

MANNA

ISSUE 58 | January–March 2009 | Sabbath



**Rise Without Compromise • Be Diligent to Enter into that Rest
Seek and You Shall Find**

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

Dear Reader,

If you take a step back and look at your life right now, what would you see?

Perhaps you see someone busy with homework and tests or worried about job security and paying off the mortgage. Or perhaps you see someone busy adjusting to a new life after getting married or having a baby. (Or you see someone reading Manna magazine.)

We're constantly making adjustments and trying to make the most of our lives. Yet we can always see the mercy of God and the blessings He has given to us. Sometimes we just have to look harder.

In this issue, you can read testimonies about the lessons that were learned after receiving God's grace and love. You will also find articles that remind us of the blessings of the Sabbath. We hope that you will be strengthened and encouraged after reading the articles.

THE EDITOR

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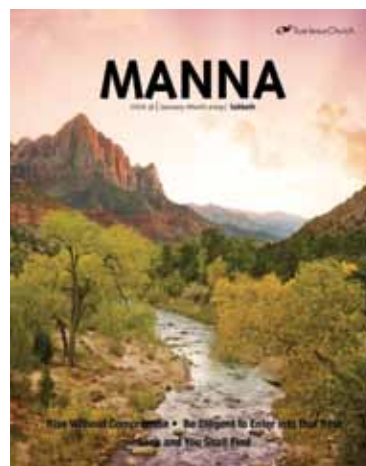
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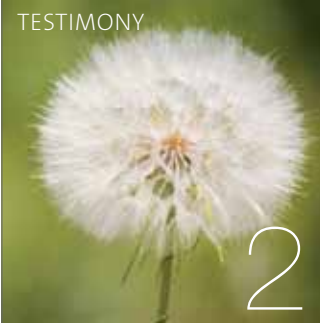


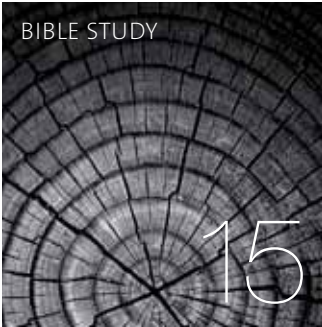
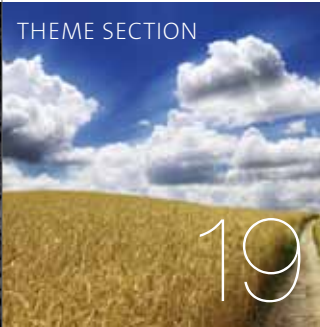

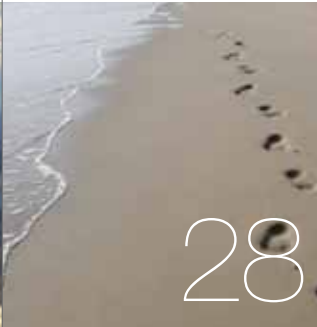

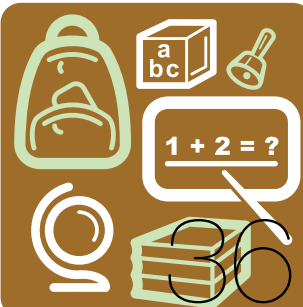
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Sufficient Grace

Paul Chen—Cerritos, California, USA

Ever since middle school, I have always enjoyed going to church and spending time in the chapel. I had a difficult time during my school years because academics were very competitive in Taiwan, and I wasn't a good student. But I always found peace and joy at church. I was able to build up my faith and relationship with God through the difficult times I experienced.

GOD'S WILL TO STUDY ABROAD

I started to prepare for the university transfer exams after I completed compulsory military service. My acquaintances couldn't believe I wanted to go to university because they knew how I had barely squeaked by to graduate from high school.

I took the exam, but I wasn't accepted by any of the schools I tested for. However, I wasn't discouraged. I just prayed to God and told Him that my purpose in going to college was to be able to serve Him better.

One day, I had a conversation with my English teacher from high school and he told me, "Don't worry if you can't get into a university here. You can just go to America for university." I laughed when he said this because he, of all people, knew how poor my English was.

But this former teacher told me, "Just stand up where you fall." This is easier said than done, but it encouraged me.

I went to church and I told God, "If it is Your will for me to go to America to study, please at least let me be accepted into one school here so that I can build up my confidence. When I am accepted, I won't finish my degree here but will transfer to study abroad. I will know that this is Your will if I just barely manage to get into a university."

I took the university transfer exam a second time and applied to seventeen universities. I was put on the waiting list at one of them. I prayed every day that someone who was accepted would decline so that I could move up the

waiting list and be accepted. And that is what happened.

I knew then that it was God's will for me to study abroad, and I started filling out the application for a student visa to the US. As I was doing this, I started to think, "If I can graduate from college here in Taiwan, why am I making more trouble for myself by trying to study abroad?"

During my first semester of college, I failed many of the classes I took, yet all of the procedures for studying abroad went very smoothly. This was particularly surprising because I had applied for permanent residence some years earlier, and applicants waiting to be approved for permanent residency didn't usually receive visas.

No True Jesus Church

I was granted a student visa to the US that year, and I prepared to move. But there was still the question of where I would attend university.

When my high school English teacher heard how I had been approved for a visa, he told me, "God is helping you." I felt that God encouraged me through this teacher. It was through his advice that I chose where to study.

I ended up at Wichita State University in Kansas, which was a big change from the climate in Taiwan, but I soon got used to the cold snowy winters and hot summers. What I could not get used to was the absence of a True Jesus Church there.

I had attended church regularly since I was a child, and I missed the fellowship and spiritual joy that comes with worshipping as part of a congregation. I tried to transfer to other universities that were near True Jesus Church locations, but I wasn't accepted by any of them. I felt that God wanted me to stay in Kansas.

Because there was no church there, I had to observe the Sabbath by myself. It was a little lonely, so every chance I got I would visit my brother in Chicago and go to church there. Later on, I discovered that Dallas Church was closer to Kansas than Chicago Church, so I started to go to church there whenever I had a holiday.

Graduating in 2002 was a miracle. With such poor English, it really was due to the grace and guidance of God that I was able to obtain my Master's degree. I was so happy after I received my diploma that I left before the graduation ceremony was over—I was finally able to move somewhere near church.

My dad and I drove immediately from my graduation ceremony to Dallas Church to attend a spiritual convocation.

THE ONLY WAY TO STAY

Now that I had obtained my degree, I wanted to start working and pay off my student loans. However, I hadn't made any plans beyond attending the spiritual convocation.

I suddenly recalled a testimony that I had heard from a pastor. A brother had been working in an area far away from a

I shed many tears of sorrow over my situation, but looking back I can see how God was with me during that time.

True Jesus Church and was laid off. So, he packed all of his belongings into a car and moved with his family to a place where there was a church. He didn't look for a job or arrange housing before moving, but he found a job and a place to stay a few days after he arrived.

I decided to do the same thing—I packed my car with my possessions and drove to Chicago with my parents. But I didn't find a job.

I would often pray in church, and I asked God to let me find a job before my work permit expired so that I could stay in the US. After several months, I finally found a job, and I felt that God had opened a road for me out of nowhere.

I thanked God every day for this job, but I also asked if He could give me a higher salary because my pay was extremely low at the time. I also prayed that if I couldn't get a higher salary I could at least obtain a work visa so that I would be able to stay in the US after my work permit expired.

I was called aside by my boss and a human resources representative soon after my probation period ended, and I thought, "Finally, God is opening a way for me and is going to answer my prayers."

But instead of offering me a pay raise or helping me with a work visa, they told me that my salary was too high and that they would be decreasing my pay by 25%. I felt a lot of pain and suffering after this because it seemed like God wasn't listening to me even though I prayed at least three hours a day.

Since I didn't have a work visa, the only way I could stay in the US was to go back to school. I applied to universities that

were near True Jesus Church locations, but I was accepted to only two PhD programs: one at the University of Idaho and the other at my alma mater, Wichita State University.

Neither school was near a True Jesus Church, but I chose Kansas between the two of them because it was closer to church than Idaho. I wasn't very excited about going back to school since I had already spent so much on my education and wanted to earn money, but I felt that I had no other choice.

I shed many tears of sorrow over my situation, but looking back I can see how God was with me during that time. Even though I encountered so many trials, I knew that God would continue to guide me since He had already guided me through so many difficult times.

BLIND IN MY RIGHT EYE

So, I went back to school for my doctorate. In 2006, a semester before I graduated, I was granted permanent residence. I was determined that I would leave Kansas, and I told my professor that I would not stay even if they offered me a teaching position. He thought I was joking because my department was ready to offer me an assistant professorship once I graduated, but I told him that I was sure I wanted to leave.

I moved to Phoenix immediately after I graduated, and the first thing I did was drive to church with my parents. I didn't have the keys to church, but just looking at it made me feel like I was free—I was no longer limited by my situation and could finally choose where I wanted to live. I found a job there, and even though I didn't really like the work I stayed and bought a house because it was near a church.

I finally had a job that allowed me to pay a mortgage as well as start to pay off my student loans. I was content. I worked the night shift at my full-time job, from 11 pm to 8 am, making sure that the computers were ready for the day

workers when they came in. I also worked part-time during the day on Monday, Wednesday, and Sunday.

One Saturday morning at work, I realized that I was blind in my right eye. It was 7:35 am—my right eye was open, but I couldn't see anything at all, just blackness. I was very scared and broke out into a cold sweat. But I thought back to the time when God preserved my left eye when I was in military training, and I was reassured that He would also protect my right eye.

During this time, I witnessed the great love that parents have for their children: my mom not only prayed for me every day for more than three to four hours but was prepared to sell our house in Taiwan in order to pay for my eye treatment.

I pretended that everything was fine and didn't tell anyone else about my problem. Even though being able to see out of only one eye caused me to feel out of balance, I kept going to work and driving.

I worried that my problem would be discovered when I had to renew my driver's license and that my license would be revoked. If I lost my license, then I would lose my job and stop earning money, and my life would be miserable.

I took time off work in December because my eyesight didn't improve. I continued to pray and ask God to heal me as soon as possible, but things stayed the same every day.

FULFILLING A PROMISE

I continued to stay home from work until early January. One Friday after evening service, I heard the announcement that the United States General Assembly (USGA) was hiring. I recalled how I had promised God that I would serve Him faithfully the rest of my life if He kept me alive during military service.

More importantly, I promised God in 2003 that if I was granted permanent residency I would serve Him and do whatever was needed in the church.

However, I didn't fulfill my promise right after I received my PhD because I wanted to gain work experience. I didn't plan when I would work for God but thought that it would be clear to me when the time came.

I heard that the position at the USGA had been open for a while, so I prayed to God and asked that if it was His will, to let me apply for the position and let my eye heal. I filled out the application for the position and mailed it on Monday. On Tuesday, I had a phone interview.

After the phone interview, I noticed that my eye started to get better—it wasn't

completely healed, but I could see colors and blurry objects. It was clear that God was answering my prayer and wanted me to serve Him, but it was difficult for me to give up my good job. I was hoping to fulfill my promise later on.

Since I had not received a job offer yet, I went back to work. My eye had gotten better and I was back earning money. I decided that if the USGA didn't contact me again regarding the job, I would take it as a sign that everything would go back to the way it was.

I was very happy to be back at work, and I told my colleagues that my eye had



improved. But after four hours of work on my first day back, my eye started to darken and I went home.

I thought that the darkness of the work environment at my night job was causing the eye problem, so I went back to my day job the following morning. But when I was there, I felt such extreme pressure on my right eye that I thought it was going to pop out of the socket. It was time to fulfill my promise to serve God.

I went home early and told my parents that I had to go work for the church. I had been given a Chinese article to translate to test my English proficiency when I applied for the USGA position, and I noticed that whenever I worked on it my eye would get better. So I wrote an email to the USGA executive secretary and explained that if I wasn't hired, I would go blind.

Proof from God

After submitting my translation, I was offered the job to work for the USGA in Southern California, and I quit my jobs in Phoenix in preparation for my move. I was supposed to start work on a Tuesday, but we had spiritual convocation at Phoenix Church until Sunday, so I decided that I would move on Monday.

On Sunday, the turn signal light on my car broke on the way to church. During prayer that day, I told God, "If you want me to move to Southern California, you have to help me so that my signal works when I drive there."

After the final prayer, when everyone was having lunch, I went to my car, said a silent prayer, and then said "Hallelujah" and tried the signal. Miraculously, it worked.

But then I thought, "Maybe it's only a coincidence." I asked God, "Is this a coincidence? If you really want me to move, let the light break again and then work again, and I will believe that it is your will for me to work at the USGA." Despite the sign from my healed eye, a part of me still hoped that I would be able to serve God full-time later on.

Since I began working for the church, I have experienced God's grace every day. He has never left my side or allowed me to suffer or be in need.

When I drove home, the turn signal light was broken again. After I parked the car, I tried the signal again, and it worked. I knew that it was God's will for me to work at the USGA.

I believed that if I went, God would arrange everything for me. He just wanted me to be strong and have courage. I drove to Southern California the next day and started work the day after.

Since I began working for the church, I have experienced God's grace every day. He has never left my side or allowed me to suffer or be in need.

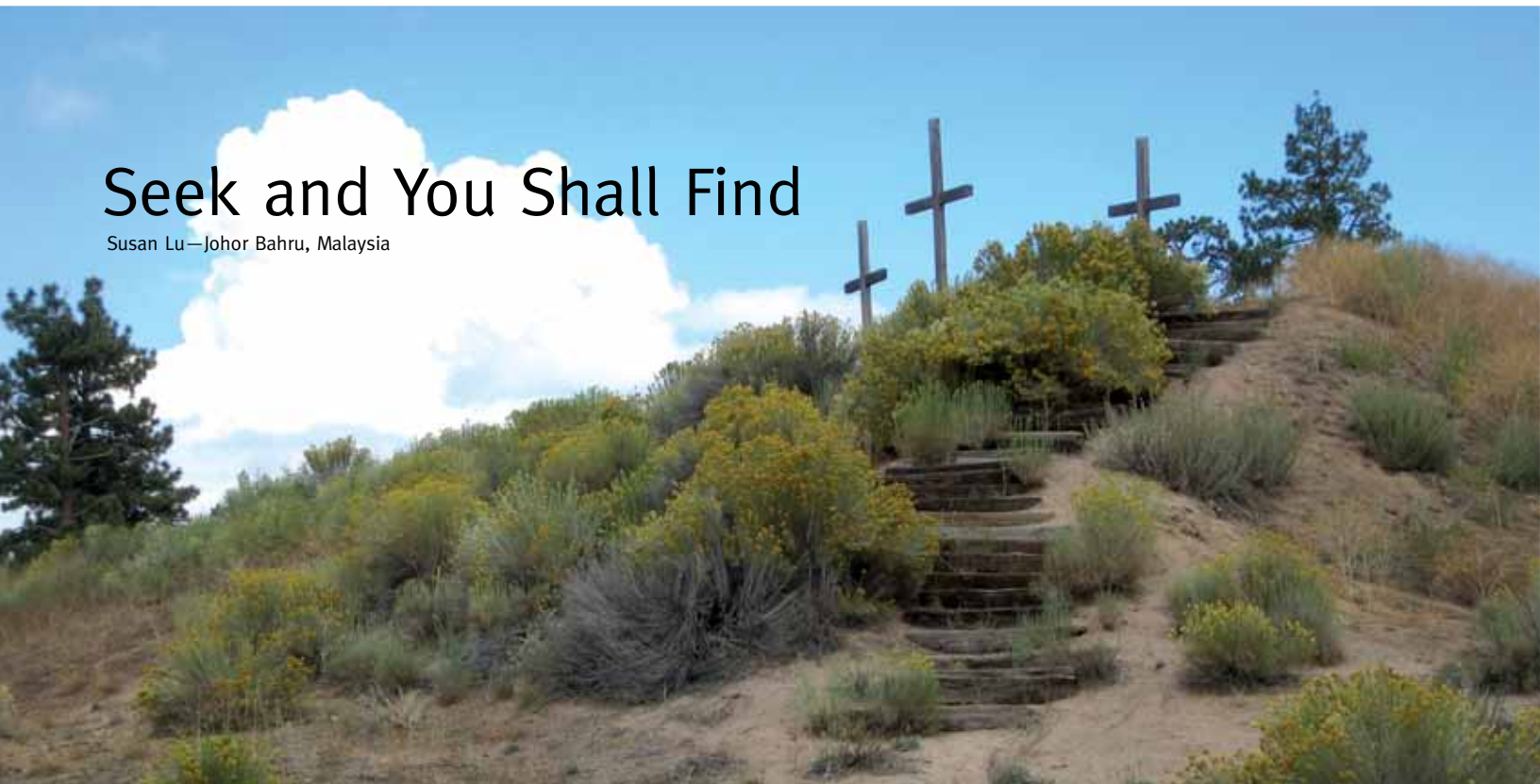
On my first day at work, my dad called and said, "Your tax refund came, and it is a large amount." The refund was the exact amount I needed to cover all of my expenses until I received my first paycheck from my new job.

Coming to study and work in the US has shown me how important it is to rely on God and be faithful to Him. I know that God hears our prayers and fulfills His promises, and I have seen how we must obey His will and fulfill our promises as well.

When I look back on my experiences with God, I can see how Jesus has always reassured me, "My grace is sufficient for you." ★

Seek and You Shall Find

Susan Lu—Johor Bahru, Malaysia



"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jer 29:11-13)

SCARED BUT INTERESTED

I was born into a staunchly Buddhist family. I did not like Christians in general as I felt they always criticized other religions, but I still had a few friends who were Christians. Two of them were from the True Jesus Church.

My first visit to True Jesus Church happened in 2000 when my friend, Alice, from secondary school invited me to an evangelistic meeting at True Jesus Church Elopura, Sandakan, Sabah. I attended the service together with a few of my friends. We were astonished and scared during the prayer session.

Although it was "scary," I was convinced that it was a true spirit because

Alice had received that spirit. She did not behave strangely or suspiciously. She could still give me logical advice and was a good friend with whom I could share everything. So, I decided to go again the next day. I invited another friend to go along because I wanted to see how the people prayed again. I had been scared, but I was also interested!

A few months later, Alice approached me, saying that, given our closeness, she would feel very bad if she owned something precious but did not share it with me. The precious thing that she had in mind was the gospel. Then, she started to preach to me. I asked her many questions, especially about why True Jesus Church was so different from other churches.

After that conversation, with my curiosity satisfied, I did not bring up the topic of religion again. I was still a practicing Buddhist, sure that the deities I had been worshipping truly existed. However, Alice had gotten me to think that perhaps Jesus

Christ existed, too. But, in 2001, we soon went to separate institutions for tertiary studies and rarely met.

WORSHIPPING A DIFFERENT GOD

One reason my family relied so much on Buddhist gods was because of the great financial pressures we faced. In 1994, my father was cheated by his business partner and had to declare bankruptcy.

With my father jobless for almost eight years, my parents looked to these Buddhist gods for deliverance. During this time, my aunt introduced a new god, one worshipped by Japanese Buddhists, to my family and me.

I did not know the origin of the god or anything else about him. I only knew how to pray to him by reading a text given by my aunt. According to her, we just had to tell the god all of the things that we wished to have, and he would give them to us.

As a result, this Japanese god was added to the Buddhist pantheon that we

had at home. My parents worshipped the newest addition whole-heartedly because they hoped that the god could resolve all of their financial difficulties. But after a year of prayers to him, their situation did not improve, so they stopped worshipping him.

On the other hand, things went smoothly for me. In 2001, I obtained good grades in the *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (Malaysian Higher School Certificate), an examination taken by students to gain admission to Malaysia's public universities. On top of that, I even won a scholarship to further my studies at the Science University of Malaysia.

I thus relied on the Japanese god more and more, trusting that he could fulfill my every wish. I never missed saying my prayers to him every night before I went to bed.

I kept on worshipping this god in university. When I found out that one of my roommates had family problems, I introduced the god to her so that she could receive his blessings, too. She told me that she had learned about this god when she had a vacation job in Singapore.

Her friend's uncle had prayed earnestly to this god and received everything that he asked for. But one day his son died.

He approached the leader of this religion and asked why such a terrible thing had happened to him. The leader then explained that it was only fair: since the god had given him so many good things, he would definitely take something back from him in exchange.

I was astonished and started to have doubts about this god. I shared my unease with my aunt, but she convinced me

there was nothing to worry about and told me to just continue praying to him.

Around that time, my grandma was diagnosed with colon cancer and had to undergo surgery. I loved my grandma very much, and I was very worried that the Japanese god would take her life away in return for the many good things I had received. I confided my worries to my younger sister, who was also praying faithfully to him, and both of us decided to stop praying to the god.

COMING BACK TO JESUS

After ceasing my worship around the end of 2002, I was at a loss. I did not know which god to turn to.

One day, while enjoying a rare chat with Alice, I told her the whole story. She then told me that the true God is generous. If He gives us something, He won't take it back from us. As the Creator, everything belongs to Him. He has no need to be so calculating with man.

She invited me to pray to Jesus Christ. I brushed this invitation off—although I had been to church with her, I thought I should remain faithful to my Buddhist gods. But her statement of a generous God gave me much food for thought.

After some time, I came to a decision. This Japanese god was frightening. He could help me—but at a price. Buddha, whom my family had traditionally worshipped, did not seem powerful enough to help me.

On the other hand, Alice seemed to have received such abundant blessings from her God. Perhaps this God would also bless me if I prayed to Him. I decided there was no harm in trying.

So I asked my other friend from True Jesus Church how to pray to Jesus. From that day, I prayed only to Him. I prayed every night before I went to bed, and I started to feel His presence. That semester, I scored the highest marks in class and was rewarded with RM500 cash. That was the first time I said, "Thank God."

I started to seek the truth. I emailed Alice and asked her questions in order to learn more about Christianity. Not only did she answer my questions, she gave me a Bible for my birthday. It was just the right present at the right time. All this while, I had wanted to own one but never took the step of going to buy it for myself.

I received the Bible around the time of our examination period. I would read it whenever I felt bored with the reading materials for my exams. Of the sixty-six books in the Bible, 1 Corinthians really attracted me. There were so many valuable teachings in there that I had never learned in my original religion! I even invited my friends to read with me. They were all shocked that I would rather read the Bible than lecture notes during the peak exam season. They thought I had taken leave of my senses!

After one year of studying the Bible on my own, I told Alice that I wanted to go to church. She helped me contact a member at the church nearest my university.

And thus, it was a brother from Butterworth Church who came to drive me to church and a sister who sent me back to university every Saturday. I felt embarrassed because my hostel was very far away from church, but Alice told me that they were more than happy to give me a ride.

Gradually, I had the feeling that I should go to church every Saturday. Sometimes, even if no one was free to drive me to church, I would take a bus there by myself. As I learned more about the Holy Spirit, I became scared about death because I knew that without the Holy Spirit, I could not go to heaven. I started to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit.

I also had discussions with other Christian friends about their beliefs because I was so curious to know why there were so many different denominations. Through all the debates, I concluded that only the True Jesus Church practices everything according to the Bible.

From that day, I prayed only to God. I prayed every night before I went to bed, and I started to feel His presence.

I went to a Methodist church once with my friend. I asked her about the Holy Spirit, but she told me she did not know what it was all about. I was very surprised as she had definitely read the Bible more than I had.

I wanted to show her the Bible passages concerning the Holy Spirit, but I did not know where they were. Miraculously, when I opened the Bible, it was exactly at Acts chapter 2. I was so happy! After asking her to read it, I introduced the True Jesus Church to her.

God poured down His precious Holy Spirit on me. It was the most wonderful day. I will never forget how moved I was—I cried non-stop tears of joy because I was receiving something very precious that I had been longing for.

REPENTANCE, BELIEF, BAPTISM

One morning, I woke up and cried non-stop. In my dream, I had seen a flashback of all the sins that I had committed since I was young. There were so many bad things I had done, especially to my family. I felt ashamed and sorry.

I needed to speak to someone but did not dare share my dream and thoughts with my roommate; I was worried that she would laugh at me. So I quickly switched on the computer and wrote an email to Alice, describing exactly what I had seen in my dream.

I expected her to scold me for being such a bad person. But surprisingly, all she said was that she was so happy to have received my email. She went on to say she was more than willing to explain sin to me.

For the first time, I learned about sin and who could wash them away. All this while, I had thought that baptism was just a formal ceremony to proclaim that

you had been accepted as a member in a particular church. The True Jesus Church's definition of baptism and its effect was different from other churches. But it was entirely in line with the Bible.

By God's will, after graduating from university I got a job in Johor Bahru where Alice had also landed a job. This was fantastic as that meant she could continue to guide me in the truth. I went to church almost every Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, and I learned about the basic beliefs and doctrines.

In four years of seeking the truth, I was moved by many sermons, as I felt that God was talking to me through them. I loved going to church. As a Buddhist, my focus had been on praying and waiting for blessings from the deities. But I knew that Christians should not receive the Lord's grace in vain. Instead, one must labor for the Lord. But if I was not baptized, I could not participate in the holy work.

With so many natural disasters happening around that time, I started to worry that if I died in one of them, I could not go to heaven. I wanted to get baptized as soon as possible. My parents objected at first, but I kept on praying and asking God to open the way. Thank God, they didn't prevent me from receiving baptism, and now they even take me to church if I do not have transportation.

Six months and twenty-two days from the day I got baptized, God poured down His precious Holy Spirit on me. It was the most wonderful day. I will never forget how moved I was—I cried non-stop tears of joy because I was receiving something very precious that I had been longing for. I was able to serve the Lord in the church and repay His love.

Most importantly, I thank God for His mercy. Through these events, I was even more assured that the Lord Jesus Christ keeps His promises and listens to my prayers. May all the glory be to God.★



Remembering God's Grace and Glory

Christine Chen—Baldwin Park, California, USA

In November 2007 a cold paralyzed half of my six-year-old daughter's face and took away her smile and ability to blink. Through this incident, we learned that events such as these actions are not so easily managed—they need the grace of God.

A SERIOUS CONDITION

Katie caught a cold during the first few days of November, but she got over it soon and seemed to be back to her regular self. When we had guests over on the following Sunday, I was preoccupied with the preparations for dinner and didn't really have time to pay special attention to my children, who were running around the house with their friends.

However, my husband and I both noticed that Katie looked a little different from usual. We told her, "Don't smile with only half of your face, that's a bad habit." She told us that she wasn't doing it on purpose, but we didn't press her for

an explanation. It was severe enough that our guests noticed and mentioned that Katie looked different.

It was rather late by the time everyone went home, so the kids quickly took showers and got ready for bed. When Katie was washing her hair she cried out and said that her eye hurt. My husband reminded her to close her eyes when rinsing her hair, but she said that she couldn't. We were all so tired that we didn't spend time trying to figure out what was wrong.

The next day was a holiday for the kids, and I started to become more concerned when Katie was getting ready to practice violin before lunch. I took a closer look at her and asked her to close her eyes. She could only close her left eye. I told her to try harder to close both of them, and she told me, "I'm trying as hard as I can!"

I realized then that her situation was really serious. My husband was at work so I didn't want to bother him, but I

wasn't sure what I should do. I wondered why this was happening to my daughter. Even though I knew that God would take care of Katie, I still felt uneasy.

All of a sudden, I remembered that a brother had just moved to the area from the East coast, and he was a medical doctor. Although I didn't know what he specialized in, I felt that it was better to take Katie to see him because he was a member of our church.

We went to see him that afternoon, and he told us that Katie had facial nerve paralysis, possibly caused by a viral infection from her cold the week before. He explained that the condition (also known as Bell's palsy) wasn't usually seen in children and that it would heal on its own. However, it was possible that it could take up to a year before she recovered—there was no way to predict.

I was worried that the paralysis would never be healed, but I had a peaceful heart when I brought Katie home because

the brother didn't give me any reason to believe that this would be the case with Katie.

INCREASED WORRY

Because Katie couldn't close her right eye all the way, it got dry very quickly, and she needed to use eye drops every hour. When I brought her to school the next morning, I told the secretary that she needed to have someone help her administer the drops. The secretary said that any medication given at the school required a doctor's signature.

I explained that they were only artificial teardrops and not medicine, but the secretary told me that without a doctor's signature I would have to come every hour and give Katie the drops myself.

I wasn't able to come by every hour, so I decided to see if Katie's teacher would be willing to help us. I was a little intimidated by the teacher because of her stern appearance, but I told her, "Katie can't close her right eye so she needs to have eye drops put in very often."

Unexpectedly, she responded immediately, saying, "I know, this is Bell's palsy.

Give me the eye drops, I will help her." She even comforted me by explaining that she had a cousin with this condition and that I shouldn't worry so much. I really thank God for this teacher's understanding and help so that the day passed by peacefully and without worries.

I expected Katie to begin recovering soon, but her condition got worse instead of better. Even though the brother said that she would heal naturally, and I knew that God would take care of her, I had little faith.

I worried a lot about Katie, and I did some research online on Bell's palsy. It would have been better not to do this—the more I read, the more unsettled I became.

Advice from friends combined with the information I found online increased my worry and fear. I heard and read things like "early detection brings early cure," "you should try acupuncture," "you should try corticosteroids," and "if you're not careful and she doesn't get treated soon, her face could be paralyzed for life." I was very worried after hearing

"paralyzed for life," and I started to lose my faith and trust in God.

REMINDED OF GOD'S GRACE AND GLORY

Although my faith was low and my mood fluctuated with Katie's condition, I gradually came to see how God was with us throughout this time.

It was difficult to endure seeing my child suffer. Because she couldn't close her right eye, I had to put a bandage over it to prevent her cornea from drying out during sleep. Her right eyelid was completely paralyzed, her right arm and fingers were hard and swollen, and even the slightest touch to her cheek caused a lot of pain.

She had to use her hand to open her mouth when she ate, and she couldn't speak clearly. Her face looked distorted because the skin and muscles on the right side of her face were pulled back very tightly.

But thank God, Katie never complained about any discomfort or inconvenience from Bell's palsy. Even when her classmates repeatedly asked why she only smiled with one side of her face, she was never embarrassed or offended by them.

Since Katie had always been active, we were used to her bumping into things and getting small cuts and bruises. However, one day, she ran into something with more force and started crying from the pain. We were worried because the sound of her crying was strangely muffled, and, while the left side of her face was contorted with pain, the right side didn't move at all.

I knew that God was watching over her, but when I saw her like this—a bubbly, lively child now in pain and physically altered—I could no longer wait patiently for her to recover. I felt that every day passed by slowly and that it would be impossible to reach the two-week mark when patients normally started to heal.

Nevertheless, we believed that God had a good reason for allowing this to happen



Katie smiling while still affected by Bell's palsy.

I thank God for listening to our prayers. It is through His love and mercy that we can thank and praise Him. We have experienced that smiling and blinking are a grace from God and that His creation is marvelous and unfathomable.

to Katie, so the only things we could do were to pray and trust in God.

I prayed to God, "I know now that smiling and blinking are difficult if we do not have your permission. You have watched over details as insignificant as these! We never knew how to cherish these things. Please have mercy on our weaknesses."

I thank God for listening to our prayers. It is through His love and mercy that we can thank and praise Him. We have experienced that smiling and blinking are a grace from God and that His creation is marvelous and unfathomable.

Little by little, Katie started to recover movement on the right side of her face. By the third week, she was able to move her eyelid more and more, and after one month she was almost completely healed. Now, she is back to normal. Thank God for His mercy; He did not let us worry long over her condition. Every time Katie smiles and blinks now, we are reminded of His grace and glory.

Through this experience, we have been able to reflect on the blessings and love that God has given to us. We realized that we easily overlook His grace.

As Psalm 104:10-14 tells us,

*He sends the springs into the valleys;
They flow among the hills.
They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
By them the birds of the heavens have their*

*home;
They sing among the branches.
He waters the hills from His upper
chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your
works.
He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the service of man,
That he may bring forth food from the
earth.*

God is the one who created the heavens and the earth. If animals live without worries, what about us, the children of God? Will He not protect and watch over us?

We have once again experienced the wonders of God's creation. May He have mercy on all of us and strengthen our faith.★



How to Accompany Hymns



Praising God through music is an integral component of worshipping Him. When King David was young, he understood the power of praising God and used it to appease King Saul whenever evil spirits disturbed him. Recognizing the importance of musical worship, King David later instructed the leaders of the Levites “to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy” for the house of God (1 Chr 15:16).

As accompanists for the church, we need to take this holy work to heart and pray for God’s abidance and empowerment so that our playing can glorify Him and touch the hearts of men.

Objectives

- Lead the congregation to sing in unison and harmony to praise God
- Create a worshipful atmosphere through the precious gift of music from God

Preparation Beforehand

- Pray for the guidance and abidance of the Lord.
- Contact the hymn leader and/or sermon speaker for the hymn numbers.
- Find out if the service is intended for a special occasion, in which case there may be a special theme for the hymns.
- Consult the hymn leader and/or sermon speaker in advance and take note of the following for each hymn:
 - Number of verses – if the number of verses differs between the English and Chinese hymnals, know how many verses are to be sung.
 - Tempo – confirm the speed of each hymn
 - Fermata – confirm how long they should be held

Preparation On the Hour

- As accompanists are visible to the congregation, dress and groom yourself accordingly to serve God and represent the church.
- Arrive at least 5 minutes before the hymn-singing session.
- Let the hymn leader know when you are ready to play, and discuss any necessary details.

While Playing

- During the hymn-singing session:
 - Watch the hymn leader for the tempo before each hymn.
 - When there is a fermata, look for the cue from the hymn leader on the next beat.

Additional Pointers

- Be familiar with hymn number 1-530. Take time to practice all the hymns so that they become familiar. Master tempo, rhythm, and dynamics as you practice each hymn.
- For the prelude to each hymn, play the last complete phrase of the hymn (unless it is an unfamiliar hymn, in which case play the first complete phrase).
- Have a brief pause between each verse and after any fermata for the congregation to catch a breath.
- Slow down at the very end of each hymn to indicate ending.
- Include an appropriate level of elaboration (but not so excessive that it draws attention).
- Most importantly, bring out the mood of each hymn for the praise of God.

Questions and Answers



What does “resurrection” mean? How did Jesus resurrect?

While the exact nature of resurrection remains a mystery to us, we know very simply that Jesus’ body “got up” and was transformed into a spiritual body; thus, He was able to appear to the believers even though the doors to where they were gathered were locked.

Jesus was not, however, a ghost (i.e. a spirit without a body) because He could be touched, and He ate with them. He was not merely “revived” as Lazarus was, for while Lazarus walked out of the tomb with his grave clothes, Jesus’ grave linens lay in the tomb; Lazarus would suffer physical death again, whereas Jesus was clothed in an immortal body.

Jesus’ resurrection is not the same as reincarnation, either, because His body was immortal, even as it still bore the scars and resemblance to His old self.

Finally, Jesus’ resurrection was not assumption—He was not taken up directly into heaven as Enoch and Elijah were. Rather, He came from the dead, having suffered the torments of Hades for our sins, back to earth to reinforce the message of His resurrection. As Paul explained, “The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:42-44).

How do we know Jesus’ resurrection really happened? Does it even matter?

Paul wrote that “if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor 15:14). Thus, it is crucial that we understand and believe in the truth of the resurrection.

Jesus’ death is confirmed. The Roman soldiers saw that He had died, and it is impossible He could have survived the final stab in His side. His body was buried behind a stone and guarded by Roman soldiers, and yet on the third day the tomb was discovered empty. Either Jesus resurrected or His body was stolen. But who, other than the disciples, would want to steal the body? Those who were against Jesus could have proven that the resurrection was a hoax simply by trotting out His body from the tomb. They did not, because they could not.

Jesus’ resurrection is a fact established by Paul’s own testimony, the witness of the other apostles, as well as the witness of over 500 other believers. It is incomprehensible that they would suffer and die for a lie that they had created. They had neither the means to pull the fraud nor the motive to promote it, given the immense hostility they faced.

We know He resurrected and lives today through tangible evidence: 1) we receive the Holy Spirit, just as the apostles did in Acts, and 2) because He answers our prayers, even in miraculous ways.

Facts, Stats and **Syntax**



Polls and Statistics

Top 10 Countries with the Highest Number of Christian Denominations

1. USA 635
2. India 263
3. Britain 253
4. Japan 179
5. South Africa 178
6. Philippines 176
7. Canada 145
- Nigeria 145
9. China 141
10. Brazil 130
- France 130

Taken from <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/about/denominationlist.asp>

Word Study

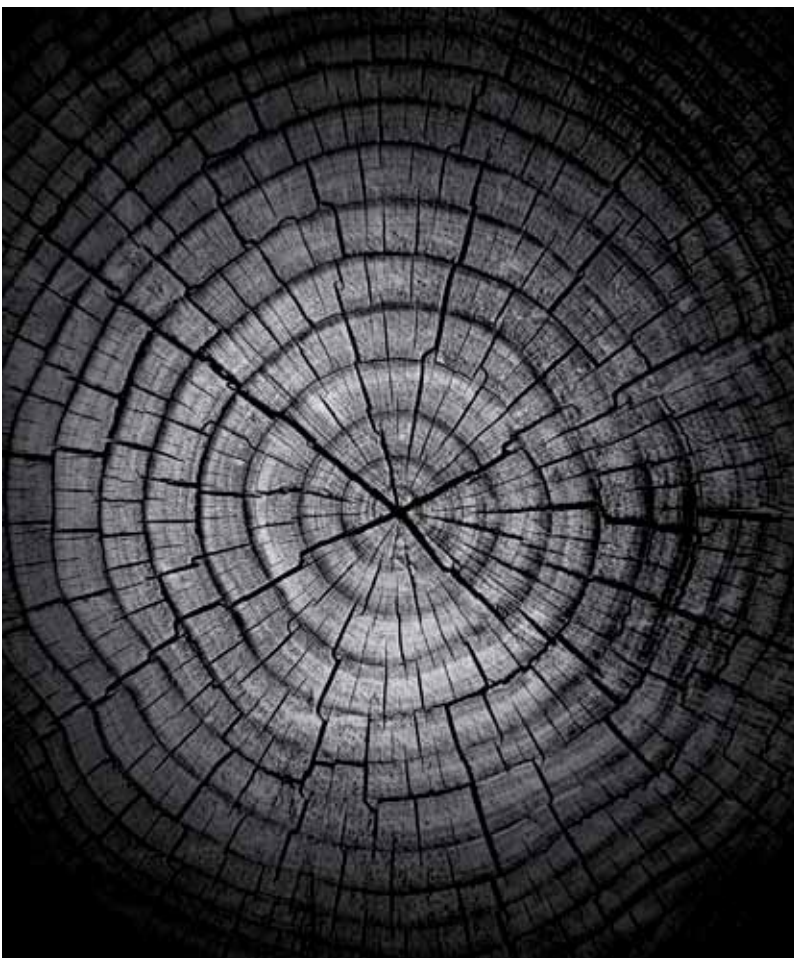
The longest name in the Bible is Maher-shalal-hash-baz, meaning “speed the spoil, hasten the prey” (Isa 8:1). Isaiah was commanded to give this symbolic name to his son (Isa 8:3, 4).

The shortest name in the Bible is Og, meaning “long-necked” (Num 32:33). Og was the king of Bashan and was defeated by the Israelites under Joshua’s leadership (Josh 12:1, 4).

Did You Know?

How was food prepared in the days of the Bible?

Grains were sometimes eaten uncooked (Lev 23:14; Lk 6:1), fish was broiled (Lk 24:42; Jn 21:9), vegetables were stewed (Gen 25:34; 2 Kgs 4:38, 39), and meats roasted (Ex 12:8).



The Legacy of David

Hain-Lee Hsueh—Hillsborough, New Jersey, USA

Have you ever had a dream to serve God, having high hopes or expectations for your servitude? Have you thought about the wondrous differences you can make in God's ministry? Have you ever experienced rejection or slight bitterness when it seemed like God didn't want your service despite your apparently good intentions?

DAVID'S DREAM

Just like any of us might have, David had an admirable vision for God, a glorious ambition—he wanted to build a temple for God.

Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of

cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains." (2 Sam 7:1, 2)

God gave David prosperity and rest from his enemies. He had the resources, the manpower, and the authority to do what he wanted for God. In his eagerness and excitement he went and told the prophet Nathan his plan. Nathan gave an encouraging answer, an almost definite affirmation of David's aspiration: "'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you'" (2 Sam 7:3).

David probably spent the rest of the day drawing up designs, making rough measurements, and gathering an inventory of materials. We can only imagine how he might have felt—possibly a combination of glad, noble, and honored to build the house of God.

Later, however, God told David, "'You

shall not build a house for my Name'" (1 Chr 28:3). David made an apparently gracious offer of noble servitude, but God said, "No."

If we were David we may have simply given up our plans right then and there, but is that what David did? Unfazed, David continued to toil with all his might in making preparations for the temple to pass onto his son Solomon. He offered his own gold, silver, bronze, and precious stones in front of the assembly of Israel:

"Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection

on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver: three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses; the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen.” (1 Chr 29:2-5, emphasis added)

Wait a minute. How did David do that? God rejected his offer to construct the temple, effectively shattering his personal ambition, and gave the noble undertaking to someone else with practically no experience. Why wasn't David disappointed? What compelled him to generously offer all his resources?

What was David really offering to God?

DAVID'S LAST WORDS

Shortly before his death, David delegated the task of building the temple to his son Solomon. Taking a look at David's final words of encouragement to Solomon allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the answers to these questions:

*“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a **loyal heart and with a willing mind**; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it.” (1 Chr 28:9, 10, emphasis added)*

A loyal heart and willing mind—let's try to think about what these words mean concretely. We may have a general and abstract idea of what the heart and mind are, but what are they exactly?

In the Bible, the Hebrew word for “heart” (*leb*) means not just our inner man or feelings, but also resolution, determination, and inclination. The

Hebrew word for “mind” (*nephesh*) refers to our own self, our soul, desire, and passion. Today the word “heart” is often used to encompass all of these attributes.

Now let's look at “loyal” and “willing.” “Loyal” is translated from the Hebrew word for “perfect” (*shalem*), meaning complete, whole, full, and in some cases peaceful.

“Willing” is particularly interesting because 1 Chronicles 28:9 is the only verse in the Bible where the Hebrew word (*chaphets*) is translated that way. The word itself actually means, and in other verses is translated as, desiring, delighting in, or having pleasure in.

Now let's put those words together again. *Loyal heart*—a complete resolution. *Willing mind*—a desiring soul. Take a few moments to let the definitions and concepts sink in.

David encouraged Solomon to serve God with a perfect, complete, and peaceful resolution, with every inclination of his heart. He counseled Solomon not to be willing in the sense of the word today, but to *desire* and *delight* in serving God. Why?

Because before God, the heart and mind are transparent. God can see every distinct purpose in the mind and distinguish between every inclination of the heart. Finally, David exhorted Solomon simply to “be strong” in building the temple of God, to carry out the task with urgency and firm resolve.

So what does David's encouragement to Solomon have to do with what David was giving to God? Looking in 1 Chronicles chapter 29, we see that after David and

the people of Israel dedicated their gold and silver, they were joyful because they had offered *willingly* and with a *loyal heart* (1 Chr 29:9). As a result, David offered a prayer of praise, acknowledging God's greatness, providence, and glory.

And then David made the following plea—read it carefully:

*“O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own. I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, **keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You**. And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision.” (1 Chr 29:16-19, emphasis added)*

On the surface, we see that David passed his wealth of material resources to Solomon for him to use to build the temple (an extensive list is in 1 Chronicles 28:11-19). What we often fail to see is that David really tried to pass something else to his son and to the rest of Israel, something David knew was of much greater importance—his own heart.

David had a perfect and willing heart. Building the temple of God would have been glorifying to God and for David himself, but every inclination in his mind and heart was for God alone. Because of that, he could accept God's refusal with a peaceful resolution to make preparations rather than with confused discouragement.

He knew that the complete and delightful heart behind the construction of the temple was what was precious in God's eyes, because everything he and

David had a perfect and willing heart. Building the temple of God would have been glorifying to God and for David himself, but every inclination in his mind and heart was for God alone.

God doesn't look at what we've done for Him, He searches and understands our hearts and intent of thought. However glorious and spectacular the physical result may be is secondary; having a truly perfect and willing heart is primary.

the people could physically offer came from and already belonged to God.

He knew that when the temple was complete, God wasn't going to make an inspection of it to see that all the right measurements were made, all the correct materials were used, and all the rooms were properly furnished. He was going to make an investigation of the heart.

That's why David prayed that Solomon and the Israelites would forever keep that perfect and willing heart fixed on God—it was the only thing they could really give and what God ultimately looked at.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

In our service today we often get caught up with the physical results. We build new chapels and think that their beauty and grandeur are pleasing in the eyes of God.

We weigh our devotion to God by the things we've done: the donations we've given, the religious education classes we've taught, the sermons we've delivered, the meals we've cooked, the floors we've cleaned, and the articles we've written.

We may even look at other people's work and think that we could do a better job. If this is how we judge our servitude, then we only see the physical things that David contributed. We see only the gold and silver and not the pure and selfless heart behind them.

Everything we can physically give—our money, our possessions, our talents and abilities—is from God and belongs to God, yet too often we look at the outward things we have done for church and take pride in them, even if just a little.

If David were living with us today, he would rebuke us. He would tell us that

we had missed the point, and that God doesn't look at what we've done for Him, He searches and understands our hearts and intent of thought. However glorious and spectacular the physical result may be is secondary; having a truly *perfect* and *willing* heart is primary.

Upon examining the core of David's servitude, the words that God spoke to Samuel before he anointed David now resound with a deeper significance:

"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Sam 16:7)

So let us ask ourselves today—what is the motivation behind our service to God? Do we serve God with our own notions of what's right, automatically assuming that whatever we do with good intentions is acceptable in front of God? Do we serve God to publicly display our devotion and love?

Are we more concerned with the quality of our physical service or with the quality of our hearts? Is our servitude unconsciously conditional, or are we content and at peace with serving in any way, regardless of the task? Is our service to God just a part of our life that we do when we can, or is it *the* goal and joy of our life that we pursue eagerly and with urgent resolve?

What are we really offering to God? ★

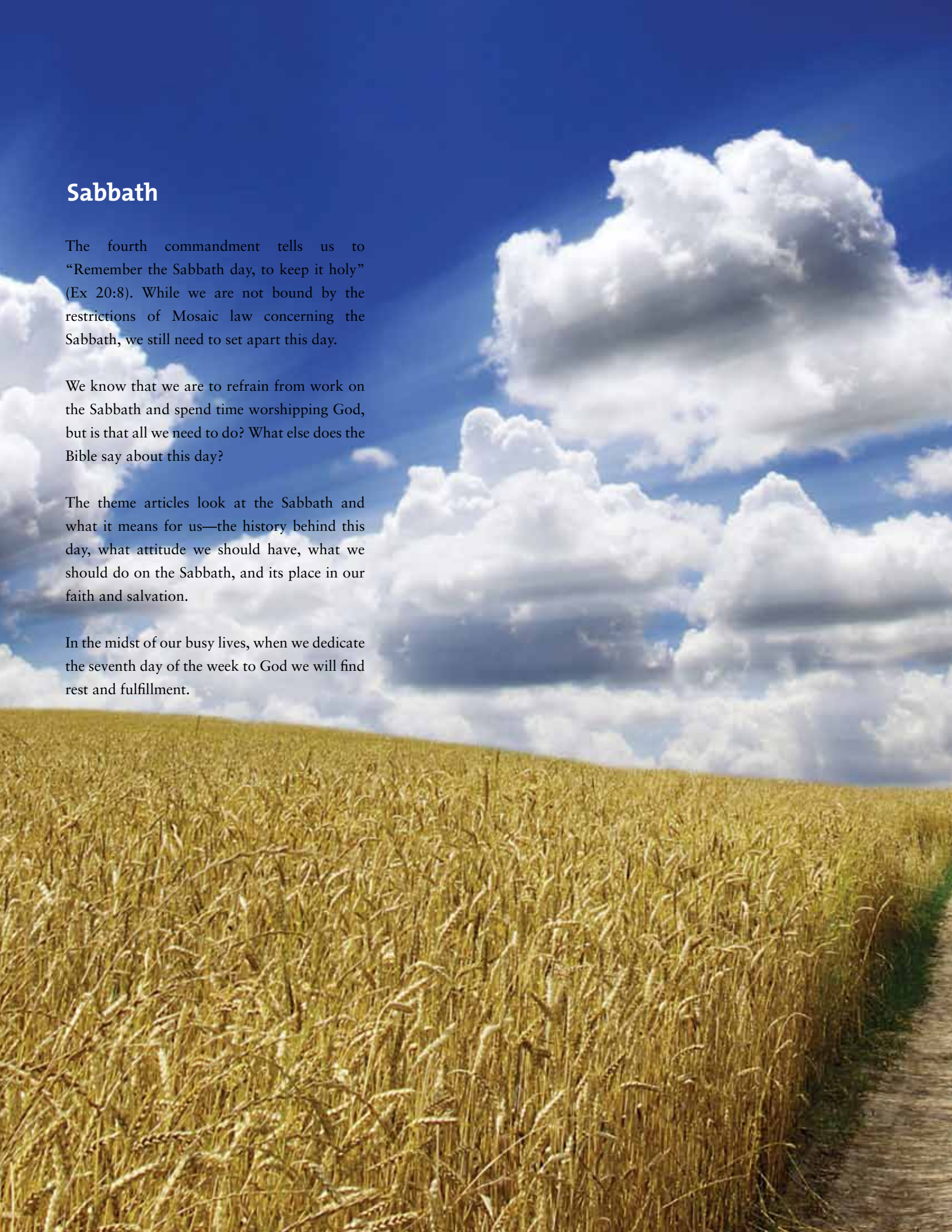
Sabbath

The fourth commandment tells us to “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8). While we are not bound by the restrictions of Mosaic law concerning the Sabbath, we still need to set apart this day.

We know that we are to refrain from work on the Sabbath and spend time worshipping God, but is that all we need to do? What else does the Bible say about this day?

The theme articles look at the Sabbath and what it means for us—the history behind this day, what attitude we should have, what we should do on the Sabbath, and its place in our faith and salvation.

In the midst of our busy lives, when we dedicate the seventh day of the week to God we will find rest and fulfillment.





Made for Man: Understanding the Grace Behind the Weekly Sabbath

Peter Shee—Singapore

The weekly Sabbath is quite a misunderstood subject that is attended by diverse and conflicting opinions and practices.

Some reckon that the Sabbath is of the law and not binding on Christians, who now observe instead “the Lord’s Day” to commemorate Christ’s resurrection. Others see the fourth commandment as binding but that the Christian Sabbath is now on Sunday.

A seemingly less legalistic approach is to rest one day in seven, so any day can be a self-proclaimed Sabbath according to one’s convenience.

Similar to this contingent Sabbath concept is to coincide the weekly worship with the official rest-day of the geo-political locality—so it is Sunday for most

of the world, Friday for Arab or Muslim countries, and Saturday by default for those living in Israel.

How should a Christian who is serious about the word of God, seeking to please Him in all things, respond to all this?

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ statement, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,”¹ is often quoted by proponents of a lax attitude towards the Sabbath, but few bother to explain the phrase “made for man.”

Besides noting that man is not to be burdened and fettered by rabbinic excesses with regard to the Sabbath, do we know what God intended “for man” by setting aside a special day each week for him?

LAW AND GRACE

Jesus' corrective statement on the Sabbath is two-fold: first, "the Sabbath was made for man" and, second, "not man for the Sabbath." The positive part comes first, affirming the beneficiary of the Sabbath, followed by a negation of legalistic restrictions.

Unfortunately, faulty hermeneutics has underscored the second over the first; hence, we often hear "Don't let others judge you concerning the Sabbath," "It doesn't matter which day is Sabbath," and "Sabbath is not for Christians, we are free from the bondage of the law."

This is really missing the point—that God, out of His gracious providence, made the Sabbath right after the sixth day of creation so that man could be blessed and refreshed.

By now it should be clear that Jesus' remark does not apply only to New Testament Christians. Since the very beginning, the Sabbath was instituted for the benefit of mankind, from the first humans to the present elect, as long as we have a relationship with God.

To the covenant people under the law, the Sabbath was linked to their liberation from Egyptian bondage:

"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." (Deut 5:15)

The weekly rest provided a welcome respite from daily toil and realigned the faithful community in fellowship with their Creator—a reversal of Egypt and reminiscent of Eden.

The Sabbath is therefore of grace, not of law. In fact, grace underlies all of God's interactions with men, and we have to recognize this before we can make any sense out of the otherwise tedious statutes, rituals, and ordinances of Mosaic law.

The Sabbath is therefore of grace, not of law. In fact, grace underlies all of God's interactions with men, and we have to recognize this before we can make any sense out of the otherwise tedious statutes, rituals, and ordinances of Mosaic law.

Jesus was not injecting something new into the Sabbath by His response to the Jewish leaders but was merely teasing out unwarranted elements added to the Torah that worked against the Sabbath grace God intended for men of all time.

Paul explained that after Christ had fulfilled the requirements of the law by His death, Mosaic law would no longer be applicable. But we have to distinguish grace from law—from the veil of transitory Torah requirements.

Just as we distinguish between the grace of forgiveness and animal sacrifices, we distinguish the grace of Sabbath rest from its related legal requirements.

Under the new covenant, while the sin offering is done away with, remission of sins remains; likewise, while animal offerings and Mosaic prohibitions associated with the Sabbath are abolished, the Sabbath rest remains as a grace for us the redeemed, the new creation.

Unfortunately, many have done away with the Sabbath itself in the name of Christ, throwing away the baby with the bath water.

COVENANT OF GRACE

There are those who are wont to differentiate between "Sabbath of law" and "Sabbath of grace." This would be analogous to saying there is atonement of law and atonement of grace, but we know atonement is by grace, not law.

To be biblically sound, we should say that the Sabbath is a grace enjoyed even

by those under the law, just as atonement is through Christ alone but available to those under the law.²

The difference is, Sabbath observed under the law involves sacrifices and Mosaic legalities, which have been abolished through the cross (Col 2:14). What remains is grace, the basis of our covenantal relationship with God.

What does the Sabbath have to do with grace? According to the Torah, the weekly Sabbath is a double celebration of creation³ and deliverance.⁴ In Christ, we are a new creation,⁵ redeemed from the bondage of sin,⁶ so the Sabbath is elevated to a higher, spiritual plane—a celebration of our salvation, our new birth.

Why is it necessary to crystallize salvation or grace into a weekly observance? Isn't a weekly rest superfluous, since in Jesus we have already received the promised rest?

The rest in Jesus is the inward, unbroken serenity amidst life's tempest. Though the invitation is to all "who labor and are heavy laden," Jesus says to "Take My yoke upon you," a reminder of the continuance of earthly toil; with His easy yoke, you will find rest "for your souls."⁷

Nevertheless, the grace of God extends to our fragile frame burdened by the reality of labor, sickness, and pain, so He ordains one day each week during which we put aside our physical work for worship and reflection.

Just like the physical emblems of the Lord's table, the weekly Sabbath stems from the love of He who understands our need for an outward physical experience of His inward spiritual grace.

Not until we shed our fleshly robe will we fully receive the promised rest (Rev 14:13); therefore, while "a promise remains of entering His rest" (Heb 4:1), the weekly Sabbath remains an anticipation and foretaste of that blessed state (Heb 4:9, 11).

Sabbath observance is also a covenantal expression not only for the nation of Israel but for all nations. Here is an interesting passage from the prophet Isaiah:

Thus says the LORD:

*"Keep justice, and do righteousness,
For My salvation is about to come,
And My righteousness to be revealed.
Blessed is the man who does this,
And the son of man who lays hold on it;
Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,
And keeps his hand from doing any evil."
Do not let the son of the foreigner
Who has joined himself to the LORD
Speak, saying,
"The LORD has utterly separated me from
His people";
Nor let the eunuch say,
"Here I am, a dry tree."
For thus says the LORD:
"To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths,
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold fast My covenant,
Even to them I will give in My house
And within My walls a place and a name
Better than that of sons and daughters
I will give them an everlasting name
That shall not be cut off.
"Also the sons of the foreigner
Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve
Him,
And to love the name of the LORD, to be
His servants—
Everyone who keeps from defiling the
Sabbath,
And holds fast My covenant—
Even them I will bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in My house of
prayer...
For My house shall be called a house of
prayer for all nations." (Isa 56:1-7)*

The messianic ring of this passage is obvious: "My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed," anticipating an influx of Gentiles into the congregation of the LORD, until God's house becomes "a house of prayer for all nations."

The unmistakable message is that during this new covenantal period, the Sabbath will be a visible expression of the covenantal relationship: "Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant."

Here the Sabbath is not "an Old Testament thing," but it is for the covenant people of the Messiah, the New Testament Christians in Christ who hail from all nations.

Notice also that the Sabbath is linked to moral behavior and not ceremonial conduct as evidenced by verse six ("who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil"). So while the ceremonial law is abolished in Christ, the Sabbath, as part of the moral code, remains.

The apostle John caught a glimpse of the eschatological church, and there was the ark of the covenant, the wooden chest housing the moral code, including the Sabbath commandment, written by the very finger of God (Rev 11:19).⁸

It is comforting to know that covering the ark is the mercy seat, the throne of grace, now sprinkled with the blood of the new covenant (Heb 12:24), toward which we can freely approach and receive mercy in time of need (Heb 4:16).

SIGN OF SANCTIFICATION

Besides being an emblem of a covenantal relationship, the Sabbath is also a sign of sanctification.

The weekly Sabbath is mentioned in Ezekiel's description of worship during the messianic age (Ezek 46:1, 4, 12). Earlier on, the LORD had told him that the Sabbath was a sign between God and the people He sanctified (Ezek 20:12, 20). As a day sanctified from creation, the Sabbath has a sanctifying effect on those who keep it holy.



As Christians, we conduct ourselves uprightly in our daily lives, choosing good and eschewing evil. Sabbath-keeping sharpens our senses in that our choices are not merely between good and evil⁹ but between sacred and secular.

Keeping the Sabbath holy is to free it from mundane work; we order our lives each week, planning ahead to complete our mundane tasks in six days:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” (Ex 20:8, 9)

Thus, Sabbath is consecrated, separated for a holy purpose, without any distracting chore from the household or workplace occupying its sacred hours.

Observing the sacred rest might appear to be restrictive and burdensome. Herein lies a great irony—rest becomes a burden. While those living below the poverty line or residing in oppressive societies yearn for elusive rest, many in affluent countries voluntarily enslave themselves to their work.

Unless we have our vocations in essential services like hospitals, telecommunications, or public transportation, working on the Sabbath is a bad choice.

The majority of us do not really need more than six days to make a decent living or to keep our houses habitable. Even personal errands like banking and marketing can be easily handled with modern conveniences like the internet and supermarkets or through efficient use of our lunchtimes during weekdays.

Of course, we commit no sacrilege if we have tried our best but cannot avoid borrowing Sabbath hours to do some of these things—we are under grace, not law—but all too often, we abuse this liberty. We rob ourselves of a twenty-four-hour Sabbath, either because we overtax ourselves by aspiring too much, by desiring too much, or simply because we want to do things our way.

So it boils down to attitude—whether we love God enough to do things *His* way, and whether we enjoy spending time with Him alone, like how we dedicate special moments for the ones we love. If so, we will find God’s commandments not at all burdensome (1 Jn 5:3), and we ultimately stand to gain.

*“If you...call the Sabbath a delight,
The holy day of the LORD honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways...
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isa 58:13, 14)*

CONCLUSION: FROM CREATION TO ETERNITY

The weekly Sabbath was instituted during creation week (Gen 2:2, 3), intended for us to remember our Creator (Ex 20:8-11) throughout our temporal existence, as an enjoyment as much as an enjoinder, until we are ushered into the grand Sabbath of eternal rest. There, we rest from our labors and our works follow us (Rev 14:13); and within the walls of our Father’s house, we have a place and a name, an everlasting name that shall not be cut off (Isa 56:5). ★

1. Mk 2:27

2. Heb 9:15

3. Ex 20:11

4. Deut 5:15

5. 2 Cor 5:17

6. Jn 8:34-36; Rom 6:14

7. Mt 11:28-30

8. In apocalyptic language, the heavenly temple refers to the church; see also Heb 12:22, 23

9. See Heb 5:14



Be Diligent to Enter into that Rest

Jason Hsu—Baldwin Park, California, USA

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. (Heb 4:11)

Two distinct terms are used in church to describe the Sabbath: (1) Sabbath under grace and (2) Sabbath under law. Although neither term is found in the Bible, the concepts behind them are explained.

“Sabbath under grace” and “Sabbath under law” both underscore the continuing importance of Sabbath observance. At the same time, these terms also raise difficult questions for Sabbath observance. Should Christians today observe the Sabbath under the regulations set forth in the Mosaic law, under grace, or not at all?

For many Christians, the Sabbath is now defunct—a mere shadow of the

substance found in Christ. Others believe the Sabbath was only given to the Jews. Although God did not specifically command His people to observe the Sabbath until Moses, God had already established the Sabbath long before that time. As part of God’s creation, we are all, in some sense, called to enter into His rest.

From the Decalogue, we understand that God gave the Sabbath to His covenant people to remember both His creation and His redemption.¹

As Creator, God called what did not exist into existence.² As Redeemer, God called a nation of slaves out of Egypt to be His own special treasure and people.³ The Sabbath, therefore, serves as an important sign between God and His people.⁴

He who sanctifies the Sabbath is also He who sanctifies His people.

THE SABBATH IS STILL RELEVANT TODAY

Today, the church is the sanctified people of God.⁵ While the church does not observe the Sabbath legalistically, Sabbath under grace is not unimportant or defunct in the New Testament. As the New Testament author of Hebrews encourages us, we must be diligent to enter into that rest signified by the Sabbath.⁶

Joshua led God’s people into the promised land, but he could not fully realize God’s promise of rest for His people. So the author of Hebrews speaks of yet another rest that remains for God’s people.⁷

As Christians, we understand our rest is found in Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, the author of our salvation.⁸

Although we are under the promise of a better covenant in Christ, we do not forsake the principle of observing the Sabbath. If we are to lay hold of God's promise of eternal rest in the world to come, we must grasp the Sabbath's significance for our present lives. And so the exhortation is given: "[B]e diligent to enter that rest" while we still can, while it is still called "today."⁹

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SABBATH

History is an important teacher. Our past holds our victories, our mistakes, our experiences. By studying history, we can gain invaluable insights into the present and guidance for the future.

Human history is also Sabbath history, for Sabbath history spans the entire course of human history from the creation until the present. And it will continue until God brings all things to completion.

History is also the story of God's divine work in the world. For, by the grace of God, human history is the story of God's redemption.

Since creation, the Sabbath has been a constant and weekly reality. The reality of the Sabbath is not dependent upon whether or not we are aware, observe, or understand its significance. Just as our failure to recognize God's existence has no direct bearing on Him, our ignorance of the Sabbath has no power to negate its reality, holiness, or significance.

Whether or not we realize that we are all a part of God's creation and history, we must all come face to face with the end of our labor—the reality of the Sabbath. The question each of us should grapple with is whether or not we will be diligent to enter into the promise of rest contained within the Sabbath. What legacy will we leave behind for the next generation?

At Creation

Sabbath history begins in Genesis with the origin of man. The Sabbath was instituted by God after He finished His work of creation.¹⁰ But it was God, not man, who kept the Sabbath first. Therefore, God is not only the source of creation, He is also the source of the promise of rest.

Man, of course, needs rest; God does not. God neither faints nor is weary. Yet, on the seventh day, God ceased from all His labor and rested. A seemingly innocent act of God can teach us a great deal about God's thoughts toward His creation: God is very mindful of man.¹¹

The truth is, it was God, not man, who was first to remember on the Sabbath. If God did not remember His creation, in particular man, the supreme object of His love, there would be no Sabbath.

Yet, after God ceased from His work of creation, there is a long period of silence from Adam onward about the Sabbath and its observance.

The Promise of Rest in Noah

The promise of rest is what all creation and human history are moving towards. Through Noah, God once again imparted this important promise to humankind.

During Noah's time, God was determined to destroy the whole world with a flood; all creation would be destroyed. Noah, however, found favor in God's eyes, and God made a covenant with him.

After the flood, God promised Noah that, while the earth remains, His providential care for His creation would never cease.¹² This is not the picture of divine rest but divine care. God's



unceasing care over His creation simply confirms His unceasing love toward His creation.¹³

Noah's story, however, touches upon Sabbath, law, and grace on another level, for Noah's story is one of God's justice and mercy. God exercises His judgment over a wicked generation and, through water, destroys all flesh. At the same time, Noah's story is a story about God's grace, for in Noah we find the promise of redemption and comfort.¹⁴

Noah's story not only testifies to the fallen nature of God's creation, it also testifies to a God who desires to redeem it. Noah then becomes an archetype of mankind's hope for comfort and rest, the hope that one day we might all be free from the futility and corruption that binds all of creation.¹⁵ In Noah's salvation through the flood, we see a wonderful prefiguration of how we, too, may be saved through water—through the grace of water baptism.¹⁶

Let no one misunderstand: from the beginning, the Sabbath has always been a sign of the completion of God's work, not our work, in creation and history. But by remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy, God simply wants us to remember His work.

Therefore, Noah's story is significant to Sabbath history because it embodies God's promise of rest for His people.

The Time of Moses

After Noah, the promise of entering God's rest reappears with Moses. Through Moses, the teachings of the Sabbath for God's people once again come into prominence.

God called His people out of Egypt to be a special treasure and holy nation. He led Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land that He had promised to them.

The Bible says, "Out of Egypt, I called My son" (Hos 11:1).¹⁷ God led Israel in the wilderness, allowing His people to hunger and feeding them with manna;

He did all of this so that they would know man does not live by bread alone.¹⁸

When God provided manna in the wilderness, He commanded the Israelites to gather twice the amount of manna on the sixth day so that they could rest on the Sabbath. God was testing His people to see if they truly trusted in Him and would obey His commandment.

True faith meant God's people would find their rest in Him and keep the Sabbath day holy. Unfortunately, God's people often failed, disobeying God's command to keep the Sabbath day holy.¹⁹

God provided for all of His people's needs in the wilderness. Yet, God's blessings to His people also demanded their obedience.²⁰ The Bible says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb 4:7).

To truly rest and trust in the Lord alone is not as easy as it may sound. The reason why many people today cannot rest on the Sabbath is precisely for this reason: they cannot find their rest in the Lord. True faith, however, not only entails simple belief but also obedience. And obedience implicates law.

Sabbath Under Law

In the wilderness, God revealed very specific instructions or commands to His people concerning the Sabbath and how to observe it. "Sabbath under law" now comes into full view during Moses' time: the command to keep the Sabbath was memorialized in the Ten Commandments, written with God's own finger on stone tablets delivered to Moses on Mt Sinai.²¹

The command to keep the Sabbath day holy was given upon penalty of death.²² So for the Talmudic teachers of the law, the Sabbath was equal in importance to all the precepts of the Torah combined.

Being of such monumental importance, Sabbath observance developed under very strict regulations through the teachers of the law. This was to build a fence around the Sabbath and protect its sanctity among the people.

The reason why many people today cannot rest on the Sabbath is precisely for this reason: they cannot find their rest in the Lord.

Jewish law sets forth thirty-nine principle labors forbidden on the Sabbath, with subcategories underneath. Many of these labors were inferred from the work necessary to complete the construction of the tabernacle.

In Numbers 15:32-36, a man was put to death for "gathering sticks" on the Sabbath. Some may find capital punishment unnecessarily severe, but we must understand the seriousness of the penalty for breaking the Sabbath (under the law) in light of God's absolute holiness and His command for His people to be holy.²³

To understand Sabbath, we must understand holiness. In the Ten Commandments, the word "holy" appears only in connection with "Sabbath." When God's people defiled the Sabbath, they not only profaned the Sabbath, they profaned God's holy name and character.²⁴

The Sabbath, then, ultimately concerns God's people clearly understanding God's holiness and their own holiness as well. How important is this understanding? From God's command to observe the Sabbath, we know God considered it a matter of life and death.

So for God's people today, to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy is vitally significant. Although it is unlikely we would ever risk losing our physical life for breaking the Sabbath today, we cannot afford to take Sabbath observance lightly. We often notice that those who drift away from God fail to honor the Sabbath.

The failure to honor the Sabbath puts our spiritual life at risk. It confirms we no longer remember Him who created and redeemed us, and we do not have a habit

God did not establish the Sabbath to bring man to his knees by the sheer weight of it but to express His love and remembrance of man. The Sabbath was made for man.

of doing so. Isn't this a matter of life and death?

NEED FOR A SABBATH UNDER GRACE

Under the law, we know our flesh and human weaknesses more often than not prevail over God's commandments. All too often, we become the breakers and not the keepers of God's law.

The apostle Paul said,

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. (Rom 7:9, 10)

A command such as, "Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day," if interpreted literally, would be too severe a burden.²⁵

Therefore, we find in the history, development, and interpretation of God's command to observe the Sabbath that additional regulations had to be developed to ease the burden of keeping the Sabbath under law.

Regulations like the "Sabbath limit," the distance a Jew was allowed to travel on the Sabbath, were not developed to add additional burdens on the Sabbath but to ease them.

From the need to ease Sabbath restrictions under the law, we begin to see the limitations of a strict interpretation of the Sabbath under law. And the failure of God's people to keep the Sabbath under law exposes the weakness of the law.

RESTING IN CHRIST'S WORK

Prophet Habakkuk complained that the law was powerless until he realized, "The

just shall live by faith."²⁶ Under the law, we live by what we have done.²⁷ But for man to truly cease from his labor and find rest, he must find rest in Christ's work. Even though Sabbath under law was given by God, the promise of rest, found in the Sabbath, could not be fulfilled apart from Christ.²⁸

The apostle Paul wrote, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4). "End of the law" here does not mean God's law is now null and void. Rather, it more likely refers to completion, meaning Christ completes the law for righteousness to those who have faith in Him. He completes the Sabbaths.²⁹

The Bible says,

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law... (Gal 4:4, 5)

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh. (Rom 8:3)

The weakness of the law, then, lies not in the law itself, but in us.

THE OVERRIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE LAW

The principles laid out in God's law are not weak, unimportant, or profane. The Bible clearly teaches us that the law is holy and the commandment holy, just, and good.³⁰ Therefore, it's foolish for Christians to denigrate or speak evil of the law given by God.³¹

The Bible says, "Love never fails" (1 Cor 13:8). Against love there is no law.³²

And all the law may be summarized in one word: "love."³³ Therefore, love is the overriding principle of the law that cannot be abolished.

But it is in this small word, love, that we find perhaps the most important distinction between Sabbath under grace and Sabbath under law. The Sabbath loses its original significance and meaning if only taken as a bare collection of regulations to bind men down. God did not establish the Sabbath to bring man to his knees by the sheer weight of it but to express His love and remembrance of man. The Sabbath was made for man.³⁴

This was the central dispute between Jesus and the teachers of the law over the Sabbath, particularly over what was lawful to do on the Sabbath.³⁵ God's commandments, not to mention the Sabbath itself, were not given to burden men down with regulations.³⁶ Therefore, Jesus told us, "[I]t is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Mt 12:12), and this included works of healing, compassion, and love.

Sabbath observance, even under the Mosaic law, if kept within the love of God and man, still serves the Sabbath's original purpose. For the Sabbath was a reminder to God's people of how much God loved both His creation and His people. In this sense, there's no need to rigidly demarcate Sabbath "under law" and "under grace." God's Sabbath is simply the Sabbath.

For many Jews, Sabbath under law is the same as Sabbath under grace. To them, the Sabbath is simply a wonderful opportunity, given by God, to enjoy His blessings. At that point, the Sabbath no longer becomes a burden of the law but a means of God's grace.

If we properly understand the Sabbath and its significance to our lives, we will understand how deeply God cares for humankind and His creation. God places such a high value upon it. If we understood this, we would not set aside the Sabbath so easily. We would not forget to remember and value what God

Himself remembered. We would not fail to sanctify and bless what God Himself sanctified and blessed.

It is true that, in Christ, we are not saved by the works of the law.³⁷ But this does not mean we can therefore live a lawless life without care. The council in Jerusalem determined gentile converts were no longer bound to observe the ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic law, except for a few specified enumerations.³⁸ However, the principle of Sabbath observance, under God's grace, still remains relevant even for today.

Just as all other principles of God's Ten Commandments remain relevant today, the principle of the Sabbath is still relevant.

The law truly contained many shadows of the good things to come in Christ; these shadows included various animal sacrifices, dietary laws, festivals, new moons, and sabbaths prescribed under the Mosaic law.³⁹ The fact that Christ came to fulfill the law, however, does not mean Christ came to abolish the Sabbath or even the principles of the law. God Himself established Sabbath from the beginning and wrote down the command with His own finger.

We must not misinterpret Christ's work of completing the law. If anything, after Christ came, He established and confirmed the truth and principle of the Sabbath for God's people.

Jesus Himself said He is Lord of the Sabbath.⁴⁰ Jesus is not Lord over something non-existent; Jesus will not rule over things of no value.

It is vital to understand, then, that the law is not voided by faith.⁴¹ Jesus

never taught His disciples to forsake the principles of God's law.⁴² Jesus never abolished the principle of the Sabbath, and He never taught His disciples to do so.⁴³ Jesus' own disciples continued to observe the principle of the Sabbath, and Jesus Himself anticipated Sabbath observance by His followers.⁴⁴ Even until the very end, when all flesh will worship the Lord, the Sabbath still remains.⁴⁵

Today, we must understand that, far from being irrelevant or abolished, the Sabbath is confirmed under the new covenant. Through Christ, God's promise of rest for His people is fulfilled. This promise is signified in the Sabbath, and this is something we should not carelessly abandon.

Instead, we must be all the more diligent to enter into that weekly Sabbath rest. When we do so, we testify that we understand we are a holy and sanctified people of God. We witness that we hear His voice and our hearts are not hardened. We make known we are those who diligently seek to enter into the promise of eternal rest.

May the Lord continue to guide each of us from one Sabbath to another, till all flesh comes to worship the Lord, till we reach the end of our journey. Until then, let us be diligent to enter that rest, that we may receive the promise of Him who loved us from the beginning. Amen. ★

Through Christ, God's promise of rest for His people is fulfilled. This promise is signified in the Sabbath, and this is something we should not carelessly abandon.

1. Ex 20:8; Deut 5:12
2. Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3
3. Ex 19:4-6
4. Ex 31:13, 17; Ezek 20:12, 20
5. 1 Pet 2:9, 10
6. Heb 4:4, 10
7. Heb 4:8, 9
8. Mt 11:28, 12:8; Heb 5:9, 12:2
9. Heb 3:7, 13-15, 4:7, 11
10. Gen 2:1-3
11. Ps 8:4, 103:14
12. Gen 8:22
13. Cf. Jn 3:16, 5:17
14. Gen 5:29
15. Rom 8:20-22
16. Gen 5:29; 1 Pet 3:20, 21
17. Mt 2:15
18. Deut 8:3
19. Cf. Ex 16:4, 5, 22-28; Neh 13:17, 18
20. Deut 28:1, 2, 9, 13, 15; Isa 58:13, 14
21. Ex 31:13-18
22. See Ex 35:1-3. Although the penalty set forth is capital punishment, which was indeed carried out (Num 15:32-36), the interpretation of Jewish law took into account "intentionality" and mitigated the penalty accordingly (cf. Num 15:27-31). The death penalty was only given in cases of presumptuous violations. Yet, even during Jesus' time, this was still apparently being enforced (Jn 5:18).
23. Lev 19:2
24. Ezek 20:13, 14, 20-22, 36:20-23
25. See Ex 16:29
26. Hab 1:4; 2:4
27. Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29; Ezek 20:11, 13, 21; Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12
28. Cf. Rom 3:21-22
29. Cf. Mt 28:1, at the end or close of sabbaths.
30. Rom 7:12
31. Jas 2:12, 4:11
32. Gal 5:22, 23
33. Gal 5:13-15
34. Mk 2:27
35. Mt 12:1-14; Mk 2:23-3:6; Lk 6:1-11, 13:10-17
36. Cf. Mt 23:4; Lk 11:46
37. Acts 15:11; Rom 3:20
38. Acts 15:28, 29
39. Heb 8:5, 10:11; Col 2:16, 17
40. Mt 12:8; Mk 2:28; Lk 6:5
41. Rom 3:31
42. Mt 23:2-3
43. Passages such as Romans 14:5, 6 and Galatians 4:10 don't confirm Christ abolished the Sabbath; however, they do contain important teachings about how observing holy and sacred days, fulfilled in Christ, must not become ritualistic "shows" apart from Christ.
44. Lk 23:56; Mt 24:20; Acts 13:14, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4
45. Isa 66:22, 23



Refreshing the Body and Mind on the Sabbath

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Modern human beings lead hectic lives and endure heavy pressure from work. If we use weekends and holidays to exercise or to participate in relaxing activities, we can boost our metabolism and eliminate stress. Such activities can also promote a healthy lifestyle and decrease the chance of disease.

However, rest only removes fatigue from our body—it will not result in the cleansing of our mind and soul. The Sabbath has broader implications than merely rest. Other than the reprieve given to our body, the Sabbath also refreshes our mind and soul.

The Sabbath is associated with God. Only when we have an intimate relationship with God can we allow our lives to enjoy rest. The Sabbath requires our return to God's bosom. But what does

this have to do with Sabbath days? We will examine this question according to the Bible.

WHY DID GOD ESTABLISH THE SABBATH?

Jesus said,

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (Mk 2:27, 28)

Evidently, the Sabbath was instituted for the benefit of mankind.

To Allow Man to Remember that God Is the Creator

In six days God created heaven, earth, sea, and all the living creatures within them.

The work of creation was complete and He rested from His work on the seventh day. Therefore, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.¹

But man is forgetful. As time passes, we fail to remember that God is the Creator. The Lord established the Sabbath day as everlasting evidence to mankind that God is the Creator.² If we can observe every Sabbath in remembrance of His awesome creation, then we will stay away from idolatry and avoid trouble.

When the Israelites left Egypt, Moses commanded the people to double the amount of manna that they harvested on Fridays so that they could reserve portions of it for meals on the Sabbath. Only under such conditions would the manna not spoil and attract worms.

They were not supposed to gather manna on the Sabbath because they would not find any. Nevertheless, some people tried to gather manna on Sabbath days—but they were unsuccessful.³

God made the Sabbath one of the Ten Commandments so that the Israelites would observe this day for generations to come.⁴ Anyone who violated the Sabbath and did work on that day would be put to death,⁵ but the people still refused to treat the Sabbath as sacred.⁶

Through Jeremiah, God issued warnings and said,

"But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."
(Jer 17:27)

Unfortunately, the Israelites were still unwilling to listen, which led to the Babylonian captivity.⁷ We should heed this warning and observe the Sabbath to honor our Lord the Creator.

To Allow Man to Remember God's Saving Grace

Because human beings easily forget God's salvation, the Lord instructed the Israelites to hold holy convocations on the Sabbath.⁸ In doing so, they could remember that they had been enslaved in Egypt and that it was God who used His mighty hand and outstretched arm to lead them out of Egypt.⁹

In New Testament times, the chosen people also held services on the Sabbath to honor the amazing grace of the Lord Jesus who shed His blood to redeem us.

As human beings, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Even though the wages of sin is death, we are freely justified because of God's grace and salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ.

As it says in Romans 3:25, God set forth Jesus

as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

We need to always remember God's grace, and we need to make His deeds known to future generations. If we do not constantly remember God's grace, His deeds will be quickly blotted out of our memories because we are forgetful creatures. Therefore, we need to make a determination to observe the Sabbath in remembrance of His saving grace.

Moreover, we need to instruct the next generation to honor the Sabbath so that our faith can be passed on and God's grace always remembered.

We need to instruct the next generation to honor the Sabbath so that our faith can be passed on and God's grace always remembered.

To Allow Man to Enjoy Rest in Body and Mind

The Bible says,

*The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary. (Isa 40:28)*

God does not need rest; therefore, the Sabbath was instituted for man so that we can enjoy rest both physically and mentally. We are made of flesh and often become weary.

We also have many issues to worry about: our children, our parents' health, the relationships between in-laws, and our family's financial situation. These can impose a great deal of pressure on us and prevent us from finding peace. Jesus proclaimed,

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mt 11:28-30)

If our body and mind are to enjoy rest, we need to first hand all of our difficulties to God. We do not do any work on the Sabbath. Such actions represent our faith toward God and acknowledge that He has control over everything. This reminds us that the world is controlled by God and not by men.

A problem might continue to persist even when we are willing to trust and rely on God. But because of our reliance on God, strength can come from within us to overcome difficulties.

Second, we need to be obedient to God. Jesus told us that we need to take His yoke and learn from Him, and then we will find rest.

We can learn obedience from Jesus' example—He entrusted Himself to God. When He was verbally abused He did not respond, and when He was persecuted He did not retaliate. He obeyed

wholeheartedly to the point of death, even death on the cross.

The Lord Jesus' complete obedience is a wonderful example for us.¹⁰

To Allow Man to Hope for the Sabbath in Heaven

In the Old Testament, God promised the Israelites that they would enjoy peace.¹¹ Further, in the New Testament, the Lord assured those who labor and are heavy laden that they will receive rest.¹²

However, due to the skepticism and defiance of man, this promise never came to fruition; we are not able to enjoy a truly heavenly existence on earth.¹³

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. (Heb 4:8-10)

There is no resting place in this world. If we can observe the Sabbath, however, the Lord Jesus will carry our heavy burden so that we may taste the sweetness of the heavenly Sabbath. Therefore, if we hope for the second coming, we will be able to enter the heavenly kingdom to enjoy eternal rest.

THE IMPACT OF THE SABBATH ON MODERN LIVES

An entrepreneur in the church was once asked to speak to a youth fellowship. He answered, "My schedule is completely booked for the next six months, and I cannot make any changes." It seems that a prevailing idea today is that the busier one appears to be, the more important one is.

Though the advances in technology are supposed to make our lives easier, they actually seem to have increased the pace of our work as well as the number of our responsibilities. For instance, the advent of cell phones and fax machines forces people to take care of work-related issues at home.

Overloading ourselves with work often results in exhaustion and a bad temper that make us difficult individuals. Furthermore, because of long hours, job-related stress, and irregular schedules, more and more deaths caused by overwork are starting to occur.

As we immerse ourselves in work, especially when we become successful, it is easy for us to become pompous and self-centered. We believe that this enterprise or this world requires our existence and that without our contribution they will become bankrupt or stop functioning.

In reality, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. If we can stop participating in secular work on the Sabbath, we will realize that the world continues on its way because it is maintained by God's hands, not ours.

Human beings are composed of flesh, and we require physical nourishment to fulfill our needs. But a major part of us is our soul, which requires spiritual food for satisfaction. We are often accomplished in our career and abundant in material possessions. Nonetheless, our soul is parched and malnourished because we are deficient in spiritual sustenance.

On the Sabbath, we do not need to prove our worth through our career. Instead, we can return to God through services, prayers, and communion with Him. As our prayers deepen and we

allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, we will be able to taste the sweetness of spiritual satisfaction, which is the heavenly beauty that we can experience on earth.

WHAT TO DO ON THE SABBATH

The term "Sabbath" came from the phonetic translation of the Hebrew word *sabbat*, which is unclear in its origin. Phonetic translation of the corresponding verb is *sabat*, which can be defined as to terminate, to discontinue, or to rest. The word also implies setting apart a certain period of time as holy. God blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.¹⁴

A holy day is a sanctified and special day, which should be different from other days. This day belongs to God, and we ought to live out this day according to His instructions. We should allow our body to rest and our spirit to revitalize. Moreover, instead of focusing on worldly pleasure, we need to live out this day in accordance with biblical teachings.

With Respect to Careers

The Sabbath is a holy day and meant to be kept sacred. Therefore, we should not participate in any type of work.¹⁵ Even harvesting crops should cease on the Sabbath.¹⁶ If we can be mindful of our steps on the Sabbath, stay away from work-related activities, and refrain from mindless chatter, we will obtain God's blessings.¹⁷

The Israelites disobeyed the rules of Sabbath and were thus cursed by God to captivity. Many years after returning to Israel, some people took part in commercial activities on the Sabbath. Prophet Nehemiah rebuked the residents of the land:

"What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath." (Neh 13:17, 18)

This day belongs to God, and we ought to live out this day according to His instructions. We should allow our body to rest and our spirit to revitalize. Instead of focusing on worldly pleasure, we need to live out this day in accordance with biblical teachings.



Consequently, he proclaimed an edict that, as soon as the gates of Jerusalem began to cast shadows before the Sabbath began, the gates would be closed and locked until the end of the Sabbath day. This was to prevent the Israelites from violating the Sabbath again.¹⁸

In this hectic industrialized society, we are preoccupied with our jobs. Even after we come home, our mind is still occupied with work-related concerns. We are enslaved by our duties.

However, on the Sabbath, we should suspend all of our business activities and let go of everything that we have become so engrossed with during the week. We should focus on our communion with God and pursue an abundant spirit.

With Respect to Faith

Sabbath days are to be set apart as the holy days on which we can worship God.

In the Old Testament, God commanded Moses to do no work on the Sabbath but conduct holy convocations¹⁹ and make offerings.²⁰ In the New Testament, Jesus entered synagogues on the Sabbath and read the Bible.²¹ Paul and Barnabas also went to synagogues on the Sabbath.

Entire towns would gather to listen to the words of God.²² Today, we should also turn away our foot on the Sabbath, attend church services, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy days of the Lord honorable. In doing so, God will bestow upon us blessings and cause us to ride on the high hills of the earth.²³

In our church today, the Sabbath is full of services of all kinds (e.g., worship services, prayer sessions, classes for the newly baptized). Through these meetings, we can allow our body and mind to enjoy a break. Some churches use the time after service for hospital visitations. Holy

work such as this are meant to preach the gospel and are also acts of charity that are pleasing to the Lord.

With Respect to Family

Typically, parents spend their energy on work, and children are preoccupied with the television or the internet. Very rarely do parents and children have time to connect. On the Sabbath, both parents and children can cease their respective activities to spend time with one another. Through the opportunities created by the Sabbath, parents can listen to their children's thoughts and improve their relationship.

Sabbath is also an occasion for husbands and wives to strengthen their bond. Through walks, conversations, and meals, they can re-live happy memories and reaffirm their feelings. The Sabbath can be a day in which family members

communicate well with one another. If everyone actively participates, wonderful relationships can be established.

CONCLUSION

In a city filled with lights, it is difficult to see stars at night. But in rural and mountain areas, the sky is sprinkled with stars. During the six days that we are occupied, worldly obligations and worries accumulate, and we are not able to feel the abidance of God. On the Sabbath, we can stop our work and attend church services to pursue a fruitful spiritual life. Our relationship with God will thus become more intimate.

The Sabbath is blessed by the Lord, and it is set apart to be holy. Through our weekly attendance at church services, we can commemorate God's work of creation and His wonderful grace of salvation. Moreover, we can give our burdens to God and trust in His guidance during our prayers.

Through diligent spiritual cultivation on this holy day, we can reach the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We can also work on our relationships with family members, and visit members in the hospital so that they can feel the love of God.

The Sabbath is only the beginning. Through this day, we can pursue an abundant spiritual life and maintain an intimate relationship with our Lord that will continue with daily cultivation. We should trust that these spiritual developments will be worthy of God's blessings, and the promise of the Sabbath will come true.

In this life, we will obtain peace in our body and mind, and we will one day enter the heavenly kingdom to enjoy the eternal Sabbath. ★

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1. Ex 20:11; Gen 2:1-3
 2. Ex 31:17
 3. Ex 16:13-30
 4. Ex 20:11
 5. Ex 31:15
 6. Jer 17:23
 7. 2 Chr 36:17-21
 8. Lev 23:3
 9. Deut 5:15
 10. 1 Pet 2:23; Phil 2:8
 11. Deut 3:20
 12. Mt 11:28
 13. Heb 4:2, 6
 14. Gen 2:3
 15. Ex 20:10
 16. Ex 31:15
 17. Isa 58:13, 14
 18. Neh 13:15-21
 19. Lev 23:3
 20. Num 28:9, 10
 21. Lk 4:16
 22. Acts 13:44
 23. Isa 58:13, 14



Rise Without Compromise

Jason Chong—Pacifica, California, USA

As we gear ourselves to a frantic pace on our career paths, we may wonder how much of our achievements come at a loss to our identity. After all these years, do we still believe we are the same person with all of our principles intact? Or have we become a Jekyll outside of work and a Hyde inside?

For example, let's look at the story of William Sullivan, an IT worker who misused his access to very private and profitable information and was discovered in July 2007.

A senior database administrator for a consumer reporting agency in Florida has admitted stealing more than 8.4 million account records and selling them to a data broker. He netted \$580,000 over five years from the scheme.

William Gary Sullivan, a DBA for Fidelity National Information Services, faces up to 10 years in federal prison and \$500,000 in fines, although prosecutors agreed to recommend a more lenient sentence in exchange for his guilty plea. He's also required to surrender all remaining proceeds and pay restitution to his victims.¹

We don't know much about Mr. Sullivan from this excerpt, yet we can imagine how he ended up this way. After working at the same company for several years, he has learned where the system starts and where it ends and all the leaky holes in between.

He is cautious at first and doesn't want to be too greedy. After the first successful try and no immediate retribution, he goes for another and another and another

until the day the system finally catches up to him.

Mr. Sullivan did not start out in the company as a thief, but he ended as one.

CHRISTIANS AT WORK

We enter our respective workplaces as representatives of God's blessings. Think about it: we represent God Himself because He placed us where we are for His purpose. I think of it as God staffing positions needed in the world. So there must be a reason why we are there. At the very least, we should represent our Master in the best way.

After months or years at work, do we still represent our Master well? Reflect upon the time from when you first started to work until now. How have you changed from when you first entered the

workforce? Do you still have the same principles? Do you pray more or less?

It is interesting to see what the state of our spirituality is after we've been in the working environment for a while. Has it grown or has it become worse?

As we grow older we start to develop our own principles that govern our day-to-day interactions and determine how we handle situations. These principles define who we are to other people. For example, if a particular person never tells a lie it becomes his principle to always tell the truth, and hence he is viewed as an honest person.

Compromising those principles will slowly erode our identities. People will start to doubt our character.

The same can be said of being a Christian. Christians should have principles, particularly those guided by biblical teachings. Our adherence and actions in accordance to those principles will separate us from those who don't hold the same ideals. If there were no separation, then do we allow ourselves to be called Christians?

DANIEL—AN EXEMPLARY CHILD OF GOD WITH CAREER SUCCESS

Throughout history, there have been God-fearing people who held to godly principles in spite of ungodly surroundings. Many of them even rose to great positions in their time.

During Babylonian captivity, Daniel, a young man from a noble family, was brought to Babylon. Along with other captive Israelite youths, he was taught the language and the literature of the Babylonians.

Daniel started off serving the king in a low position, but he eventually became one of the three governors overseeing the entire empire (Dan 6:1, 2). While he gained power and riches, he lost nothing of himself as a worshipper of the one true God.

The amazing story of Daniel can be summed up as "rise without compromise."

We may run into obstacles but somehow, some way, God will make it work. We just have to have the strong conviction and persistence to not give up our principles.

Indeed, he rose through the ranks of service through two Babylonian kings, one Medo-Persian king, and one Persian king. In today's terms that would be equivalent to working in one company and climbing the corporate ladder while going through two corporate takeovers and four different managers.

We know that it's not easy to get to the top in the business world. We hear all the time of CEO's of large companies getting indicted for various illegal activities. Even if most employees never reach that stage of corruption, office politics isn't necessarily black and white.

How did Daniel climb to the top? Note that his enemies could find "no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him" (Dan 6:4).

Daniel separated himself from the rest of Babylon, and he refused to compromise his convictions right from the very beginning:

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (Dan 1:8)

Biblical historians have debated as to why Daniel and his friends refused the king's delicacies. Food from the pagan king's table during Babylonian times could have been offered to idols before consumption. Possibly, animals were not slaughtered and prepared according to the law of Moses.

In any case, by refusing to eat the good food, they would keep themselves from being defiled in the eyes of God.

Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king." (Dan 1:9, 10)

God did not help Daniel unconditionally. Daniel had to first resolve not to compromise. God then helped him in his endeavor by moving the chief official to favor Daniel and listen to his appeal.

The chief official could have thrown Daniel in jail or executed him for disobeying the customs of the country, for he had his own life to worry about if he failed to carry out the king's orders.

Instead of taking "no" for an answer, Daniel and his friends negotiated a plausible solution:

So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants." (Dan 1:11-13)

The official accepted the terms: "So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days" (Dan 1:14).

From this account, we can see how Daniel and his friends were very persistent with their beliefs. However, they were also flexible enough to work with their superiors to come up with a solution that was amicable to both parties.

TO BE A MODERN-DAY DANIEL

At our workplace, have we been similarly presented with situations that conflict with our core Christian principles? Did we compromise our principles without even trying to offer a solution? Or did we attempt to meet halfway?

In my line of work, I have access to many types of software. People in my industry know much about copyright protection, but we are equally savvy as to how to circumvent it. Every piece of software my office acquires has specific limits on who and how many people can use it.

There was one time where a member of the faculty in the department where I work needed a piece of software for commercial research outside of the sphere of his academic position. However, the program we had was strictly for educational use only. Of course, there was no way for the company to ever find out what the software was used for.

My boss told me to go ahead and install the program for that faculty member. I objected because of the legalities. I felt that professor should buy the research version.

My boss and I had a conversation in which he made it known he really wanted to please the professor. Then he proceeded to tell me how ridiculous software laws and restrictions are and that companies are just too greedy.

My situation was nowhere near the difficulty Daniel faced. However, I knew that it wasn't the right thing to do. Even though this was a small matter, I still think if you give an inch, they'll take a mile. I've come to realize that the little things that we easily dismiss are the things that will slowly wear away our principles.

Every time I give away my principles, a little bit of me as a Christian disappears. It also gets harder to draw the line when you've already crossed it many times. It gives you less leverage to use the next time you are asked to do something you are not comfortable with.

I believe that God will surely bless us for doing things that please Him. We may run into obstacles but somehow, some way, God will make it work. We just have to have the strong conviction and persistence to not give up our principles.

Like Daniel, let's not take no for an answer. We can always come up with another solution that doesn't lead to a compromise. As long as we try, God will exhibit His mercy and help us like He did Daniel and his friends.

And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. (Dan 1:15, 16)

Today, my department adheres more strictly to licensing policies. No more lengthy discussions on the matter, only what is and what is not the right thing to do and what is an amicable solution.

God is watching all of us all the time. He sent us into the world to bring the good word to all of mankind. A job is a blessing, and He places us all strategically. We enter the workforce as children of God, and when it's our time to leave, we will hopefully leave in the same manner. ★

1. http://www.channelregister.co.uk/2007/12/04/admin_steals_consumer_records/, viewed December 2008



The Blessings of a Campus Fellowship

Shammah

A WARNING FROM GOD

It was the summer of 2005 and things were going great. I had just spent two weeks close to God at the National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS), so I was in high spirits.

I was recently accepted as a transfer student at the university of my dreams. Thank God I was able to find a cheap room to rent in a house close to campus, and I was now on my way to sign the lease.

When I got there, my housemates showed me pictures of people laughing, dancing, and drinking at a housewarming party earlier that summer.

The pictures weren't of anything I hadn't seen before and, by worldly standards, were fairly tame. However, when I saw them anxiety came upon me.

It's the feeling you get when you're in a situation that you *really* don't want to be in.

During the drive home, I realized that NYTS had heightened my spiritual sensitivity. Prior to NYTS, I would have had no problem being in environments like those in the pictures because I was far from God and did not realize when I was in spiritual danger. I was glad for the warning from God because it told me that I needed to be cautious as I began my schooling at the university.

When the semester started, I immediately became aware of the reason for God's warning. It didn't truly become apparent that I was the only True Jesus Church member in a house of seven until I spent my first night there. I felt very lonely but found it difficult to pray because I

had a roommate. I realized that spiritual battles could happen anywhere—even within your own room.

The second challenge I faced was the environment. I lived down the street from all the off-campus bars. From Thursday night to Sunday morning, it was normal to see people walking back from the bars drunk.

My house was also about a few hundred feet away from a hospital. Ironically, this only added to my stress because every couple of minutes, ambulances zoomed by with their sirens blaring.

A SPIRITUAL FAMILY

However, thank God my university's campus fellowship had become stable eight years earlier. One of the reasons I dreamed of attending my school was



because a lot of the brothers and sisters I grew up with were there.

We had a prayer meeting every Wednesday night, when we'd come together to share about our week and our prayer requests, then pray for thirty minutes. From these prayers, I felt that there was something in this campus fellowship I couldn't find in any other group or club—a family in Christ.

During my third year, I felt conflicted while choosing a career. It was down to two different possibilities, and I needed to make the decision soon in order to graduate at a reasonable age. There were friends who would listen to my concerns, but I didn't feel like they had the heart to sympathize.

However, when I brought this up during a prayer meeting, I finally felt that there were people who sincerely cared about my situation. They offered me words of encouragement from their own experiences, which I cherished. But it was their willingness to pray for me that really touched my heart.

How many people are there who honestly intercede on your behalf to the heavenly Father when you go to them with an issue? All the words and ideas in the world can only do so much, but truly it is only prayer that can bring about a resolution.

Through the prayer and support of my fellow brothers and sisters, I received the strength from God to overcome the spiritual and physical loneliness I felt. I developed the courage to pray in my room no matter who or what was around me.

The spiritual siblinghood I experienced is one of the sweetest and most important relationships a college youth can have.

I distinctly remember one evening when my roommates walked in while I was praying and were very accepting and even respectful of it. One of my roommates shushed the other one, saying, “Shh! Be quiet, he's praying!” Thank God!

From that point on, though I was still the only believer, I felt the spiritual peace and confidence I would have in a house of believers. And although all the drinking going on down the street didn't stop, I realized one very important thing. If I didn't have those brothers and sisters on campus, there was a good chance that I would have been one of those people walking to the bar on Thursday night, drinking and partying as a result of loneliness.

A SPIRITUAL SIBLING

I now realize that God provided the campus fellowship not only to help me but also so I could help others. A year after I arrived on campus, a younger brother entered as a freshman. Instead of living in the dorms, he rented a room off-campus.

I had to commute that year because resources were tight. However, the Lord provided for me because that brother invited me to stay over whenever my travels got tiring, which became most of the week. In time, I came to see the Lord's plan for us to be roommates.

I was mentally transitioning from late adolescence to early adulthood that year, and being around him helped the process. Since I was older, I felt compelled to set a good example, which refined my spiritual and physical life.

I developed a more rigid schedule of Bible reading and prayer and took better care of my body by sleeping earlier. I came to view our relationship as that of two brothers who benefited from each other—the younger being guided by the older, and the older learning a lot about himself from the younger.

We shared almost everything with one another: our trials, our joys, and

our aspirations. I remember a few times when we experienced God's mercy during exams. One of us would burst into the room sharing how awesome God is. It's one thing to experience this on your own, but when you're able to edify someone else, it becomes so much sweeter.

More importantly, we shared some of the most touching prayers together. I remember times when one of us felt weighed down with burdens and unmotivated to pray. The other would take note of this and automatically start praying, eventually moving the other to pray. We would keep praying until we felt satisfied and peaceful, a beautiful experience I believe would have been difficult to attain on our own.

*Two are better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him who is alone when he falls,
For he has no one to help him up. (Eccl 4:9, 10)*

The spiritual siblinghood I experienced those two years is one of the sweetest and most important relationships a college youth can have.

Being connected to brothers and sisters, especially during turbulent times like college, is a blessing and providence. It enhances our college experience, and, more importantly, it's something that every one of us needs in our spiritual journey—someone to help us up when we fall. ★



Reason to Hope

Jing Ye—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Week after week, you tell your friends, “No, I can’t go on Saturday. Remember? I have church...No, not Friday night either! I also have church.”

Each time, your friends feel more disappointed that you can’t spend time with them because of church and they’ll ask, “Is church really that important to you? Why do you even want to go?”

At times this is where many people, including myself, get stuck. You can’t just respond by saying that your parents make you go because your friends will say that religion should be your personal decision.

Instead, you have to respond with an answer reflecting your own opinion on church and how much it really means to you. Without a sincere heart that willingly seeks to worship God, it’s hard to give a strong enough reply to defend your beliefs.

SANCTIFY THE LORD GOD IN YOUR HEARTS

In 1 Peter, a letter written to the dispersed Hebrew Christians, the apostle Peter expressed his understanding of the threats they received from nonbelievers. He told them not to be afraid, but to

sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. (1 Pet 3:15)

If we do not know for certain the reason behind holding onto our beliefs, then, as Peter advised, “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.”

A Different Meaning

The first keyword in this advice is “sanctify.” To sanctify is to purify, consecrate, dedicate, and venerate. When used in the context of God sanctifying us, the definition fits.

However, in this verse where we are the ones sanctifying God, only “dedicate” and “venerate” are suitable. God can purify and consecrate us, but not the other way around, because God is holy.

Furthermore, we must dedicate and venerate God in our hearts. As living beings, the heart is crucial because it gives life. The Bible records the importance of the heart in Proverbs 27:15: “As in water face reveals face, so a man’s heart reveals the man.”

We can see that the heart not only sustains our physical life but also endows the core personality that makes us who we are—all of our innermost thoughts, desires, and emotions.

We cannot truly understand a person unless we know his heart, and neither can we live without a heart. Hence, if the heart is essential to a human, sanctifying God in our hearts is necessary to our lives.

A Different Feeling

As a whole, the phrase “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” implies that we should dedicate and venerate God genuinely.

To dedicate, we should focus our time, effort, and thoughts less toward secular ways and more toward ways that are pleasing in God’s eyes. To venerate, we must always keep in mind that our God is almighty and worthy of worship.

This is not a one-time occurrence but an ongoing process that requires determination and persistence. When we have sustained our dedication to and veneration of God, then we will have completely surrendered the most precious spot in our hearts as a dwelling place for God.

Once this form of reverence for our Lord God has been cultivated, we will clearly understand what our motivation is in holding on to God’s promised hope of heaven and salvation. Deep in our hearts, there will be a yearning to willingly offer all that we have for God.

Even more, we will be convinced that every drip of sweat, every teardrop, every minute, every word of praise, and every good thing in this earth spent on glorifying God has served its greatest purpose.

THE HOPE IN YOU

So, “Is church really *that* important to me? Do I *really* want to go? Why *do* I bother exerting so much effort to serve God?”

Until we learn to fully sanctify God in our hearts, we will not be able to defend our beliefs with an honest heartfelt reply. Instead, we will merely convey a message to nonbelievers that we Christians are not even certain that keeping a holy life is needed to reach God’s heavenly kingdom.

With God sanctified in our hearts, however, we will *a/ways* be able to answer any questions concerning our faith and hope in God because we can base our defense on real experiences. The more we realize how much God means to us, the stronger we’ll feel about living as a Christian.

This way of life is not simply a religion anymore but becomes a relationship with God that is rooted in sincere love. Our hope is to one day spend eternity with God. We are not just holding onto this hope with one or two fingers but hanging on to it with our whole heart. ★

Manna for Forty Years

Sharon Chang—Singapore

*See it with your mind
Feel it in your heart
The stark endless
The hot ruthless
Cruel desert plain
Suddenly clothed in pristine shimmering white*

*He gave a command to the skies above
And opened the doors of heaven¹
He rained down...*

*"What is it?" They wondered
The bread the Lord has given you to eat
Moses answered*

*Beautiful, women breathed
Amazing, men added
Yummy, children sighed
Jehovah Jireh
the Lord provided*

*He gave them the grain of heaven
[His people] ate the bread of angels²*

*From one day to one week
Did the wonderment persist?
From one year to forty
Did gratitude still exist?*

I wonder

*As a mother gathered with her child
Did she say each day
Remember this, my love*

*We are free
We are filled
Because of the Lord's love*

*As the people started out each morning
Was the awe still as strong
How high how deep how wide how long
Is our Father's love*

*As families sat down to dine
Did each bite taste
Better than Egypt's finest meat and wine
Or did they groan
Bitterly at the dreary sameness
The heart-, soul-, might-, mind-numbing mundanity*

*When my hands first held
The chance to serve the Lord
I wondered that He,
all the millions in the world
thousands in the church
Had chosen me
unclean lips
unworthy heart
To be His vessel*

*To be like You Lord
I whispered then*

*You emptied Yourself
Your food, to do the Father's will
You loved the loveless, unloved and unloving
Broke bread with he who meant you ill
You fed You taught You healed You touched
You rested little, labored much*

*To give my best
To do no less
I resolved then*

*From one day to one week
Does the wonderment persist?
From one year to many
Does the gratitude still exist?*

I wonder

*Beautiful Savior, I breathed
Amazing grace, my heart added
Help this child always remember
Jehovah Nissi
the Lord, my banner
Help me love and serve You
all my heart my soul my might my mind
The Lord
my bread of life.*

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1. Psalm 28:23-24
2. Psalm 78:24-25

Call for Devotionals

"I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways." (Ps 119:15)

Most of us regularly read the Bible and ponder upon God's words and His works. Not all of us take time to actually pen down our thoughts. But if you do, you may actually be writing a devotional.

A devotional is a pithy article (300 to 350 words) inspired by biblical teachings. Has a verse recently caught your attention, giving you insight on God's love and a Christian's relationship with Him? Write it down and share this spiritual nourishment!

If you want to read recent and archived devotionals written by our church members, go to www.tjc.org and members.tjc.org.

To submit your devotional, please indicate "Devotional" in the subject line and send it to manna@tjc.org.



CALL FOR ARTICLES

Author Guidelines and Editorial Calendar

Issue #62:

Genre: Workforce

Articles due: September 1, 2009

Work. Most of us spend at least a third of our waking hours in activities related to our jobs. In many ways, conscious and unconscious, our work life impacts our overall well-being. The Workforce column is a place to share your experiences of work and how work affects you as a child of God.

The scope of this column extends from the job search to actually dealing with difficulties or joys at work. How did God's grace help you through hard times on the job or relationships with co-workers? Were there times when you had to make a difficult decision that may have compromised biblical principles? Did you receive pleasant surprises from God through things that happened to you in your career?

Even if you do not have personal testimonies to share, you may write on any topic that provides biblical nuggets of wisdom regarding work-life. Any article that expounds on the word of God regarding Christians in the workforce is welcome!

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

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

CONTENT

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

GRAMMAR/STYLE

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

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

Christian Living

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

Bible Study

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

Doctrinal Study

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

Exhortation

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

Testimony

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

Creative Writing

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

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please email electronic files of articles (Microsoft Word) to manna@tjc.org, or send hardcopy and disk to:

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

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

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

True Jesus Church

Articles of Faith

Jesus the True God

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

Holy Bible

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

Church

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

Salvation

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

Baptism

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

Foot Washing

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

Holy Spirit

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

Holy Communion

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

Sabbath Day

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

Judgment Day

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

TRUE JESUS CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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