (1 Jn 3:16; 4:9). But how do we sacrifice our life today?

JESUS HAS SET THE EXAMPLE OF LOVE

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave us a new commandment: "[L]ove one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

John says that whoever has this world's goods, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart, he does not have God's love abiding in him (1 Jn 3:17). "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). "Laying down our lives for our brothers" encompasses all the ways we show love to others (e.g., giving to another in their time of need).

Service to the Lord does not require memorization of a complex set of rules or the following of a detailed formula for behavior. It really boils down to something very basic: how do you show love to others?

The type of love and zeal possessed by the Lord Jesus for God's people is an example for us to follow, so that we might know what is required of each of the Lord's true and faithful servants.

Even though each of us may have a zeal for God's house, it is hard for us to make the sacrifices the Lord made. So Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Mt 10:24-25).

When the disciples saw Jesus' act of cleansing the temple, they remembered what was written in Psalm 69:9: "[Z]eal for Your house has eaten me up." Now John 2:17 also repeats, "Zeal for Your house will eat me up." But why did the New Testament account shift to the future tense?

Jesus' zeal for the Lord's house would indeed end up consuming the Lord, that



Service to the Lord...really boils down to something very basic: how do you show love to others?



is, it would lead to His death. But the death of His body released the old temple and reawakened God's temple anew. Therefore, the Lord's cleansing of the temple was an act of prophetic symbolism that the disciples were blessed to behold. For in this way they could understand how the Lord would renew God's temple and once again draw in and gather God's people to Himself.

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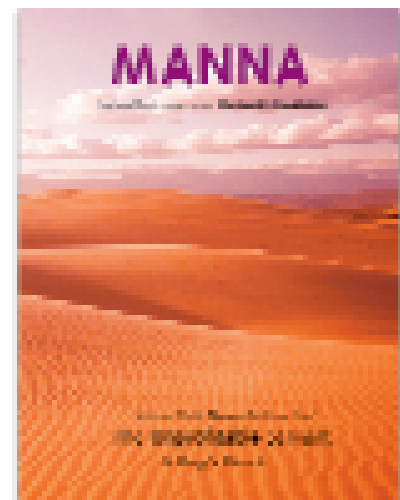
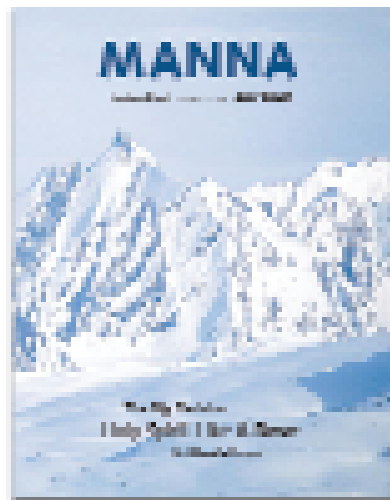
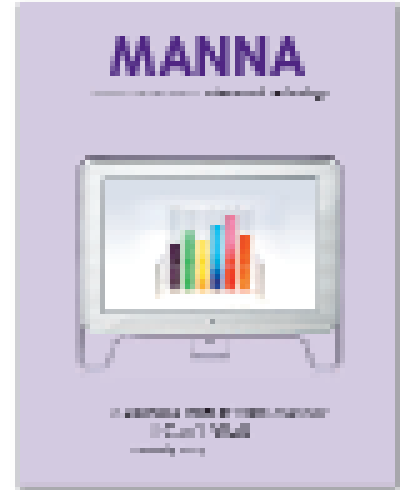
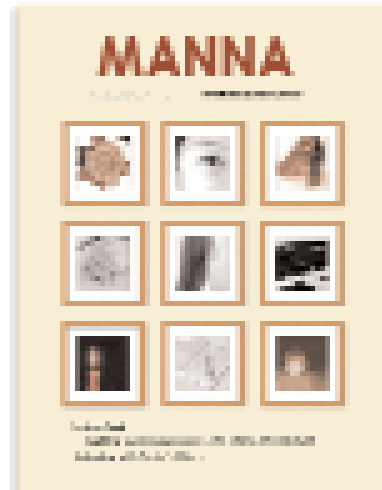
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To always have a zealous heart that is concerned with God's temple and willing to sacrifice is not easy, but an easy sacrifice is no sacrifice at all, really.

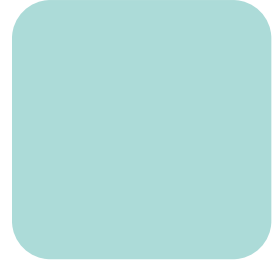
If we do not love God's house or possess a zeal or concern for God's house, it will be hard for us to follow the Lord as His servant. The sacrifices required would cost too much and we might then lay God's work aside.

But the Lord has given us Himself as an example of the heart of a servant, so that we could both witness and know what it means to possess the heart of a servant.

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (Jn 13:17). ★



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The Burning One

Vuthy Nol-Mantia—Boston, Massachusetts, USA

SERAPHIM THE SERVANT

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (Isa 6:1-2)

The prophet Isaiah heard the voice of God in a vision saying, “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Isaiah responded, “Here am I! Send me.” In the vision, he also saw the seraphim show him the meaning of true servitude. From the seraphim’s example, he was able to answer God’s calling with readiness, confidence, and fervor—because he understood what it takes to serve the Lord.

In the same way, we have to learn from the seraphim the attitudes of a servant before we serve God. And it is when God sees that we are ready and prepared vessels that He will call us to His

work.

Seraphim are God’s angels, and their name means “the burning one.” This adjective is often used in the Bible to describe a person’s holiness and zeal towards God—both of which are extremely important when we serve Him.

Many servants of God in the past had this burning desire to serve God, even when they faced many trials and persecutions for speaking the truth to people who did not want to hear it. It would be so much easier to give up their service to God, but they couldn’t because their hearts burned with His message and His work.

If we know the Lord we serve, our hearts would be burning with the same zeal as the seraphim. We can’t help but proclaim God’s word because His spirit smolders in our hearts and motivates us.

Since I came to Christ five years ago, I have met many older members of the church who always amaze me. Some of

them have served God all their lives, and their hearts continue to burn with zeal.

On the other hand, I've also met some younger members who do not have the desire to serve the Lord, even though they have been given great talents and gifts. They lack the zeal for God because they do not truly know Him nor see the value of serving Him. Therefore, our zeal in service comes from knowing the One we serve.

Knowing Him also means that we have to see ourselves from His perspective, just as the seraphim also understood their place.

FACE COVERED

The seraphim in Isaiah's vision each had six wings.

With two wings, he covered his face. This gesture symbolizes self-denial. In the world today, it is hard to cover our faces because they are so important to us. Every year, people spend thousands of dollars on makeup, facelifts, or cosmetic surgeries. Many of us would not forget to put on makeup before we go out to make our faces beautiful.

Yet, the seraphim that Isaiah saw each covered his face.

"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me'" (Lk 9:23). The Lord's words are a hard saying—He wants us to deny ourselves by covering our faces.

Maybe we can go two or three days without looking at our faces. But to not look at our own faces our whole lives would be almost impossible. However, in a spiritual sense, all servants of God have to cover their faces and deny themselves, no matter how difficult this may be.

Why is it so important to deny

ourselves? Read the account of the fall of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12-14. Why was he cast down from heaven? God said to him, "[F]or you have said in your heart...."

He was driven out of God's presence simply because, in his heart, he thought himself equal to God, the Most High. Pride had taken control over Him.

The way pride festers in our hearts is similar to the process of internal bleeding. We may be bleeding inside, but we may not realize it until it's too late. It often builds up in us before we know it, and we may even be rejected by God before we realize it.

God said to Lucifer, "Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit" (Isa 14:15). God humbles those who exalt themselves and He will bring them low.

Knowing the seriousness and dreadful consequences of pride, we have to learn to deny ourselves if we wish to worship and serve God. We need to remove the "I" in our thinking—take away the ego in our service. Then, we may be servants who are acceptable in God's eyes.

FEET CONCEALED

With two of his wings, each of the seraphim also covered his feet. This action reminds us to forget our accomplishments in our service.

In our journey of serving God, our

feet will inevitably leave footprints along the way. But we must not look back on these footprints. We have to leave behind any contributions we might have brought to God's ministry. Otherwise, it will become a hindrance to our service.

We cannot savor the memories of what we have done for God. Past accomplishments are not nearly as important as what lies ahead.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12-14)

Paul does not look behind him because he knows that he has yet to attain his goal in Christ. He illustrates this point by painting a vivid picture of an athlete running a marathon.

Let's say a race stretches 26.5 miles. If the runner looks back at the 26 miles he has run but stumbles in the last 0.5 mile, he loses the entire race. Although the last few hundred feet are the most difficult, only the runners who strive toward the goal ahead will get to the finish line.

We also need to develop such perseverance in our ministry, and we must strive forward and not look back.

WINGS TO FLY

Each of the seraphim used two of his wings to fly.

The flying seraphim teach us the importance of reaching new spiritual



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heights as we serve God. As servants of God, not only do we have to deny ourselves and forget what is behind, we also need to let the Holy Spirit lift us high and far above earthly things.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (Col 3:1-2)

Why should we set our mind on things above? Because that is where Christ sits at the right hand of God. If we want to serve the Lord who sits on the throne, high and lifted up, we have to elevate our minds. If we are not lifted up high, we cannot see things from God's perspective nor understand His will. We would only see and yield to the things of the world. Worst, we would serve Him using our own ways and thinking.

Setting our minds on things above also means we have to consider spiritual matters more important than worldly matters. It is often easy to become confused about whom we are really serving. In this world, there are many different gods: the gods of money, career, fame, etc. And everyday, we may be unconsciously serving these earthly gods.

Moreover, the value of these things is slight and temporary. If we focus on earthly matters, they become like unnecessary baggage that inhibits our flight, delaying us from drawing closer and nearer to God.

True blessings can only be found in serving God. We have to continually and unceasingly grow in the grace and knowledge of all things that are spiritual and that are of God (2 Pet 3:18). We

have to place His matters as our first priority.

When we recognize that it is the eternal and glorious God that we serve, we will appreciate the honor and value of our service. Only then can we serve Him steadfastly and joyfully.

LIPS PURGED

Before we can serve the true and living God, we must first realize that we are nothing but sinners. We are worth nothing apart from God. It is only by God's mercy that we can live and serve Him.

So [Isaiah] said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts. Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged. Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." (Isa 6:5-7)

When Isaiah heard the glorious voices of the seraphim crying out God's holiness

and immense glory, and when he witnessed the smoke that filled the temple he was completely shaken. He suddenly realized how unworthy he was, being nothing but a sinner before God.

Despite Isaiah's sinfulness, the seraphim flew to Isaiah and touched his lips with live coal to purge his iniquity. The Spirit of God is so powerful that it can completely cleanse our hearts and refine us.

Why the lips? As the prophet of God, Isaiah used his lips to declare God's words. If his lips were unclean, he would become useless to God. Likewise, if we are zealous and are able to humble ourselves but our lips are not clean, we still cannot serve God.

Whether it is preaching the gospel or encouraging each other, we need to use our lips. Filthy lips cannot lead people to Christ.

Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. (Jas 3:3-4)

A horse, which is more than ten times stronger than a man, can be tamed by a small bit. A ship, which is impossible to be moved by hand, can be turned with a small rudder. In the same way, if we are able to master control over our tongue, we would be able to control our entire



We have to continually and unceasingly grow in the grace and knowledge of all things that are spiritual and that are of God (2 Pet 3:18).

body.

James 3:5-6 also describes the tongue as a little fire that can spread and burn down an entire forest. This explains how the small tongue can defile our entire being.

The tongue is able to create far-reaching consequences, both good and bad. That is why we must take care to use it to benefit others. Otherwise, our tongue may ruin the very good works we have done for the Lord.

PREPARE OURSELVES

Suppose you are very good pianist or a great cook, and the president of the United States, who is one of the most powerful figures on earth today, invited you to a solo performance at the White House or to prepare a banquet for him. How honored you would feel! You would definitely prepare for this grand event day and night for weeks and months.

As Christians, we need to realize that the God we worship and serve is the true and living God, and we must have the same zeal to serve Him as we would serve the president of our country. In fact, we should serve Him with more reverence than we would serve anyone else.

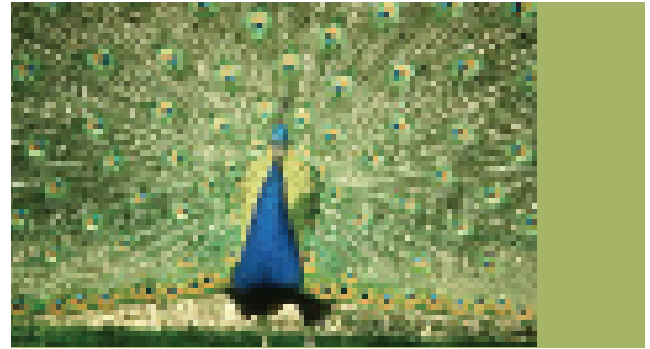
The prophet Isaiah's dedication and courage were not impulsive or short-lived resolutions. Before he offered himself for the Lord's use, God prepared him through the example of the seraphim.

Isaiah saw the majesty and glory of the King he served. He learned the seraphim's humility, persistence, and closeness with God. He trembled before the Lord, realizing his sin and unworthiness, and he received the cleansing that came from the fire of God's altar. Only then could He bravely cry out, "Here am I!

Send me."

It wasn't until Isaiah truly understood the meaning of servitude was he able to confidently accept God's commission. It was God who would work through him to accomplish His plan.

Let us each heed and learn the lessons that God has taught Isaiah, so that we may also answer the Lord's calling with the same boldness and conviction. May our life-long service to the King be ever pleasing to Him. ★



The Nature Of Pride

Seraphim

There are three temptations to which all humans are vulnerable: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16).

Not too many things in this world arouse my desires, so by due process of elimination, I am most suspect to pride's pitfall. It is a peculiarity that those of us having a great desire to serve God and cultivate ourselves are also highly susceptible to this vanity.

For some of us, the first two temptations are overcome through prayer and self-discipline in the pursuit of holiness. But the pursuit of holiness, coupled by good works and a slightly misguided heart, can quickly develop into self-righteousness.

Hence, pride has reared its ugly head.

IT SNEAKS UP ON US

I have this fear that I will someday become lukewarm and wake up one morning to find myself serving in church not because I am driven by a passion for Christ but because I'm merely doing what

is expected of me.

It may be that we are initially moved by God's love and want Him to grant us an opportunity to return His favor. Fasting and praying with tears in all humility, we pour our heart out before God and offer ourselves as empty vessels to be used for His good purpose.

Touched by our sincere petition, God bestows upon us some spiritual gifts to edify His church, and we are soon provided with an occasion to contribute to the holy work. We carry out our responsibilities faithfully, and all is well for God is with us.

Since we prove ourselves competent and faithful, we are given more and greater responsibilities. In time, we develop a reputation for being a "fervent" brother or sister in church. People start to talk about how good we are, praise us, and thank God for us.

At this point, be very afraid that our heart is not puffed up from this attention. Although we have a reputation, we should be careful to make ourselves

of no reputation, as Jesus Christ also lowered Himself. We must pray earnestly for humility, or pride will be our demise.

The nature of pride is this: it sneaks up on us like a serpent slowly creeping into the depth of our heart to plant its seed.

While soaking in the joy and limelight of accomplishing great works for God's glory, edifying and leading many to come to believe in Jesus' name, we continue unaware that our heart is overrun by this weed of pride.

We may not notice, but others will observe a change in our character, in our countenance, the way we walk, and the way we talk. The alteration is subtle at first, but this inward superiority soon manifests itself outwardly.

We become less considerate to members in church who do not meet our standard of holiness. We develop the Martha syndrome and start complaining to God why others aren't doing as much as us. We become increasingly intolerant of people's weaknesses and very

opinionated in meetings and Bible studies. Our statements are curt, unseasoned with salt, and before long we start parading around the church as if we owned the place.

We have become very good at the works we do, but brothers and sisters are miserable with whom we've become.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." I find this to be true. Not too many men can responsibly handle the power of power, maintain humility in a position of authority in the church, and not become puffed up while exercising great spiritual gifts.

I speak not only of brothers, but sisters also need to guard their hearts against this evil. For it is certainly unbecoming of a woman to flaunt an attitude of arrogance and conceit when she knows what is precious and beautiful in her holy Father's eyes is a meek and contrite heart—a gentle and quiet spirit.

It is a pitiful thing to see a once-humble servant of God changed by pride and, like a fallen angel, cast down by God because we no longer give or bring glory to His name. We become marred vessels not useful for accomplishing His good work.

We Need to Repent

There was one particular summer I was super busy with church work. I was doing everything—setting up at church, cooking, cleaning, hosting preachers, preparing for religious education classes, leading Bible study, etc.


It was during a fellowship gathering at the end of the summer that I broke down. I remember feeling strange that whole evening. During hymn singing,

it was as if I was mechanically opening and closing my mouth. I had no strength in prayer. It even suffered me to move my tongue.

The Bible was propped open on my lap but I was unable to absorb the words. I couldn't feel anything. I was completely numb to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Dread overcame me as I realized my worst fear had encroached upon me: I had become lukewarm.

Sin and pride had built up like plaque to harden my heart. At that moment, I felt so distant from God, and it was the worst feeling in the world.

In panic, I came before God in tears of repentance. I begged Him to allow me to just feel again and to turn my stony heart back into a heart of flesh. After returning to Him with all sincerity, God did not only show me mercy but embraced me with His utmost love.



Not too many men can responsibly handle the power of power, maintain humility in a position of authority in the church, and not become puffed up while exercising great spiritual gifts.

IT IMPACTS EVERYONE

Pride will bring down even the most zealous holy worker, but let us also be aware that a proud person in a position of leadership can be a stumbling block to the entire congregation.

Because of Pharaoh's hardened heart,

the Egyptian people were afflicted by ten debilitating plagues. Because the proud Israelite kings would not heed the prophet Jeremiah's warnings to repent, the citizens of Jerusalem were besieged by the Babylonians and perished by the sword, famine, and pestilence. And because they were blinded by pride and jealousy, the Pharisees and Sadducees led the Jews to crucify Jesus Christ.

Under extreme pressure and frustration from the Israelites, Moses struck the rock with his staff even though God told him to speak to it. Moses didn't want to upset the people, in part, because he didn't want to fail. Sometimes, we serve God fervently because of our own selfish ambition to gain people's respect, which is a form of pride.

For that one tiny slip from complete obedience, God stripped Moses of the privilege to enter the promise land. If God seemed unfair, it is because we don't understand Him or see His greater will.

The LORD explained to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Num 20:12)

The key phrase here is that Moses failed to hallow God in the eyes of the children of Israel. In trying to please men, we forget that it is God's instructions and approval that matter most. Therefore, we have to constantly examine our actions; whether they are born out of pride and whether they glorify God.

Also, the people were intently watching their great leader. It is often

easy to hallow someone who is able to perform such extraordinary things before our very eyes and forget that it is God who is working the miracles through them.

Maybe if God had allowed Moses to lead the people into the promised land, they would have neglected to give God glory and Moses would have become a stumbling block to their faith. In His own wisdom, God raised up Joshua to lead the Israelites in Moses' stead.

Although Moses had to step down from his position of leadership, by no measure did he receive a shameful discharge. After forty years of faithful service, God gave Moses the most honorable retirement ceremony—He buried him with His own hands.

does not parade himself or becomes puffed up. He knows that he is an unprofitable servant and has only done what was his duty to do.

A humble person does not behave rudely or seek his own interests. His love is without hypocrisy—esteeming others above himself. A humble person is not provoked and thinks no evil. He is slow to anger, slow to judge, and quick to forgive.

Therefore, the secret to overcoming pride is not to wear a mask of false humility but to be filled to the brim with God's love.

Now if love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, its increase comes by the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which is only received through unceasing prayer in the Spirit.

love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14-20)

And what is this power that Paul observes to work in us? It is the awesome power of the Holy Spirit, which dwells inside of our sinful mortal bodies to give us strength and to grant us life (Rom 8:11).

When we abide in God's spirit and become saturated with His love, we are able to bury our pride—the sin that so easily disqualifies our service to God.

It amazes me when I consider the power of this humble, one-syllable, four-letter word. Perfect love will cast out fear, compel a person to lay down his life, forgive a transgression, restore a wounded heart, and cover a whole multitude of sins. Yes, even our stiff-necked pride. ✨



When we abide in God's spirit and become saturated with His love, we are able to bury our pride—the sin that so easily disqualifies our service to God.

IT IS OVERCOME BY LOVE

We have talked much about the pitfall of pride, but how do we rid our heart of this iniquity? How can we continue serving God and not be inflated with pride?

Have you ever wondered why humility, although such a prominent topic in the Bible, is not recorded as one of the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5 lists love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But where is humility?

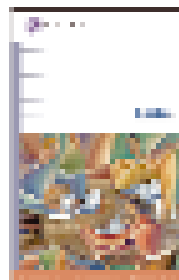
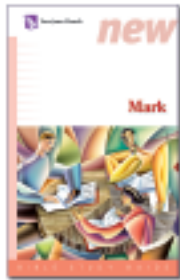
An explanation of this curiosity can be found in 1 Corinthians 13, where it is revealed that humility is, in essence, a manifestation of love. A humble person

The apostle Paul best articulates the importance of grasping God's profound love in his own prayer for the saints in Ephesus:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the

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Whether you are studying the Bible on your own or leading a small-group Bible study, the Bible Study Guide helps you focus on individual passages, discover God's truths, and apply the teachings to life. By going through the exercises and questions in each lesson, you and your study group can study the Bible in-depth.

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



Women In The WorkForce: *Placing God First*

Yvonne Chan—Toronto, Ontario, Canada

The phrase “Women in the Workforce” is one that requires special thought or consideration. The question of equality surfaces—an issue that contemporary society is still grappling with, even though social views of working women have changed dramatically over the past hundred years or so.

Gone are the days when women were expected to remain at home after marriage. In many countries where girls and boys are given equal opportunities in education, girls are entering the work-

force equally ambitious.

The type of work women take on can no longer be stereotyped. In the business world, for example, where women used to be seen as secretaries or junior assistants, many are now rising to positions of authority, becoming key players and decision makers.

This trend of change can be seen in almost every type of job. Even in traditionally male-dominated areas like construction, women are entering the field to work alongside men.

The Bible certainly encourages us to work hard. The book of Proverbs especially is full of wise sayings about the positive effects of hard work. “He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread,” says Proverbs 12:11, “But he who follows

frivolity is devoid of understanding.”

The Bible teaches us that “The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor” (Prov 12:24), and “Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, And an idle person will suffer hunger” (Prov 19:15). Proverbs 12:27 also tells us that “diligence is man’s precious possession.”

It may surprise some to learn that the Bible encouraged women to take on active roles in the workforce. Women’s contributions were valued even within the patriarchal structure of the Old Testament.

Our Lord Jesus certainly included women in His ministry, and we are also able to find examples of working women worthy of our attention in the Bible.

EXEMPLARY WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

There are outstanding women in the Bible with successful careers or vocations. Three of these women are mentioned below. They are noteworthy because their success stems from the way they placed God in their hearts.

These are three exceptional women in the Bible who had careers of their own. What were noteworthy about their success, however, were not their own capabilities. Their success stemmed from how they placed God in their hearts.

Lydia

Acts 16:14 introduces Lydia, who was “a seller of purple.” She was a merchant and thus a businesswoman. From all accounts, she was a very successful entrepreneur.

After Lydia believed in the Lord, she got baptized with her entire household. She then opened her house to the members as a meeting place. Paul and his companions were able to evangelize and strengthen the faith of the believers because of her hospitality, offered despite her busy business schedule (Acts 16:15, 40).

Philippi was the first European city that Paul preached in during his ministry. Lydia set such a good example that Paul later wrote to the established church at Philippi—thanking the members for their generosity and support (Phil 4:14-20).

The spirit of hospitality and generosity displayed by her became a mark of the church in Paul's time.

Priscilla

Priscilla, another woman mentioned in the New Testament, shows us that a



The women in these examples show us that, in whatever we do, we should focus on God first, and everything else will fall into place.

married woman can be actively involved in business as well as evangelism.

Paul met her and Aquila, her husband, at Corinth (Act 18:1-3). She worked with her husband in the tent manufacturing business. Since Paul was in the same trade, the apostle stayed and worked with them. Priscilla also traveled and worked with her husband as evangelists.

Later, when Paul left for Syria, the couple accompanied him (Acts 18:18). Paul left them at Ephesus, perhaps a provident move, for it was here that the couple were able to teach a dynamic young preacher named Apollos the correct way of God (Acts 18:24-26).

Apollos became one of the most active evangelists of the church. He was able to keep to the true message of God due to the diligence of Priscilla and Aquila. They were willing to put God at the center of their lives as husband and wife and as business partners.

Deborah

There are also examples of working women in the Old Testament.

Judges 4:4 tells us that Deborah, “a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.” The “children of Israel came up to her for judgment” as she sat under “the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the

mountains of Ephraim” (Judg 4:5).

Although we have no information on Deborah's early years, we already know that she was a prophetess who judged the people. Here was a married woman who was also a judge. She gave orders to a commander, Barak son of Abinoam, to deploy troops against their enemy. When Barak insisted that she come along with him, she did not hesitate. She went with the army into the war zone as courageously as any modern-day woman in the army would.

Deborah listened carefully to God's call (Judg 4:6-7) and showed her leadership qualities by delegating tasks accordingly. She willingly went into danger for the people of God (Judg 4:9-10) and inspired the army of Israel to fight their enemies with faith (Judg 4:14-16).

In all that she did, Deborah placed God at the center of her actions and her trust.

Others

There are of course other examples of women in the workforce, like Shallum's daughters who worked on construction; a male-dominated line of work even by today's standards. This is recorded in Nehemiah 3:12.

The two women worked to repair the wall of Jerusalem together with their father, using their talents and offering their time for the people of God.

In the medical profession, two well-known midwives were Shiphrah and Puah, God-fearing women who put their own lives at risk by disobeying a direct order from Pharaoh by sparing the lives of Hebrew male infants (Ex 1:15-17).

By doing this, the people of Israel were preserved, and God's plans for His nation were not thwarted by evil design.

FOCUS ON GOD FIRST

The women in these examples show us that, in whatever we do, we should focus on God first, and everything else will fall into place.

Lydia did not abandon her business, but she prioritized her time differently. Finding the time to offer her house as the center of worship for the believers in the area became something that was very important to her.

Priscilla willingly uprooted herself, setting up her home in different places like the nomads of old, in order to assist Paul and evangelize. She accepted the uncertainty this must have caused in her life, and she was able to support her husband in their business and spiritual life wherever they went.

Deborah also put aside her family life temporarily, when God needed her to motivate His army to defeat their enemy. She risked her life to answer God's calling.

These women encourage and inspire us to offer our time, our talents, and our lives to God and His people.

We live in troubled times, and life can become stressful. Many are caught in the never-ending struggle to carve a better life—better lifestyle!—for our family. Couples are coming to the conclusion that both partners must work for economic reasons.

The marketplace constantly encourages this trend, offering new gadgets, new technology, and new designs in clothing or decorating. The media continually defines the image of success for us. Business moguls, movie stars, musicians—these are the beautiful, well-built, smart, and rich people who typify success in our modern world. Hence, those who do not have these



Hence, as we try to prove ourselves as women in this modern society, we must remember to keep our focus and our priorities right.

things aspire to get them.

All of us, men and women, work in such a materialistic environment. As we strive to carve out a better life for our families and ourselves, we must remember our priorities. We must not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the need to survive or to continue improving our lifestyle to the exclusion of all else.

JESUS TELLS US NOT TO WORRY

Remember Jesus' advice in Matthew 6:26-34. Here, our Lord tells us not to worry about our life, "what [we] will eat or what [we] will drink." He asks if life is not "more than food and the body more than clothing."

The heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air even though "they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns." Consider the glory of the lilies of the field. They look more glorious than even Solomon in all his glory. The important thing, Jesus tells us, is to

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.

The successful women mentioned above truly understood this. They were able to apportion their time and

set priorities to determine what was important to them.

In the passage above, the Lord tells us to place the kingdom of God first in our hearts. When we do that, all things fall into place as God provides everything else that we need.

The examples Jesus gave are simple ones. What could be more beautiful and simple than the birds flying free in the air or wildflowers blooming in the field? Our basic needs, likewise, are simple.

God provides us with what we need, not what we think we need. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between the two. Hence, as we try to prove ourselves as women in this modern society, we must remember to keep our focus and our priorities right.

We need to consistently assign God first place in our hearts (Mt.6:33), consult regularly with our Father in heaven through prayer and quiet time (Ps 55:17), examine our own heart to determine what is appropriate at any given time (Eccl 3:1), and keep ourselves spiritually fit (Eph 6:11).

Only then will we be able to keep our balance as women chosen by God for His purpose. ✨

Pearls in Tears

Joseph Shek—Sacramento, California, USA



There's a shiny pearl in every teardrop

So don't underrate your tears when you pray

He will not forsake the tiniest drop

He'll save the pearls and wipe the tears away

In the home above, we each own a jar

Inside the jars are pearls He has gathered

God hides them in His robe close to His heart—

A place of warmth and love beyond tether

In the holy city there is a gate

There's a pearly gate that He left ajar

He made it so high, so wide and so great

Inlaid with some pearls saved in His heart

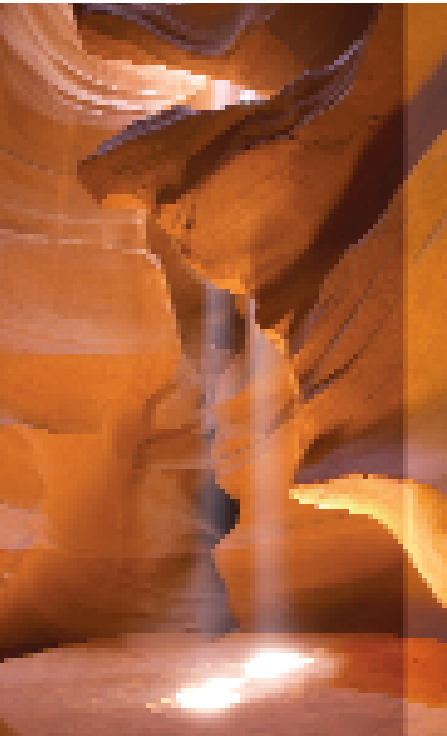
His love is so high, so wide and so great

He sees the pearls and leaves open the gate

Remember Me

O My God

Samuel Kuo—Hillsborough, New Jersey, USA



Unlike Abraham, he never heard the voice of God. Unlike Daniel, he never saw any visions nor witnessed prophetic dreams. Unlike Moses, he was never in the company of his God face to face. And unlike Elijah and Elisha, he never touched the dead so as to raise them.

Apart from having a heart to serve God, Nehemiah had only a small collection of experiences of God's providence throughout his life mission. It was never anything as clear-cut and awesome as in the cases of the saints of old—never a grand vision, never a splendid, miraculous event.

Nevertheless, his heart fueled him to do great things for God: he led the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in fifty-two days, he suffered ridicule and harassment from neighboring foreigners, he fought injustice among the congregation, he reestablished God's law, and he labored without end to keep the purity of his people.

It was through bitter tears that he served. It was through thick and thin, disappointment and grief, anger and rebuke, barely peppered by rare moments of joy. It was through loving tears and toilsome labor that he loved God.

So Nehemiah cried, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!" (Neh 13:22).

I find myself identifying a great deal with Nehemiah. In fact, I feel as if I can identify with him much more than with other servants recorded in the Bible.

Like Nehemiah, I have never heard the voice of God, never saw visions, never witnessed prophetic dreams, nor was I ever called by angels "greatly beloved" (cf. Dan 9:22).

I have never beheld God face to face, nor have I resurrected the dead.

But like Nehemiah and much of the church congregation, I just try to do my best.

Nehemiah's cry is the cry of the seemingly regular God-loving Christians. They are your typical servants, who dutifully do what they are assigned, who are faithful to His dear cause. It is the cry of those who "know" that God is with them but don't necessarily feel it every day.

So Nehemiah cried, “Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!” (Neh 13:22).

It is the cry of those who have never seen those wonderful visions, who have never dreamt those dreams, who have never really experienced a great miracle during their period of service. It is the cry of those of us who aren't really sure if God works through us or not—who really aren't sure if we have done well.

Day in and day out, though we pray, though we read the Bible, though our every intention is for the good of God's business, though at points in our lives we feel close to Him, though we are moved every now and then, and though we serve Him continually, we are often unsure of where we stand in the presence of God.

And so our hearts utter the same cry.

Not that believers who have had these wonderful experiences have better faiths; neither do servants who have had these wonderful experiences escape from going through periods of wavering either.

In addition, not that we have been short-changed by God, for indeed, His grace is sufficient for us (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). But just that on the surface, it does seem that those servants—whether in the long past or in the present—are just that much closer and surer of God's abidance and favor.

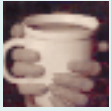
“Remember me, O my God!” (Neh 13:31)

It is a cry of uncertainty; a cry of yearning; a cry, not for the remembrance of the work we've accomplished but for the most important remembrance and recognition—to be pleasing in God's sight.

Let us serve God with our totality as Nehemiah did—through the pains and through the tears.

May we be remembered by God in the same manner He remembered Nehemiah. May we be a sweet-smelling aroma in His presence (cf. Eph 5:2).

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. (Ps 19:14)*



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

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

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

Call For Articles

Author Guidelines & Editorial Calendar

Issue #47

Theme: Worship

Articles due: November 30, 2004

What is the meaning of true worship? What kind of relationship do we want to build with God? What are the elements of worship and how can it benefit my life?

Issue #48

Theme: The Body of Christ

Articles due: February 28, 2005

How do we as members function in the body of Christ, and how do we respect each other's roles? What does the Bible teach us about unity in the body, and how does this affect our salvation?

Issue #49

Theme: The Family Altar

Articles due: May 31, 2005

What is the importance of building a family altar in our own homes? What does the Bible teach about raising godly children? What are some practical ways in which we can draw closer together as a family unit?

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

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

CONTENT

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

GRAMMAR/STYLE

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

True Jesus Church

Articles of Faith

Jesus the True God

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

Holy Bible

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

Church

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

Salvation

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

Baptism

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

Foot Washing

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

Holy Spirit

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

Holy Communion

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

Sabbath Day

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

Judgment Day

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

TRUE JESUS CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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