

mANNA



IN different NEIGHBOURS

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Ministry as a forerunner to world evangelism

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

11236 DALE STREET
GARDEN GROVE CA 92841 U.S.A.

WORDS OF LIFE, an evangelistic pamphlet published in Singapore till lately has been a friend to our English educated members and truth-seekers for many years. In some ways it has served as a forerunner of world evangelism. For example, the truth we preached reached to the Philippines through Words of Life. Today, we have established 12 churches and prayer houses in the Philippines with more than 700 members. The truth preached to Ghana was also through our pamphlets. Praise the Lord. The Department of Literary Ministry reorganised recently. Words of Life has found a new abode. With effect from issue 23, Words of Life will be edited and published by I.A. office in U.S.A.

In this issue, the feature article, "Indifferent Neighbours" draws on a similarity between the parable of The Good Samaritan and that of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In today's context the former speaks to the church leaders while the latter speaks to the believers. The writer calls the shepherds of the church to exercise more care and attention for the flock under their charge; while the congregation should also co-operate with the leaders.

"He sees from on high" reminds us that God is looking at us from heaven continuously. God sees essentially three types of believers. One group does not wish to lose God. So these believers keep their religious practices. They attend church, pray, make offerings and occasionally when time permits, read the Bible. However, they also love mammon. They think that as long as they continue with their religious practices and maintain their status quo, salvation is assured. The second group feels that the sermons are "too strict and uncompromising". These believers come to church to seek the blessings of God. When they find that

their objectives are not met, they begin to have doubts and some even leave the church. God sees yet another group. These believers are His children who centre their lives on Him. Though they may shoulder heavy responsibilities in society and lead a busy life as everyone else, in their hearts, the affairs of the church and the welfare of their brethren are their key concerns. What category of believers do you belong to?

"Thoughts by the brook of Cherith" informs us that though ravens are considered unclean animals God used them to feed prophet Elijah. Similarly, in many ways we are imperfect, but as long as we are humble and are willing God can still make use of us.

Under Practical Living, we present a number of articles; two of which are "Choosing a friend" and "When words hurt". When choosing a friend, the writer raised four pointers for us to consider. These four pointers are especially good for the youths in our church. The proverb goes, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" (Prov 25:11). Conversely, a word unfitly spoken can bring disastrous consequences. The article, "When words hurt" contains case studies.

"Dialogue between two devils" is interesting and humorous. Don't miss it. The testimonies in this issue may revitalize your spirituality.

The Department of Literary Ministry is looking for an English language editor. Please turn to the last page for full details of employment. This is a good opportunity for you to serve the Lord if you meet with the requirements. Give it a thought.

singapore
march 94

Feature article



INdifferen t

N E I G H B O U R S

The problem lies with
our indifference – if we do
not even bother to know
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stranger.

BY SHEE TSE LOONG
[SINGAPORE]

I RECOGNISE a similarity between the parable of The Good Samaritan and that of The Rich Man and Lazarus. The former was spoken in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" The latter describes two neighbours separated by a door, with the luxury of one in stark contrast to the poverty of the other. Indeed the teaching of neighbourliness is of great significance to a Christian, to whom is enjoined the great commandment of loving God and men.

The two parables are in a way complementary, in that one focuses on leaders while the other, on ordinary believers. Caring for the brethren is a responsibility of each and every one. Therefore nobody should say he is too busy to care. The wounded man enroute to Jericho was met by three people, all able to render help. This somewhat reflects our situation today, especially in church. There are needy ones among us, but there are many more of us who have the means to help. We are not in a desperate situation where our over-stretched resources fail to keep up with a never-ending call for help. The problem lies with our indifference – if we do not even bother to know people well, the wounded soul next to us would not be a neighbour, but a stranger. This would be incompatible with the fact that we are of the same household, and directly conflicts with the charge: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."¹

Knowing our fellow members enhances our ability to help, for many cases of genuine need are not as apparent as a physically wounded victim lying by the wayside. We are talking about an extended family of hundreds, of people different in diverse manners, who do not simply sound their woes at the top of their voices. Some are of such low profiles that their very existence is unknown to most. How then can we respond to their needs? Of course, at the grassroots, there ought to be spontaneity in mutual care and concern, but just as a firm cannot afford to have a management at the top which is detached from actual situations governing the market, the church

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cannot afford to have at its helm, a breed of administrators who are more interested in paper than in people. The uncaring attitude of the two religious clerics - a priest and a Levite - has caused uneasiness in many an honest church leader who feels that he has not cared quite enough for the flock. He might not have bypassed anyone whom he knew needed help, but regrets upon introspection, being largely passive in his pastoral care. He then seeks to be more

diligent in knowing the condition of the flock,² and to draw closer to people in the hope that they would open themselves to him. I find myself agreeing with the motto of one Christian organisation: *Hearts to God, Hands to Men*. I am not too certain whether 'out of touch' leaders can have their hearts to God, but I am convinced that their hands cannot be to men if their bases are stuck to their seats.

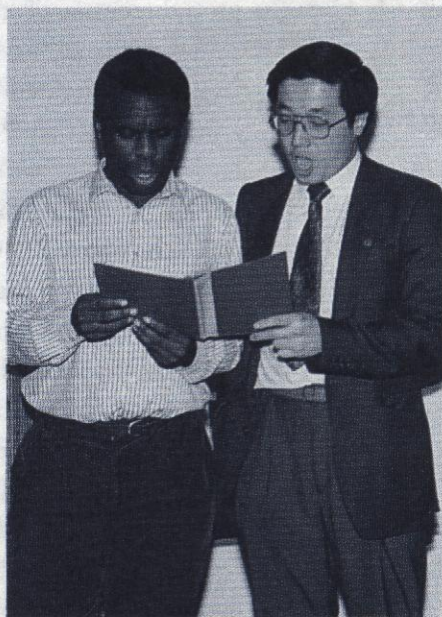
It must be realised that leadership is stewardship,³ not lordship.⁴ Just as much as others



should respect their authority, leaders should recognise their duty. Even the exercise of authority should be according to how duty prompts. To *administer* affairs without *ministering* to needs would be poor discharge of duty. Outside establishments like welfare and counselling services, religious or otherwise, can be easily accessed. It would be a shame to see children of God picking up crumbs that fall from the table of the world because

their Father's stewards are not giving them their portions at the time when they have need.⁵ Jesus did not spare His audience possible embarrassment when He continued the story by having a Samaritan, a despised outsider, play the genuine neighbour to the wounded man. A leadership which knows the people well and responds promptly to their needs would save itself from the embarrassment of having unbaptised truth-seekers attending to the needs of weaker baptised members whose faces are unfamiliar to the leaders themselves.

There is no short-cut to establishing relationships and communication networks in church. It involves time and sacrifice, besides being sensitive, sincere, helpful and genuinely concerned. Caring actions are not manufactured in a factory. The church certainly requires more than standardised care given at births, weddings and deaths. Cards, gifts and wreaths do not have a heart, only humans do. It is important to consciously take note as to who have been missing from services. It is necessary to regularly check if everything is fine with our members' families, careers, or studies and to see that these areas do not affect their spiritual lives. The old and the illiterate ought to receive proper spiritual nourishment. Newly baptised converts ought to receive proper follow-up. We ought to be personal. We ought to care for people as individuals, not just familiar faces with unfamiliar names.



Turning our focus to the general congregation, the efforts of the leaders must be replicated before a church-wide atmosphere of familial love can be generated. Moses was a good leader, but with a multitude of uncooperative people, there was little he could do. People that make up the congregation must reflect the warm, caring ways of the leadership in order to dispel the callous, indifferent disposition that may exist. God causes the rich and the poor to co-exist.⁶ One may not

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need to look beyond his local church to find poor neighbours, and our Christian duty does not allow us to dress in purple while some brethren are in rags, or to feast in luxury while they desire of our crumbs. True religion is "to visit orphans and widows in their affliction."⁷

How about the spiritually impoverished? Are we concerned for the salvation of others? Christ abandoned His glory as God in heaven to look into our eternal interests. The Bible exhorts us to have this mind of Christ in looking "not only to (our) own interests, but also to the interests of others".⁸ Our imitation of God should be "as beloved children"⁹ imitating the Father.



As the Father is the Sun of righteousness¹⁰ that shines on us all, we are lamps that brighten the house where we are.¹¹ As

the Father is the rain that nourishes our souls,¹² we can give a cup of cold water to a thirsty one.¹³ The Bible promises: "he who waters will himself be watered".¹⁴ On the other hand, the Bible proclaims woe on those indifferent ones "who are at ease in Zion", those "who lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp" but are not grieved over the misery of their brethren.¹⁵ What a contrast these couch-lying, idle-singing people make with the sleeping Christ in the stern! One fell into slumber due to fatigue, who had no proper place to lay His head;¹⁶ the other lay upon beds of comfort to pamper their idle bones. When duty calls, the idle ones remain indifferent. Yet Christ's well-deserved rest was disturbed by His faithless companions who roused Him with the rude remark, "Do you not care if we perish?"¹⁷ But we are the ones who do not care even though our Saviour labours on today. He says, "My Father is working still, and I am working."¹⁸

One final word: If anyone sees his brethren in need and yet closes his heart against him, God's love does not dwell in him.¹⁹ And as for him who has not seen his brother's needs, may this article open his eyes.

HE SEES FROM ON HIGH

THE PSALMIST tells us, The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne, He observes the sons of man; His eyes examine them (Ps 11:4 <NIV>). Have you ever asked yourself what God would see when He gazes down from on high, and looks at His church today? Perhaps these are the things He will see:



He will see a great contrast in the way some of His children live. For a start, they are scattered at different parts of the globe. Some, living in poor underdeveloped areas, are struggling somewhat to make ends meet, but they will make it because He will see that they do. Others, living in economically successful and politically stable nations, are enjoying the material affluence of their societies.

Although both groups are members of the same household, there is little association between them; they are busy with their own lives. Those living in affluent societies cannot truly appreciate the physical toils and hardships of their brethren in poverty-stricken societies. One might argue that inadequate inter-church communication, lack of information, coupled

BY LEE JIN [SINGAPORE]



They make little effort to find out how their brethren in different parts of the world are coping, both materially and spiritually, and whether there is anything they could do to help.

with physical distance, has led to this poor awareness. In fact, if there is ever an appeal by the church for assistance, they would have contributed willingly and generously too. But, by themselves, they make little effort to find out how their brethren in different parts of the world are coping, both materially and spiritually, and whether there is anything they could do to help. The gap between them remains; the rapport that should exist within a family is missing, and without this rapport, they cannot truly care for one another and look after one another's welfare.

Until a breakthrough is made, it is difficult to see how the present-day church can ever share the experience of the early believers, where they were "of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Acts 4:32-35).

Then if God searches the hearts of His children, again He will see great contrasts. There are those who have failed to take heed of His warning that one cannot serve both Him and mammon. They have fallen into the trap of trying to serve both. They do not want to lose God; they keep their religious practices of church attendance, prayers and on occasions, when time permits, bible reading. But, at the same time, they have become used to the good life and all the modern conveniences that money can buy. They appreciate gourmet food and enjoy such entertainments as karaoke. They follow the entertainment scene closely and spend heavily on videos, cassettes and laser discs. They drive expensive cars and take exotic holidays. They buy only branded goods and pay excessive attention on external appearance. To maintain this kind of lifestyle, they devote precious time and energy to device ways of making their money grow. They avidly follow the market trends; stocks and shares become their key interest. Instead of having concern over the matters of God, they are more concerned over their own financial investments. In fact, they centre their life around themselves rather than around God. He does not play a key role in their everyday existence any more. He has become someone to turn to only in times of need, but in most instances, can be 'kept in view'; someone not to be forgotten, but

can be dealt with when the occasion arises.

The sad thing is, such people are not aware that their faith have not progressed. They think that as long as they continue with their religious practices and maintain the status quo, salvation is within their grasp. Whilst it is true that salvation is a free gift from God, and not by virtue of one's own efforts (Eph 2:8), they fail to realise that those who are called have a responsibility to lead a life worthy of that calling (Eph 4:1). This includes being "careful how you walk,...making the most of the time,...understand what the will of God is,...be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:15-18).

Actually, God does not demand that His children renounce the world to lead an ascetic life. The very fact that a person has wealth and possession and can enjoy them is a gift from Him (Eccl 5:19). As the author of Ecclesiastes states, one could "walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes" but he also warns: "know that for all these things God will bring you into judgement" (Eccl 11:9). In other words, whilst he has the freedom to

decide on the kind of life that he wants to lead, he has to remember that his actions are accountable to God on the day of judgement. By then, it will be too late for regret. What is important is how he lives out his life now.



As God searches further, He will come across His wandering sheep. This is the group who has yet to be rooted in their faith, and are unsure of their own beliefs. They have doubts over certain aspects of the church's teachings and at times, find messages from the pulpit "too strict and uncompromising". They try to find reasons to justify why such messages cannot be applied to the nineteen nineties. Surrounded by proliferations of religious novelty, they are easily misled by false teachings. They are to be pitied, because they are being "tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Eph 4:14).

Since they are not yet rooted in the scriptures, they do not fully understand the reason for following

Christ. They may have come to God because they believe that God will bring them success in all their endeavours, that He will give them good health, and that He will make their lives in this world as peaceful as possible. Their reasons for embracing Christianity are many and varied, but these all reflect the fact that they are seeking after the blessings of God, after what God could offer to them in this life. They are not seeking after God Himself.

Because of this lack of true understanding, they are also easily disillusioned when they see the shortcomings of the believers. They have yet to realise that the True Jesus Church preaches the complete Gospel of salvation; that this is where the Spirit of God dwells, and where miracles and signs abound, and that she is therefore the true church that leads to salvation. Problems arise within this community of faith only because its members have yet to live up to the teachings of the bible. They have yet to apply completely these teachings into their daily life.

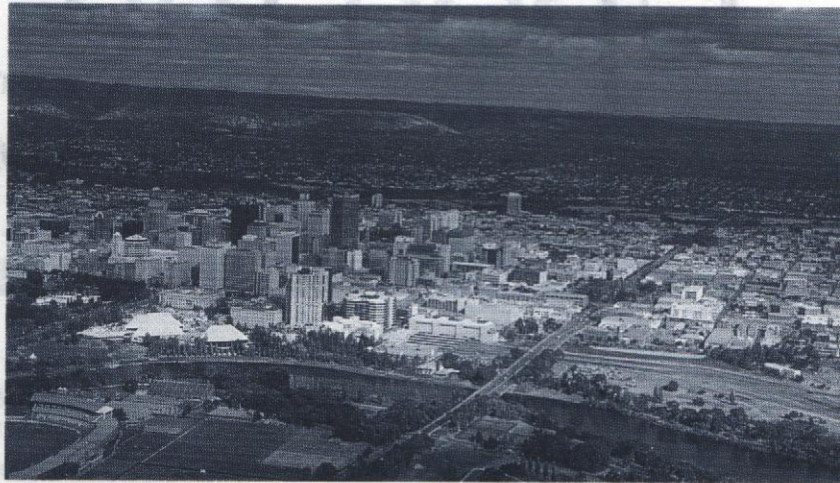
Of course, the church has a responsibility towards these

spiritually young believers. After all, the very essence of Christian fellowship is one of mutual care and concern. The teaching that the strong should care for the weak is well known. However, those who are weak ought not remain weak all their lives. Instead of always being recipients of care, at some point in their lives, they have to become givers of care. And instead of being disillusioned with the imperfections of their brethren, they have to find ways to help them overcome these imperfections. At this juncture, perhaps it is also pertinent to turn the mirror on themselves, to see their own imperfections. If they themselves are not perfect, who are they to criticise the imperfections of others? The principle that one ought to be magnanimous in dealing with the faults of others, but strict in dealings with one's own faults is worthy of emulation.

Finally, from on high, God will see the group who forms the pillars of His church. These are His children who centre their lives around Him and His teachings; they are His true and faithful servants who have established a close relationship with Him. Through their daily speech and conduct, they magnify and bring glory to Him. Although they may shoulder heavy responsibilities in society and lead busy lives just as everyone else, in their hearts the matters of the church and the welfare of their brethren are their key concerns.

They actively participate in every aspect of the church's ministry and always pray to God to guide and direct the footsteps of the true church. They are full of compassion for those in need, and always take the initiative to care for them. They visit the ill in hospital and maintain constant contact with the weak in faith. Such members have set the right priorities in their lives.

In fact, this group has not always been that devout. In the early days of their faith, they always had to make difficult decisions about serving God and mammon too. As they were still unsure of the teachings of the Bible, they also had doubts about their own faith. Yet despite these, they have pulled through, because they turned to God at the critical moments of their spiritual lives. When they were at the nadir of their faith, they remembered God, and of His love for them. Amongst all the people of this world, He chose them to be His very own, and gave them the hope of eternal life. They were not the best, and of no great worth, yet of His own accord, He had saved them from a life of darkness to one of hope.



Touched by this divine love, they had repented and returned to Him, resolving to lead a life worthy of His calling. And the important thing is, they also kept to their word. They actually made the effort to know God by studying the Bible, and to build up their relationship with Him through prayers. Once they took that difficult first step, they received support and strength from God which, they discovered, far outweighed the efforts that they put in. This provided the motivation to strive to know Him even better.

Over time, with this new approach, they find that their lives are deeply enriched. When they study the words of God, they are not only amazed by the works of God through the history of humankind, but also by its dynamic power to influence their daily actions. And when they pray, they experience the beauty of being near God, as though heaven has opened and all barriers between God and man are removed. They could talk to God as though

He is their close and intimate friend. When they experience difficulties, they can appeal to Him and He will respond. When they are afraid, they will remember the psalmist's prayer "In the Lord whose word I praise, in God I trust without a fear. What can man do to me?" (Ps 56:10-11) and they will be strengthened. Even when life becomes extremely stressful and the pressures tremendous, they could still have tranquillity and joy in their hearts, for they are confident in the knowledge that whatever the future may bring, the Lord is near. And having tasted the goodness of God, the glittering world cannot lure them away from Him any more. They share the sentiments of the psalmist "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee" (Ps 73: 25).

The psalmist tells us, The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne, He observes the sons of man; His eyes examine them (Ps 11:4<NIV>). When His eyes fall upon you, what will He see?

Upon the ROCK

NO OTHER FOUNDATION

*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
(1 Cor 3:11)*

SOMETIMES WE wonder how seemingly fervent believers can drop out of church altogether. Previously active in church work, regular in Bible-study and never missing a single service, they now keep Christ totally out of their lives. We just cannot reconcile our observation of their past zeal with their present indifference because we think that they were once like us, truly knowing why we are here and why we are Christians. Or are there times when we ourselves question why we ever got involved with Christ?

A Christian who does not know exactly why he is one must seriously examine his position. Unless he consciously commits his life to the lordship of Christ with full understanding and conviction, his church attendance is mere ritual and his faith, superstition.

f u l l u n d e r s t a n d i n g

Not everyone who enters the church gates does so with the same motives or expectations. Parents, spouses, friends, eloquent speakers, interesting activities, miracles, material benefits, or simply having nothing to do, are but a few of a myriad of reasons why some people remain in church. But a church made up of such people rests on *flimsy foundations* and does not even approximate to the church which Jesus said would prevail against the gates of hell¹. So there is no true church unless its people fully understand the reason for their following Christ.

John 6 traces the itinerary of a great multitude of Christ's followers from southwest of the Sea of Tiberias where they numbered over 5000 to Capernaum further north where

BY SHEE TSE LOONG [SINGAPORE]

many left following Him². The narrative reveals the wrong motives that many had in their persistent following of Christ. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that as long as one's discipleship rests on motives other than Christ Himself, his faith cannot last.

w r o n g f o u n d a t i o n s

When the five thousand had eaten their fill and perceived that Jesus was no ordinary man, they started to have certain expectations of Him – that He should be their King and overthrow their Roman oppressors³. They had faith all right, but it was founded on an *expectation of a physical kingdom*. But Jesus withdrew from them, for His kingdom was not of this world⁴.

Not willing to be disappointed, the insistent multitude got into boats and pursued Jesus across the sea to Capernaum where He further exposed their carnal motivation – *they sought the loaves, not Him*⁵.

To these carnal seekers of political and economic gains, everything, including spiritual things, could only be understood in terms of the physical – *unless they see a sign*, they would not believe⁶. Are there not many today who say that unless they see God, they would not believe He exists? Are there not Christians who must have miracles spaced out at regular intervals throughout their lives, lest they forget or lose sight of the reality of God? Their foundation is not Christ, but miracles that can be seen and felt by their physical senses.

f u l l c o n v i c t i o n

In contrast with the wrong motivations which hinge on the *physical*, the love of God is the main stay of a person whose faith is founded on Jesus Christ. The whole discourse about the true bread of life from heaven, the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood is really not that intriguing. It points to the simple fact that the sacrifice of Christ is *the thing that spiritually* attracts and keeps the Christian⁷. This is the beautiful way in which the Father draws people and those thus drawn will persevere till the end. None of them will be lost because they are taught of God⁸. Those who come to Christ because of Christ Himself will have the full conviction that secures their resurrection on the last day:

"After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him." John 6:66-71

"For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:40

s u r e f o u n d a t i o n

The bricks and mortar of the church are those who truly know God and are known of Him, who stand on a sure foundation⁹. They really know why they are Christians and what they aim for in life. They confess that they are mere sojourners on earth and look forward to "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"¹⁰.

ROOTED IN CHRIST

Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (Col 2:7)

RECOGNISING CHRIST as our sure foundation is not good enough. It is only the beginning of establishing one's faith. God has known from before the creation¹¹ those whom He sets upon this sure foundation. The Christian then, has to know Christ deeply, that is to be rooted in Him, before he can be built up into His perfection¹². It starts with an intense desire to know Him. This was the key to Paul's transformation from a merciless persecutor to an apostle with profound knowledge of Christ's love.

"Who are you, Lord?"

Paul, then known as Saul, was a man who had great zeal in doing whatever he believed was right. The ignorance that blinded his zeal was cleared on the road to Damascus when he asked, "Who are you, Lord?"¹³ After his conversion, his zeal, now rightly focused on Christ, was with such intensity that nothing of the world was not counted as dung "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus (his) Lord".¹⁴ After years in the ministry, he still felt that he had not known Him enough: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection Not that I have already obtained this but I press on."¹⁵ His life was a constant pursuit of Christ, of knowing Him better. The question: "Who are you, Lord?" was never far from his mind.

"I know whom I have believed"

The sweetness that a deeply rooted Christian experiences as he "grows in the knowledge of (the) Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"¹⁶ is something incomprehensible by someone outside the relationship. It thrives even in adverse circumstances: "that I may know Him ... and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death"¹⁷; "and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed for *I know whom I have believed.*"¹⁸

Sharing in the sufferings of Christ draws the Christian closer to Him, because by so doing he cuts himself off from sin.¹⁹ In this manner, he becomes not only conformable to Christ's death, but also experiences the power of the resurrected life: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection that I may attain the resurrection from the dead".²⁰

Rooted & Grounded

The goodness of Christ fully satisfies a Christian who reaches deep enough to tap its inexhaustible resources: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being *rooted and grounded* in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God".²¹

The process of understanding Christ's love is reinforced with a progressive realisation of one's own imperfections. To the Corinthians Paul wrote (circa AD 55): "I am the *very least* of all the *saints*."²² Years later, he wrote to the Ephesians (circa AD 61): "I am *less than the least* of the *saints*."²³ Towards the end of his life, he wrote to Timothy (circa AD 63): "I am the *foremost* of *sinner*s".²⁴ The more he knew Christ, the deeper he felt about his own imperfections, and the more he appreciated the extent of Christ's love for him. At this stage, nothing could separate him from his Lord.

AGAINST THE TIDE

And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. (Mt 7:25)

A CHRISTIAN needs to be deeply rooted in Christ and His words because he is called to stand against the tide. Being rooted in Christ, we grow in "the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed about with every wind of doctrine."²⁵ Not only can we *defend* against evil, we "*contend* against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"²⁶ by being "strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."²⁷ Elijah, "a man of like nature with ourselves"²⁸ provides an example of one man against the tide.

p o w e r

Elijah was a man full of vigour. Beginning from the bold proclamation of drought to King Ahab, his life was filled with activity and spectacular events; travelling to Cherith, to Zarephath, to Carmel, and to Jezreel; the miracle of the oil and meal, the raising of the widow's son, the contest on Mount Carmel, the slaying of Baal's prophets, the praying for rain. By the hand of the Lord, he was always at the forefront, thrusting forward with

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A CHRISTIAN needs to be deeply rooted in Christ and His words because he is called to stand against the tide. Being rooted in Christ, we grow in "the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed about with every wind of doctrine."²⁵ Not only can we *defend* against evil, we "*contend* against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"²⁶ by being "strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."²⁷ Elijah, "a man of like nature with ourselves"²⁸ provides an example of one man against the tide.

p o w e r

Elijah was a man full of vigour. Beginning from the bold proclamation of drought to King Ahab, his life was filled with activity and spectacular events; travelling to Cherith, to Zarephath, to Carmel, and to Jezreel; the miracle of the oil and meal, the raising of the widow's son, the contest on Mount Carmel, the slaying of Baal's prophets, the praying for rain. By the hand of the Lord, he was always at the forefront, thrusting forward with

unrestrainable force. This was beautifully pictured in his race against the coming rain in which he overtook Ahab's chariot to arrive before him at the entrance of Jezreel.²⁹ Today, the phrase "*in the spirit and power of Elijah*" describes one who stands against the tide to turn it around, that is, to turn the hearts of the people back to God.³⁰

p e r s e v e r a n c e

Power and perseverance are complementary. In a long race, both speed and stamina contribute to final victory. Chasing chariots and being at the forefront were not all God had intended for Elijah. He had still one important lesson to learn – perseverance. So God allowed him to suffer his first failure – giving up in the face of persecution. The same man who courageously opposed Ahab, called fire down from heaven, slew 850 false prophets, now asked for death when threatened by a mere woman. But he quickly learnt to “eat and drink” from the providence of God to receive new strength.³¹ The Elijah who *sped* past Ahab's chariot with all his might now *pushed forward steadily*, with *sustained stamina*, through 40 days and nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

At the mount, Elijah lodged in a cave, and it was there that the lesson on perseverance was impressed deeply in his heart. There “a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice”.³² He saw that God was not found in the powerful manifestations but in the still small voice that assured him of the silent reserve of 7000 God-fearing souls in Israel who had not worshipped Baal.³³ God's solution to problems, Elijah found, did not lie in the thick of action that he had grown accustomed to. If only he had realised earlier the truth of these words: “In quietness and in trust shall be your strength”³⁴, he would have persevered.

FINAL WORDS

There is *no other foundation* but Christ, the solid Rock upon which the Christian stands. *Rooted in Christ*, the Christian is like a strongly founded tower, an emblem of unyielding strength *against the tide*. The world passes away quickly, but the Word of God endures forever.³⁵ So does every Christian who hears the Word and practises it faithfully.³⁶

“Dialogue between 2 devils

SCENE I

Nephew devil: Tell me about our work against True Jesus Church members.

Uncle devil: Well, in the early days of the true church, our work was very difficult. We had to frighten their members; we had to make them ill, and even cause insanity sometimes. In fact, I remember once, a group of us had to appear in all kinds of scary forms before one of their elders who was writing a book. Even then, we were not successful. Then, on another occasion, I tried to frighten one of their members by appearing beside him while he was cycling. But, despite my efforts, there was no response. He just ignored me! Gosh! That was really exhausting. In the end, I had to hop onto the back seat of his bike to recover. You see, the trouble was, all these members knew how to rely on God wholeheartedly. They also supported one another in prayer. That is why most of the time, it was virtually impossible to make any progress with them.

Nephew devil: What about now?

Uncle devil: Now, things have changed. Many of their members have lost that initial zeal to spread their gospel. They are more concerned with their own lives. Religion is no longer the most important thing to them. Also it is easier now to stir up trouble within their midst. All we have to do is to sow some seeds of arrogance in their hearts.

Nephew devil: How does this work?

Uncle devil: All we have to do is to make them think that they are better than others, that their opinions are superior regardless of whether they are biblical. We try to lead them away from the Bible. Then there will always be disagreements and infightings amongst them. It is great fun to sit back and watch them.

A Christian stumbled upon the cave one

Nephew devil: But this method is so obvious. Surely they will see through our ploy.

Uncle devil: Don't you worry. They may know what the Bible teaches, and understand that they have to overcome this "law of sin" as their apostle Paul calls it, but it isn't easy these days to overcome it. We shouldn't have much problems with this method.

SCENE II

Nephew devil: How did you get these wounds?

Uncle devil: They're from a Christian.

Nephew devil: How did he wound you?

Uncle devil: This Christian initially doubted God and did not really believe we existed. He did not put up any defence against us and indulged in his desires. I could make him think and act the way I wanted him to. But lately he repented and now no longer indulges in his desires. He continually examines his thoughts and actions to see if they conform with the Bible.

Nephew devil: But how do confession, repentance and self-examination harm you?

Uncle devil: True, these behaviours only preserve him and do not inflict any injury on me. What causes me harm is that when I try to instill my thoughts into him, and create situations to stumble him, he fires me with God's words! Not succumbing to my temptations is what injures me so much.

Without bidding farewell, Uncle devil walked away, head dropping, muttering to himself, "It shouldn't be like that. It used to be him who's hurt, not me..."

Adapted from the Youth Communion, August 1993.

The Secret of My Success

by Tay Eng Guan (Singapore)



NOW there was a certain wise man and he habitually dispensed advice though he did live in the cave in a very inaccessible mountain. And a certain merchant went through much hardship and in spite of his pot belly, clambered up the mountain and asked the wise man, "O great guru, what is the secret of success?" To which, the sage murmured, "Work hard and take the narrow one way path of total dedication." The merchant happily went on his way and dedicated himself to his business; and the merchant made the Fortune's billionaire list.

Likewise, a struggling student groped his way through the thickets that flourished on the mountain side, and torn and bleeding, asked of the wise man, "O great guru, what is the secret of success?" To which the old man intoned from within the cover of his dhoti, "Concentrate and flee all distractions from the way of knowledge." The student nodded with understanding and he came down from the mountain and

immediately concentrated on his chosen field of study; and the student won the Nobel Prize.

A Christian stumbled upon the cave one day and spending some days with the wise man, was suitably impressed with his knowledge. He asked the wise man, "What is the secret of success?" To which, the wise man smiled magnanimously and offered "Be moderate in religion and live tolerantly among men." The Christian shook with emotion and felt a sense of enlightenment; and the Christian made no enemies in his life time and did not progress in his faith either.

Now it came about the merchant, the student and the Christian all died and were buried. And in Hades, they lifted their eyes, being in torment, and saw the guru from afar. And they cried out and said, "O great guru, why are we all here? We are in agony in this flame." But the guru approached and removed his turban, revealing two just visible horns emerging from thick matted hairs, and said, "That is the secret of my success."

(From an autograph written for someone leaving for overseas studies)

Thoughts by the Brook of Cherith

"Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.' And the word of the Lord came to him, 'Depart from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, that is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.'

So he went and did according to the word of the Lord;

he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan.

And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land." (1 Kings 17:1-7)

THE SETTING

IN THESE seven verses of the Bible two characters together with a few other things were mentioned, namely:- (1) Prophet Elijah, Elisha called him the chariot and the horsemen of Israel. (2) King Ahab, the wicked king who listened to the ill advice of his idolatrous queen, Jezebel. (3) The brook of Cherith seldom mentioned in other parts of the Bible. (4) The Jordan which is well-known to Christians because God had performed a wondrous deed there by allowing the Israelites cross over the river on dry land. (5) A flock of ravens.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Brook of Cherith was situated east of the Jordan. It flowed through the land which was allotted to the tribe of Gad. During the period of the kings the land belonged to the kingdom of Israel. Geographically it was located in the heart of the



land of Canaan (please refer to the map above). The land of Gad had high mountains and deep valleys; plains and rivers while Cherith was one of the rivers (Josh 13:8-11).

This region did not usually encounter drought. But when King Ahab was ruling Israel he did great evil in the sight of God. This provoked the anger of God greatly. And God brought a drought for three years and six months to the land. As a result of drought the Israelites suffered famine terribly all because of one man.

KING AHAB

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Elijah replied, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baal." (1 kings 18:16-18). The wicked deeds of Ahab are described as follows: "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all that were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke

the Lord the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” (1 Kings 16:30-33). When a king goes against the Lord God the whole nation will suffer. Similarly, if the leaders of the church deviate from the truth then the entire congregation will suffer.

PROPHET ELIJAH

According to James, Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its vegetation. Elijah was mightily used by God because he was righteous. He totally submitted to the will of God, accepting the commission of God readily. When told to depart from Gilead and turn eastward and hide himself by the brook of Cherith, he did accordingly. He responded to God’s call just like Abraham, going without any hesitation. Elijah had great faith in God. Even when God told him that the ravens would feed him he was absolutely certain that what God had spoken would surely come to pass. His dealings with man was straightforward. He admonished king Ahab immediately and unreservedly. He remained pure towards the widow whom God told him to stay with. When the brook of Cherith dried up, the word of the Lord came to him, “Arise, go to Zarepheth, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you” (1 Kings 17:7-9). Elijah was also a man of courage. He challenged Jezebel’s 850 false prophets on Mount Carmel. His victory on Mount Carmel revived the faith of the Israelites tremendously. After Elijah completed his mighty work on earth God sent a whirlwind to take him to heaven. He was the second person who went up to heaven without tasting death.

THE RAVENS

In Leviticus, ravens are classified as unclean birds: "And these you shall have in abomination among the birds, they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, the kite, the falcon according to its kind, every raven according to its kind" (Lev 11:13-15). Human wisdom will never be able to comprehend the mighty works of God. Why did God not send a clean animal to bring food to Elijah? If God wills, even unclean animals can be useful tools to Him. Harlots have no status in society are considered outcasts. But when Joshua sent two men as spies to view the land of Jericho, a harlot named Rahab saved the two spies from the king's guards. God can use us even though we are lowly and untalented, as long as we are humble and willing to be used by Him. Moses declined God's calling by saying that he was not eloquent, but a man of slow speech and of tongue. Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" Prophet Isaiah, too, said that he was a man of unclean lips and he dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips. But God sent a messenger with a burning coal and touched Isaiah's lips to burn away his filth. God used Moses and Isaiah mightily. Paul said rather aptly: "Consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor 1:26-29).

Every morning and evening, the ravens by the brook of Cherith would dutifully bring bread and meat to Elijah. Also, they did not eat up the food halfway. In Guilin, China, the people catch fish in the river not by using nets but cormorants. Cormorants are domestic animals very similar to ducks. They have long necks and are highly skilful in catching river fish. But before they are let out for the catch their master would have to fix a ring at the bottom of their necks or else the fish they catch would go down to their bellies. However, the ravens at the brook did not eat up the food meant for Elijah.

BY S. C. [SINGAPORE]

Jesus and the Woman

THE NATURE OF FORGIVENESS

BY JULIUS TSAI [BOSTON, USA]

ONE DAY when Jesus was dining at the house of a man named Simon, a woman entered the house and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.¹

In Luke's version of the story, Simon, a Pharisee, was quite put off by this action, for evidently the woman was some kind of a sinner, which in biblical euphemism might mean that she was a prostitute, or had transgressed the Law in some other way.

Jesus, sensing that Simon was scoffing at Him in his heart, told a parable:

*"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarri, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he (Jesus) said to him "You have judged rightly."*²



I have always been moved by this story because the woman's action was so beautiful. The story is of her, of Jesus' love, and also of the kind of love that we might aspire to, for divine love leads to forgiveness of the most radical sort.

The first thing that we notice if we compare the account in Luke with those in Matthew, Mark, and John, is a kind of biblical identity crisis. First of all, who was Simon? In Luke, he was a Pharisee, much-respected. In Matthew and Mark he was a leper, one of the lowest kinds of people, who





wandered about with bells, shouting “Unclean! Unclean!” so that normal people would not be defiled by going too close to him.

And who was the woman? In Luke, Matthew and Mark she was a sinner of some sort, a social outcast. In John, the woman was Mary, a friend of Jesus and certainly not a sinner.

In my mind, it doesn’t really matter who exactly Simon was, or who the woman was. Two things do not change—Jesus’ forgiveness and the woman’s action of love. All the records contain essentially the same narrative, and perhaps this can tell us that if we really think about it, many of the distinctions that we usually make about people are not justified.

Pharisee or leper? Sinner or friend of Jesus? Landowner or homeless person? Business executive or AIDS patient? It has become almost automatic for us to make instant judgments about people. On the street, we would note the kind of car a person drives, the type of suit he wears and the kind of credit cards he carries. Even in church, we may know our brethren by their professions, their net worth. But how much does any of that matter in the eyes of Jesus who forgives all our debts, who is our God who embraces all of His children?

Now, regarding the ointment. The author of John identifies it as nard, a precious balsam made from spikenard, an aromatic root grown in India. And in Matthew, it was contained in a jar of alabaster, a precious, translucent mineral, which the woman must break in order to get the ointment out. Some calculate that the ointment was worth a whole year's wages. Others claim that it was part of her dowry, intended for her wedding day. In any case, it represents all that was important to her.

It seems then, that although God's love is always there, we cannot take it for granted. If we would be near to God, it seems that we must give up all that is important to us and just yield to God. And what is most important to us? Is it our ego that we have to break just as the alabaster jar that the woman broke? Or is it our wealth accumulated over the years that we must part with? Whatever we can conceive of, whatever we value as our own must be dedicated to God. We need to appreciate that in the grand scheme of things, our lives and all that we hold dear, need to be dedicated to Him. We don't need to sell all our possessions, give up our jobs, and go live in church, but it does mean that we perform every action as if we were offering it to God. And does this not make sense since Jesus Himself gave up His very life for us?

Lastly, the story teaches us about forgiveness. While the woman was anointing Jesus, Simon, the disciples, and in particular Judas, could be heard in the background, muttering to themselves about what a sinner she was and how Jesus should have known about her background. It is amazing that even though Simon and the disciples could see with their own eyes that Jesus had forgiven her, they could not themselves forgive her. In the very presence of the Lord Jesus, they still couldn't give up their human prejudices.

Today, we often talk about how wonderful God is and how much He loves

humanity. We also talk about how much we love God. But then, shouldn't we love God, who is all-perfect? How hard is it to love perfection? But when we cast our eyes upon our neighbour, can we do the same? Can we love imperfection?

In everyday situations, whether in the classroom, in the office, or out on the street, we encounter people that we just don't like. In fact, I think that each of us, if we think for a while, could come up with a pretty good list of people we don't like, and why. But in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly says:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?²³

If we know that there are people that we cannot bring ourselves to love, and yet know that the Bible commands us to go and love them, what are we to do?

So you see, the Bible is not that easy to live up to after all. One common way to deal with people whose company we deem less than desirable is the simple rule of avoidance. Just try to have nothing to do with them. We might even say that we hold no hatred in our heart for anyone. But how good is that? I would argue that in this commandment to love our enemies, as in any commandment of the Lord, there is a minimum requirement that we at least have to reach, but also a

maximum attainment at which we may never arrive. What I am saying is that

if we only stick with the people that we love, love only those who love us, and hold no special grudge or hatred against anyone, that is only the minimum of what we are commanded to do.

As it is, just reaching that level is difficult enough. But we can always do more. How exactly do we love our enemies? One sister told us in a recent Bible study how she had had some bad experiences in the office and would initially return home each night with fresh horror stories to tell and complaints to make to her husband. But as time went by she began to change her attitude, first by constant prayer to God to shower His abundance on her, and also by viewing those stressful situations as tests through which might improve her character. Slowly, she was able to begin changing how she felt about certain people.

If God in heaven can not only forgive but die for all humanity,
which includes the people that we really cannot bring ourselves to
love, what does that say about our behaviour, our jealousy, envy,
and hatred?

There's no quick solution, and we change over a long period of time, but as long as we always keep the love of Christ in our hearts, and just like the woman in our story, dedicate our thoughts, words, and deeds to God, we can begin to change some of our narrow assumptions and judgments about others.

There were situations in my own life when I have judged people, and have refused to forgive people for the things they might have said or done even years ago. But how petty! If God in heaven can not only forgive but die for all humanity, which includes the people that we really cannot bring ourselves to love, what does that say about our behaviour, our jealousy, envy, and hatred?

We may be judging others by whether they are Pharisees or lepers, Marys or sinners. Faced with the deep love of the Divine, we must realise

before passing judgement on anyone that we have every reason to first love everyone with whom we are blessed to pass through this life. John says:

We love, because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also...

God is love.⁴

It is a difficult task to love those whom we deem unlovable. Yet that is God's command. And on the widest level, who are those today whom society has cast aside? The poor, the uneducated, the immigrants, the homeless, the drug addicts, AIDS victims, gays and lesbians... Can we live up to our calling as disciples of Christ? Do we allow ourselves to become channels of God's love that changes lives?

The story of Jesus and the woman is a rich one that tells us about God's eternal love for us, our attempts to love Him back, and our even more difficult task of loving each other. May we look into ourselves and find the love that is what God is, and that ultimately, is also what we should be.

“Hey, I’ve got something to tell you...”

WHEN WORDS

“It was only a joke... why are you so sensitive?”

hurt

“We don’t even see you regularly in church, how can you say that we have no love?”

“You are not baptised yet, you are not allowed to do church work.”

BY LIM SIOK HONG [SINGAPORE]

CASE 1

Sister X was a warm, friendly and sociable youth. She was actively involved in church work, including teaching religious education classes. Very sadly, something unpleasant happened in her private life which involved a few church members as well. Soon after, she began to complain that gossips about her were going around in church. Even long after the event, she continued to think others were still talking about it. One day, she decided that enough is enough, any further word would be “the final straw”. Today, she no longer comes to church. It has been more than three years since.

CASE 2

Although Brother A and Brother B were never best of friends, they had no serious quarrel with each other after these years in church. On one occasion, Brother A said something, intending it as a joke. Brother B however, did not see it as a joke. A great misunderstanding ensued. Later, they talked the matter over and came to a reconciliation. But, their relationship had become strained. Both felt they had better talk less to each other for fear of any future misunderstanding.

THE TONGUE is a little member and yet it boasts great things (Jas 3:5). The cases of Sister X and Brothers A and B evidence the deadly prowess of the tongue. Their experiences are not exclusive; we must have seen similar happenings even if we have not personally gone through it.

The lesson to learn is, of course, that we have to bridle our tongues. With our tongues, we can edify and bring comfort and joy. With our tongues, we can also hurt feelings, strain relationships and stumble our brethren. While much emphasis ought to be given to the taming of our tongues, we should not forget there is another issue: how we respond to the words of others.

What do we do when we fall victim to gossips, rumours, careless utterances or unfair remarks? Anger, disappointment and hurt are understandable initial reactions (Prov 15:4). Before these feelings develop into bitter, disturbing ruminations which consequently affect our walk with God and our relationship with our brethren, perhaps we can consider the following points.

①

No one enjoys hearing others speak ill of himself. If it should come from church brethren, it would be even harder to swallow. "To think that such things happen even in the true church!" "He knows the words of God, yet he gossips!" These are common responses. So, we are hurt and disappointed. Forgiving is not that easy a task after all.

Solomon thus advises "Do not give heed to all things that men say, lest you hear your servant cursing you; your heart knows that many times you have yourself cursed others" (Eccl 7:21,22). We have been a victim of unkind words. But, is the other party not also a victim, a victim of spiritual weakness? And, have we not also lapsed into similar weakness before, hurting others? Since we ourselves are fallible to such a weakness, we should not hold a grudge against others for it. Peter asked the Lord Jesus how many times one should forgive an offending brother. Jesus replied, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Mt 18:21,22). One of the most beautiful Christian virtues is the ability to accommodate others' weaknesses when we are hurt and to forgive the very people who hurt us (cf. Acts 7:57-60; Col 3:13).

②

The church is a complex organisation, comprising members of different age groups, social and educational backgrounds, character-types and experiences. As a result, divided opinions are almost inevitable. As the proverb goes, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes" (Prov 16:2); one same incident can mean different things to different individuals. Hence, when others are seemingly "spreading" false information, it could be a case of misunderstanding. It need not be influential rumour mongering or gossiping. Hannah prayed with great earnestness and contrite spirit for a child. This exemplary act of prayer was misunderstood by the priest, Eli, as drunkenness! (1 Sam 1:10-14)

It is distressing to hear of false tales about ourselves. But, if we allow others the benefit of the doubt, we would see that the situation is not as bad as we make it to be. Moreover, what really matters is how God sees us. **Others may have misunderstood us, but their views and words will not change the way God looks at us.** God sees the heart (1 Sam 16:7). So long as our conscience is clear before Him, we need not be overly disturbed (Acts 24:16). What we can do before the misunderstanding clears is to entrust and wait for the Lord to act (Ps 37:7a). God will grant us the peace and serenity much needed at such a time (Phil 4:6,7).

③

The Chinese has a saying that the speaker speaks in innocence but the listener puts in his own meaning. It is human nature to be especially sensitive to any utterance that involve our names. Much as we hate to admit it, the fact remains that we often add our own meanings to the speaker's words. More often than not, we are inclined to take comments too personally. Upon gaining victory over the Philistines after David killed Goliath, the Israelite women rejoiced with singing and dancing, saying, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." This is plainly an innocent remark, but how did Saul react? He was angry and displeased, paranoid that his kingdom was at stake (1 Sam 18:6-9). From then on, Saul began to fall from grace. It was not the words of the women but the way he reacted that contributed to his ultimate decline.

④

On a final note, let us consider what Paul says: "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? ... I am sure at neither death, nor life...nor anything else in all creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39). In the course of his walk with God, Paul faced not only physical sufferings for

the sake of the Gospel. He was also misunderstood by church members and tasted the pain that words can cause (1 Cor 4:3, 4; 1 Tim 4:14-16). On no occasion did he ever contemplate leaving God. Neither did he harbour thoughts of bitterness. Instead he went on to offer us many teachings about love, forgiveness and church unity.

**For our salvation,
Jesus gave His life. If we
should take our spiritual
life so lightly as to allow
mere words to jeopardise
it, we would have
received His grace in vain.
May God help us to be
constantly conscious of the
potential damage of our
tongue so that we may
bridle our tongue as well
as respond rightly to the
words we hear.**

CHOOSING A friend

"LIFE IS to be fortified by many friendships. To love, and be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence," says Sidney Smith. "It is not good for man to be alone," declares the Lord God. Man was not created to be a forlorn animal. Man needs other men. Friends add vivacity to life. However the Bible warns:

"There are friends who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov 18:24).

Therefore the Bible admonishes:

"A righteous man turns away from evil, but the way of the wicked leads them astray" (Prov 12:26).

And in the pages of the Bible, God has left us with some pointers as to how we should choose our friends.



◆ He who can have God as bond

Friendship may be forged by circumstances but, as quickly as it began, it may be lost by circumstances. What happened to all our school chums after we left school? What happened to all our bridge partners after we lost interest in the game? Friends are made when we are thrown together in some common activities or necessities.

And the bond of friendships is as enduring and true as our interest in such activities or our reliance on such necessities. It cannot be otherwise because transience is the essence of human conditions. On the other hand, if God be the bond

BY VINCENT YEOH [SINGAPORE]

of your friendship, the beauty and endurance of true love emerge. In 1 Samuel 18:1; 20:17, the Bible records that Jonathan loved David as his own life. Their friendship survived severe opposition. They were able to be the best of friends although Jonathan's father, King Saul, sought to kill David. Why? 1 Samuel 20:42 provides the key to understanding the strength of their friendship:



"And Jonathan said to David, 'Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'"

They had God as their bond. Christians should choose friends who can have God as their bond. The truest of friends walk together in the path of God – keeping the doctrines and the laws of God together. "Do two walk together, unless they have made an appointment?" asked the Prophet Amos (Amos 3:3). If you cannot agree with your friend as to the purpose of life, how can he be your best friend to walk together with you? Your life's aim is to serve God, his is to enjoy himself in worldly pursuits. There is no common destiny. Your mission is to preach the full gospel of salvation to all nations, his is to confuse the lost with the deadly partial truth that one can be saved by merely believing in Christ. The paths are different. Therefore, if you are looking for a true friend, look for one who not only believes in God but who will also walk together with you according to the words of God. In that way, God can be your bond. And you will be able to join the Psalmist in declaring:

If you cannot agree with your friend as to the purpose of life, how can he be your best friend to walk together with you?

"I am a companion of all who fear thee, of those who keep thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63).

◆ **He who stays in time of troubles**

Proverbs 19:4 says, "Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend." A man in a position of power and who is able to give what others want will have many people flocking to him and claiming to be his friends. But the best test of friendship is adversity. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times." Your true friend will be someone who is by your side in times of trouble.

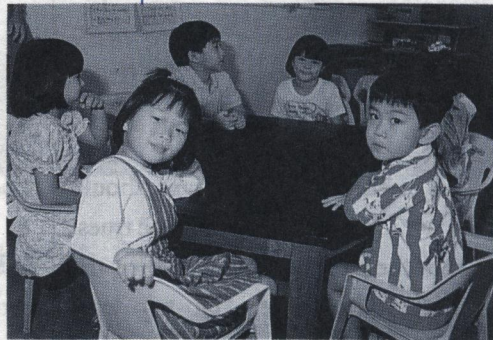
◆ He who is not bad company

"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us wantonly ambush the innocent; like Sheol let us swallow them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with spoil; throw in your lot among us, we will all have one purse' – my son, do not walk in the way with them, hold back your foot from their paths." (Prov 1:10-15) Paul in a similar vein says, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals' (1 Corin 15:33)." Avoid the company of so-called friends who walk the path of sin. For this reason, the Bible tells us to avoid drinkers (Prov 23:20-21) and hot tempered men (Prov 22:24-25).

◆ He who is willing to counsel

The mark of a good friend is his willingness to counsel. Nobody enjoys criticisms and therefore it takes a really close friend to assume the task of pointing out your faults. It is easy, and very pleasant, to praise because we win favour by so doing. But we keep friends by giving sincere counsel. Proverbs 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." And in verse 9 it says, "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, but the soul is torn by trouble." Do not take offence therefore the next time your friend points out your mistake. He is merely being true to you. The "wounds of a friend" ought to be appreciated and welcomed rather than shunned.

The mark of a good friend is his willingness to counsel. Nobody enjoys criticisms and therefore it takes a really close friend to assume the task of pointing out your faults.



The Diary of Vexed Lot

7 June 1993, Monday

It's black Monday again! Business is brisk as usual and Bass has been yelling the whole day. It's ironic that instead of bringing more happiness, more business means more frustration, stress and shouting.

Bass worries and talks about nothing but business. He often tells me to make sure that the shop is "nice and presentable" and that it is our "rice bowl". His hobby and past-time one can say, is WORRYING, FRETTING and GRUMBLING.

Because he speaks very little English and knows nothing about accounting, his main worry is TAXES. He has always been telling me to be "careful" with the accounts, because many businesses have been fined for being "naughty". I once had a conversation with a friend and he said that if the Tax Man is investigating any business, it is not a question of whether you get fined, but how much. He also said that if anyone disputes or appeals against the decision, he's in big trouble. I asked him what he meant. He said that if you dispute the figure, they will come sit with you at your business (during opening hours, of course!). Very few are therefore brave enough to challenge the Tax Man.

I often think that if the Tax Man comes for tea, I will invite him to eat fried rice with me. If he does not come I will drag him in! In fact he can sit with me for a month! I will prove to him that my accounts are at least 99% accurate and true, sometimes overtrue! I know no one can be 100% perfect, but one should be willing and pray that he can be perfected. The Lord is coming soon. He will reward with TRUE LUXURY and ETERNAL LIFE. We should not boast in our wealth or our takings. If we boast, we boast in the truth only. The Lord is perfect and holy. We strive to be the same.

8 June 1993, Tuesday

Went bowling today with cousins and friends. I noticed that most of them had personal bowling shoes and bowling balls. What really "bowled me over" was this little packet of white powder they used to make the floor less slippery. Such serious attitude! Great enthusiasm and eagerness indeed!

Often when we attend church, we arrive just on time or a little late. Sometimes we get tired of doing church work. Whatever happened to the enthusiasm at the bowling alley? Where is our eagerness to serve God?

9 June 1993, Wednesday

Read something on ex-communication today. I think it is a serious matter worth much thinking about.

This subject is rarely mentioned in sermons. It's one of the most sensitive, embarrassing and delicate matters. Mention the word and it will send shudders down the spine. Few would want to explore such a topic. Nevertheless, sooner or later, this serious matter must be examined.

In the past, most of the ex-communications in the True Jesus Church were due to adultery and sexual immorality. We have heard from sermons that if a believer commits adultery he commits a deadly sin and should be expelled. This is no doubt true (1 Cor 5:1-3, 13). But what if a believer from time to time engages in debauchery — drunkenness and immoral pleasures? (1 Cor 5:11) What about swindling (eg. tax evasion, etc)? (1 Cor 6:9-10). Or greed? (1 Cor 3:5-6). What if a believer causes dissensions? (Prov 6:16-19). What if a believer habitually lies? (Prov 6:16-19) Or gossips? (1 Tim 5:13-15) Or slanders? (1 Cor 3:8). I found other useful bible references:

• 1 Tim 6:10 • 1 Tim 2:22-23, 3:1-7, 4:3-4

I am led to think about the adulterous woman in John 8.

Verse 3: "The Scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst"

The woman was sexually immoral. Perhaps she had committed many sexual offences but was not caught till now. Did she lack understanding in God's law? Could it be that the teachers of the law rarely spoke about sexual immorality? Or perhaps she was only a part-time church goer?

Verse 5: "Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?"

I have no doubt that to ex-communicate those who have committed mortal sins is a right thing to do, for the Bible teaches so.

On balance, God extends His kindness when we sin out of ignorance. But He says "Go and sin no more." "The great day of judgment is near!"

• Rom 13:8-14 • 1 Pet 3:3-4 • 1 Thess 5:2-3 • 1 Thess 2:3-4, 9-10

If we refuse to repent, we will ultimately be cut off (Lk 13:5, Rom 11:22) Do we have any excuse?

This is my solemn, contrite prayer to God:

Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your unfailing love,

According to Your great compassion blot out our transgressions.

For we know our trespasses and sins are always before us.

All glory be unto You, O God. Amen.

10 June 1993, Thursday

We humans are strange creatures sometimes. Often we are willing to suffer, but unfortunately for the wrong reasons. For example in our working life, for the sake of money, we are willing to suffer insults, abuses, mockery, etc.

If we work for others, it may be difficult to control or limit our working hours, but if we do our own business, surely we can. But most people slog all their lives to accumulate money which they do not have much time to enjoy. Work drains their energy, morale and interest for other things. Yet for the sake of extra income they suffer unnecessarily. Sometimes I wonder: If the only reward of our toil and suffering is money, is it worthwhile? Shouldn't we reserve more of our energy to work for Jesus willingly? We will then be able to rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that our reward is true and lasting.

1 Tim 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs."

11 June 1993, Friday

Cousin May gave birth to her third child today. Sadly, the baby's not normal, just like the rest. Her second child died when he was barely five months old. Now she's got two abnormal children to take care of. When she heard about the condition of the new-born today, she kept asking, "Lord, why me?" Yes, why she? No matter what answers we humans give, none will truly satisfy.

When we suffer, for example illness, bereavements, we may ask the same question: "Why me?" We know that such questions cannot be easily answered. But one thing to remember is that we ought to always rely on God. In our sorrow we must never doubt His love or lose trust in Him. We

should all the more pray for His strengthening.

Thank God May and Eric are believers. There is Someone they can turn to, unlike unbelievers who would just blame everything on their ill-luck and live in hopeless pessimism.

For myself, one thing I've learnt is never to take God's blessings for granted. We seldom thank God for the good things but always question Him for the bad things. Though we have no answers to many things we face in life, I know He's up there, waiting to tell us, someday.

12 June 1993, Saturday

Although we in the True Jesus Church may work on the Sabbath Day, I feel we often abuse this liberty. If we work for a non-member, we may not be able to dictate our working hours, but if we operate our own business, surely we can control our operating hours. Surely if we close on Saturday, our income wouldn't be severely affected. Surely we can still make enough.

Sometimes we squeeze a full day's work into a Saturday morning and then rush to church. And while at church our mind is somewhere else.

This weekend, I'm taking a short break here in the north. The Sabbath service here is at 11am. After the service everybody rushes off to his respective business. Each time I come here I feel very disturbed, for nobody takes care of the truthseekers except a handful of foreign students who have nowhere else to go after service. Often even these are not enough. Why is business more important than people's souls? The foreign students have to leave one day. Who then will take care of the truthseekers?

Why the rush on the Sabbath Day of rest?

What do we gain by all this?

(Adapted from a series of letters received from an anonymous brother)



Seen from a passing train

A MAGNIFICENT, blue-sky day... I was on a train, wending through the Connecticut woods in fall. Crossing over a bridge, the train passed a bayside park, a patch of green by the water. I looked up from my book and out the window as the scene flitted by. An elderly couple was walking, their two dogs cavorting on the grass. I was about to return to my book, when suddenly I saw the woman raise her arm and wave to the train – a wide, sweeping joyful wave. And then we were over the bridge, back in the woods.

I settled back in my seat and thought about what I had just seen. Was it coincidence that I had lifted my eyes to look out at precisely the moment when the woman waved? Have I been hurtling toward this place this time just to receive this message? I knew that the woman could not see into the darkened windows of the train. She would never know that I or anyone else had seen her wave. And if anyone on the train had waved back, it would likewise be hidden from her.

But it was precisely the unacknowledged nature of her wave that was beautiful to me, that in her joy she had sent out her greeting to a world that quite possibly would not respond, and for all she knew, did not respond.

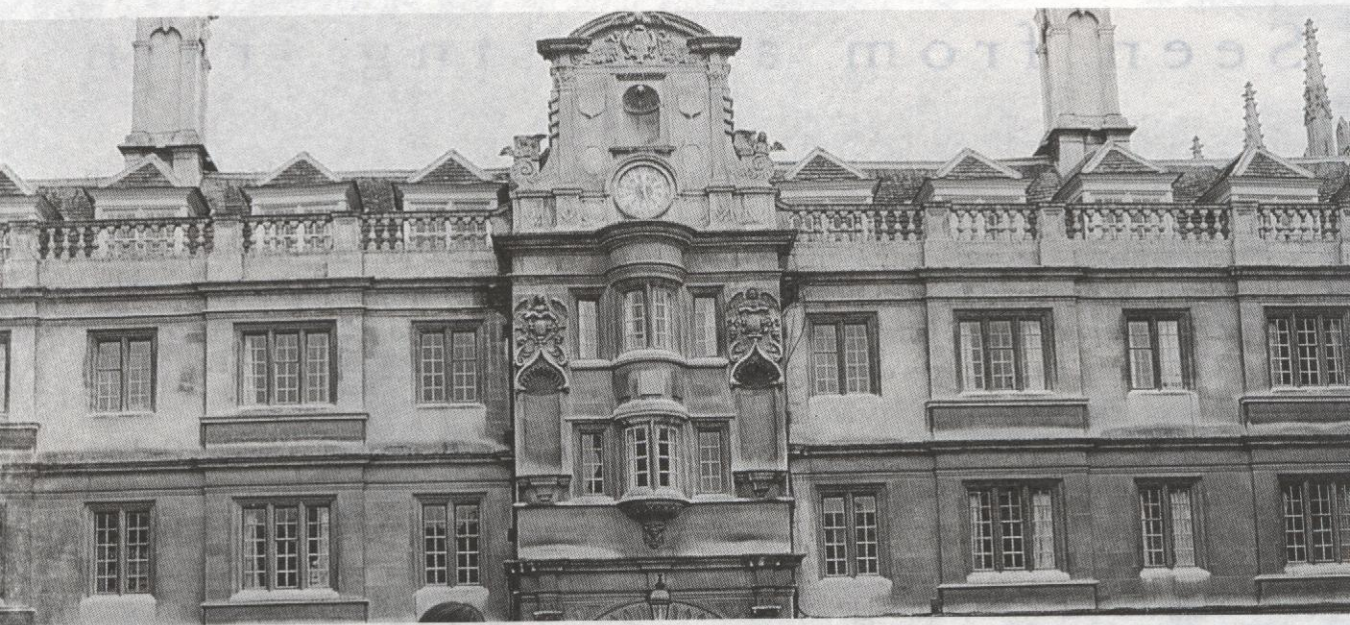
We read that Jesus commanded his disciples to give as they had been given – freely, with no thought of reward. Unfortunately, we live in a time where we have come to expect compensation for everything, payment

for our goodness in some form or other. But is life, is heaven, really to be likened to a cosmic bank account, and our only purpose for being here is to pile up spiritual capital? Hopefully not, for then we would be no more than Pavlovian dogs, drooling on command to receive divine bonbons.

Why were we created at all? Why does God love us? We may not know now, but we do know that God indeed does sustain us and love us. Life itself, love, and the hope for things to come – these are our gifts. And if we have been given so much, ought we also not act in the same way towards others? For everytime we show even the smallest measure of love for another, we are drawing from that inexhaustible well of divine love to refresh the world.

When I recall the train ride on that day, the woman and her wave still linger there in the sun, a reminder of our common life in a universe where a gesture of love can leap, like a spark, across time, space, and even understanding.

BY JULIUS TSAI [BOSTON, USA]



What I Have learnt to be grateful for

BY LOW EE LING [CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND]

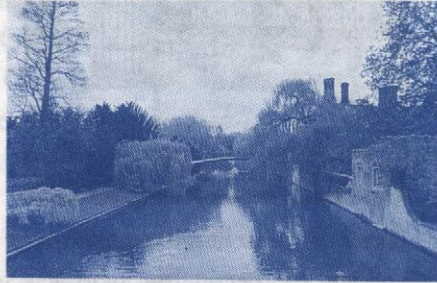
ON THE 28TH of September 1993, I began my journey into the zone of independence. The vivid scene of the tearful farewell company I left behind locked itself into the depths of my memory. A pressing question nagged at me as I boarded the plane, "Why was I given the opportunity to go abroad?"

My journey was preoccupied with reading cards given by my family and friends. Many had used the opportune moment of my departure to express heartfelt thanks and sincere appreciation for my friendship. I remembered feeling very blessed and loved as I furiously racked my brains to pen into my travel journal the name of every person who had turned up to bid me farewell. I said my first prayer of thanksgiving: "Thank you Lord for my family and friends who love me dearly."



I spent my first week getting orientated into the provincial borough of Cambridgeshire, England. This included a tour of some colleges belonging to the University of Cambridge. My first visit to Trinity college, the largest and wealthiest of these colleges, left me awestruck. The architecture of its courts is

individually distinct and magnificent - a towering fountain and a huge clock take centre stage in the old court which is lined by buildings made colourful by creepers budding out of every wall crevice. The back of this college enjoys a picturesque view of the River Cam. Here, clay-like Mandarin ducks sashay down the river in groups. Amidst the vast expanse of greenery that enfolds, two rows of trees line the driveway leading to the back entrance of the college. The golden brown leaves falling from the trees add to the beauty of the entire scene. When I took in the sight before me, I recalled the words of the psalmist, "O Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!" (Psalms 8:1) On this occasion, I said my second thanksgiving prayer to God, "Thank you Lord for the beauty of your creation."



As I left the dream-like paradise, I was struck with the thought that beautiful as nature may be, life consists of more than just ducks, rivers and trees. Whether we like it or not, life consists of people and our dealings with other human beings. This practical consideration was jolted into harsh reality when I witnessed shivering, homeless souls on the poorer streets of London, covered only with worn-out woollen blankets. Many had posters hung across their chests which read, "I am shivering and hungry. Please help!" I was in a dilemma: do I give them dinner to satisfy their hunger, gloves to keep them warm or a shelter to rest their bodies? I realised then whilst I had shamelessly taken all these for granted in Singapore, others were sadly deprived of even the bare necessities of life. I said my third thanksgiving prayer to God with a lump in my throat, "Thank you Lord for food to fill my hunger, clothes to protect me and a shelter over my head."

On the last afternoon before I left for my end-of-term holiday, I was strolling down to town, unwinding after a very hectic first term. The question that had nagged at me when I left Singapore, returned once again. Just as I was gathering my thoughts and reflecting upon the events of the past eight weeks, a robotic "Excuse me" sounded behind me. I whizzed round and was about to apologise when I stared agaped at the person who had made that request. Seated in a

motorised wheelchair that had a computer screen attached to its side, was the renowned theoretical physicist, acclaimed to be the Einstein of our time, Professor Stephen Hawking. He is a man I had previously heard about and whose battle against ALS I had marvelled at. To see him being guided by his nurse along the busy streets, to witness his attempt to live life normally despite his paraplegic appearance, was a totally humbling experience for me. I was at a loss for words. I quickly apologised and walked ahead. After two minutes, I turned back to catch another glimpse of him. He was barely ten metres from where I first met him. His motorised wheelchair had strayed towards the direction of the road and had to be guided back to the pavement by his nurse. I walked on silently for half an hour. When I regained my composure, I found the answer to my nagging question. I have been sent abroad to experience how blessed I am in all God had given me. This time, with tears flowing from my eyes, I said my final thanksgiving prayer to God, "Thank you Lord, for making me whole."

I WILL SEEK OUT THE LOST

MY NAME is Yong Ngit Ting and I came from a town called Sitiawan, in the state of Perak, Malaysia. I was baptised into the Lord when I was eight, and at that time, as there was no religious education (RE) classes, I did not receive any formal RE training. In the mid seventies, I moved to Singapore to work. It was here that I met my husband. He was introduced to me by my relatives. Although he was not a member of our church, I agreed to marry him. I thought then that as long as it was made clear at the outset that I could have freedom of worship and that he would not interfere with my belief, I would be able to uphold my faith. Although I was not marrying someone within the faith, I resolved that I would not be one of the lost sheep.

In the early days of our marriage, I kept to my resolution and attended church services regularly, but as time passed, the frequency became less and this marked the start of my decline in faith. Thinking back, there were a number of factors why this happened. My husband did not



object to my church attendance, and my mother-in-law, who was then a practising Buddhist, also did not stop me. The factors lay within myself. First, we moved to a place further away from the church and transportation was not that convenient. At home, I found it inconvenient to pray in the spirit, and I was only able to pray in silence. After I became a mother, I had even less time for God. With a young family, I also had to supplement my husband's income by taking up sewing for others. Gradually the years passed and God was no longer a part of my life. I became one of His lost sheep.

For ten years I led a life without God, until the day His amazing grace sought me and brought me back to the fold again. In the late eighties, my two sons

were still young and as one of them started attending school, I began to notice that he had a very irrational temperament. He would throw terrible tantrums and at times, even threaten to harm himself. He would not listen to anyone of us. His father, his grandmother and I were at a loss, not knowing how to tackle the problem. Gradually, the situation became progressively worse, to the extent that we became frightened of what he might do to himself and to us.

It was during this difficult period of my life that I began to realise that only God has the power to help my son and if I did not turn to Him, the problem would become worse as time passed. It seemed that my gracious heavenly Father also acted to remind me of His presence. For example, on two to three occasions, I had the same recurring dream. I dreamt of the church at Telok Kurau (in Singapore) where I could see the congregation praying. I tried to walk towards the church but as much as I tried, I could never reach it. In the dream, I could see myself becoming more and more anxious.

On Saturday afternoons, as I was working, I would find myself thinking of the Sabbath services being conducted at church. And sometimes when I looked at my children, I began to develop a sense of guilt. I brought them to this world, and yet I had not brought them to know God. They will never have a part in the salvation of God. With all this going on around and within me, I decided to return to God. I discussed the matter with my husband who agreed that my two children and I could attend church services.

So after ten years of absence, I returned to church again. I thank God that this time, I was able to bring my sons with me. As we started attending services, my son's temperament gradually improved. I was able to teach him using the words of God and he would listen. Through religious education, he learned more about God and began to think about baptism. This was reinforced by a dream he had, where he saw an angel talking to members of the congregation, but when the angel reached him, the angel waved its arms and suddenly, my son found himself in pitch darkness. He felt as if he did not belong to the congregation, that he was not part of them. That was why the angel shunned him. This prompted him to request for baptism. We therefore decided to seek the permission of his father and grandmother. Thank God, they did not object. But apparently, the Devil did.

On the day we received the baptism form, in the evening, when my two sons were chatting, one of them heard an eerie and frightening sound, like rustling of feet, behind him. As he turned around, he saw a pair of legs on the floor, rubbing against a nearby chair. The sight really frightened him but did not deter him from wanting to be baptised.

The following morning, by the grace of God, my two sons received baptism and entered the true fold. Now they too have the hope of eternal life. Not only this, in July 1992, during one of the weekly prayer sessions of the youth class, my son received the Holy Spirit. I truly praise and thank our heavenly Father for His amazing grace upon me and my family.

In Ezekiel 34:11,16, God says

**"I myself will search for
my sheep, and will seek
them out....I will seek the
lost, and I will bring back
the strayed."**

In my case, this is what he has done. I had forgotten Him, yet He did not forget me, and He took it upon Himself to seek for me. All glory and thanks be to Him.

**BY YONG NGIT TING
[SINGAPORE]**

The Lord healed me

IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ I testify.

On 1st September 1993, I woke up feeling pains all over my body. Thinking that I had caught a flu, I took four Chinese antibiotics before I left for the school where I was a teacher. Before lessons began, I had to take another three tablets. At the end of the classes, I needed four more. After dinner that evening, I felt an acute pain where my left kidney was. My husband brought me to a nearby clinic where I was diagnosed as having an infected left kidney. The doctor gave me an injection, prescribed some pills and told me to go for an X-ray the next day. That night, the pain grew more gripping. It was only then that I thought of praying to God. My husband and son prayed by my side and I cried because the pain was very excruciating. "Lord! I can't bear it any longer!" I cried out in agony. Finally, after a long time, the pain subsided and I fell asleep.

The next day, I went to the National University Hospital (NUH) in Singapore for an X-ray. The result showed stones in my left kidney and bladder. A kidney specialist was arranged for me. Meanwhile, I was to take antibiotics to counteract the infection. But I was allergic to that type of antibiotics and I found myself vomiting and suffering from fits of cold and heat just 10 minutes after swallowing the pills. Nevertheless, I was told

that despite my allergy I had to take that type of antibiotics to curb the swelling in my kidney. Left with no choice, my family prayed with me before I took any more of those antibiotics. Amazingly, the side effects did not occur again.

At NUH, I first underwent a minor surgery where a tube was inserted into my body to draw out puss and hopefully, the smaller stones. After this operation, the pain subsided and my temperature returned to normal. Seeing that conditions had improved, I was hoping that I could be discharged soon.

However, I was told that my urinary tract was blocked by many stones. Furthermore, my left kidney and my bladder had six and four stones respectively. Therefore I still needed an operation to remove these stones. The operation would be major and I would be under general anaesthesia. I became worried as I always had a weak heart and I was frightened that I might never regain consciousness after the operation. Even assurance from a heart specialist could not allay my fears.

It was then I decided to request my whole family and the church to pray for me. I believed that with prayers, Jesus would heal me. When a deacon of the Singapore Church laid hands on me in one of the prayers, I felt a

very warm current flowing down from my head right to my body. I knew then that God would definitely heal me. True enough, He did.

My operation was arranged for a Monday. The Saturday before, I had a severe pain on my left kidney and I could see little stones in the puss and blood that were flowing out of my body through the inserted tube. I had the feeling that it was the Lord Jesus crushing the big stones within me so as to allow them to flow out. That night, I slept very soundly, something which I had not experienced since the day I was hospitalised.

On Sunday morning, I felt a sudden urge to pass water. I urinated into a bedpan intensely for about 15 minutes. In the process, I could hear noises, as if objects were dropping into the bedpan. Out of curiosity, I put on a pair of gloves and put my hand into the bedpan. I felt many little hard objects like pieces of diamonds. I felt for the biggest piece and decided to keep it.

On Monday morning as the hospital staff were preparing me for surgery, I told the specialist what had happened on Sunday morning and also showed him the stone that I had kept. He was very surprised and decided to postpone the operation. I was then given another X-ray. Most amazingly, the X-ray showed that all the stones had disappeared except for a few little ones in the kidney. There was no need for an operation after all. I just had to drink plenty of water to flush out those remaining stones.

Thank God, He has operated on me and took out the stones! His grace indeed abounds evermore! All glory to His name!

BY CHONG CHEE-LIAN [JOHOR BAHRU, MALAYSIA]

The Lord looks after our house

"BLESS THE LORD, O my soul; and forget not all His benefits" (Ps 103:2), the psalmist reminds himself. Today, living such busy lives as we do, we need this reminder too, since it is easy for us to lose sight of God's grace and give thanks to Him. When we escape major catastrophes, we may recognise the Lord's deliverance but what about those daily events that can be explained away as mere coincidences? To what extent do we really count the Lord's blessings?

Here, the author recognises the Lord's constant care upon her family. Would you have done so, if you were in her shoes?

"One day, I was in the kitchen of our newly-purchased house, cooking a pot of macaroni when the door bell rang. I went to the front door and saw that one of my aunts and her family had come to visit us. Keen to see them, I went out to the front porch to greet them. Suddenly there was a strong gust of wind and I heard the front door slammed behind me! When I realised that I did not have the door key with me, I began to panic. The gas stove was on maximum in order to cook the pot of macaroni, and my three year old son was in a nearby room playing. What if the water on the pot dried up? What if my son decided to venture into the kitchen? I dare not think of the consequences.

Hurriedly, my guests and I made numerous attempts to get into the house but we were unsuccessful. When it seemed that all avenues had been exhausted, I decided to pray to God. Once again, my gracious Lord did not turn away from my pleas.

At this crucial moment, the previous owner of the house happened to be in the neighbourhood and stopped by to inform us that she still owed us a set of door key. When she learnt of my plight, she rushed home to get me that spare set of key.



With this key, I was able to enter the house and quickly switched off the gas stove. Thank God, the pot of water had not dried up, and my son was unharmed.

May all glory be given unto the Lord."

BY JANE, TUNG-KIU [PORTSMOUTH, ENGLAND]

Striving to strengthen Literary Ministry as a Forerunner to World Evangelism

AT THE SIXTH World Delegates Conference in March 1993, the Department of Literary Ministry is urged to undergo reorganization, mainly to cater to the publication of materials in various languages. In view of the fact that we are far short of our goals toward world evangelism and that literary ministry is one of the forerunners of world evangelism, the following have been set up as of now:

- A Task Force Committee and other working committees
- A special literary evangelism fund
- Rules of DLM Censorship Committee and appointment of the Censorship Committee
- DLM work stations in various countries – Australia, Canada, Europe, Hong Kong, Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Singapore, U.K., U.S.A. and Mainland China.

During the last IA Executive Committee Meeting in March 1994, the employment of an English language editor for 1994 (please see the next page) and a graphic artist (typesetter) for 1995 have been approved.

The demand for English evangelistic and pastoral publications is ever pressing. So is the demand for translation of the same materials into other languages. Presently, we have the following translations undertaken on a priority basis – French, Spanish, Malay, Korean, Japanese, Tagalog (Filipino), and Hindi, and we are yet to work on a systematic approach. For example, owing to a need to evangelise in Russia this year, our Basic Beliefs are now being translated into Russian. But we are facing problems of getting editors and typesetters to ensure accuracy and quality of the translations and quality of the end product.

For 1994, IA DLM will have to work hard to intensify the literary ministry. The following are in the approved plan:

1. Basic Bible Doctrines in French and Spanish
2. Tracts in English, Russian, French and Malay
3. Basic Beliefs in English

4. Monographs in English (Words of Life series)
5. Proceedings of the International Symposium in English and Chinese
6. Current publications such as Manna (3 issues) and IA Newsletter (2 issues)

Apart from these, IA DLM has a four-year project planned. In addition to increasing tracts of various languages, it will also ambitiously extend its work in future to include radio and TV evangelism. Later, scripts in audio/video productions would be available to listeners and viewers upon request. Much effort is needed in this. May the Lord guide us and move those who have the skill and zeal to assist in this respect.

Manna has been one of the main publications of IA. Therefore, it belongs to every member of the True Jesus Church. It will be printed and distributed by the IA Office, USA. Members throughout the world who have the gifted talent in writing or other areas are requested to contribute toward the success of this magazine. Thank God, the demand for this magazine is encouraging due to the increase of more and more English readers.

With the required personnel, we also hope to be able, in future, to distribute our publications to national libraries or bookstores in countries which enjoy religious freedom, and to all those who request for copies, free of charge. In this regard, we can anticipate a substantial amount involved in publication. As such, we welcome freewill offerings from our members in order to defray the cost of publication.

With that, we hope that our believers will make good use of the IA publications for their spiritual development and for the propagating of the Truth to millions of lost souls.

All this work needs manpower, financial support and prayers of our members. We pray that the Lord will guide our members to be aware and supportive to our goals, to enable us to carry out His great mission in the Last Days. Hallelujah!

BY DANIEL PANG [USA]

English Language Editor *required*

POSITION	English language editor for IA Department
REQUIREMENTS	Able to write well in English and knowledge in Chinese an advantage
PLACE OF WORK	IA Office – Garden Grove Church in USA
SCOPE OF WORK	Select, compile and write articles, English editing work in publications
DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	1994
LIVING ALLOWANCE	Same as US GA fulltime staff's living allowance, etc.
HOW TO APPLY	Letter of application and resume to be sent to: Chairman, International Assembly of the True Jesus Church, 11236 Dale Street, Garden Grove, CA 92641, USA.

Application is to be endorsed by your local GA or Coordination Board or Church.

INTERVIEW/EXAM	To be arranged
CONTACT	Director, Department of Literary Ministry, IA Office Tel: (714) 539-1329 or Fax: (714) 539-9722

exhortations

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**Department of Literary Ministry
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11236 Dale Street
Garden Grove
CA 92641
United States of America**



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