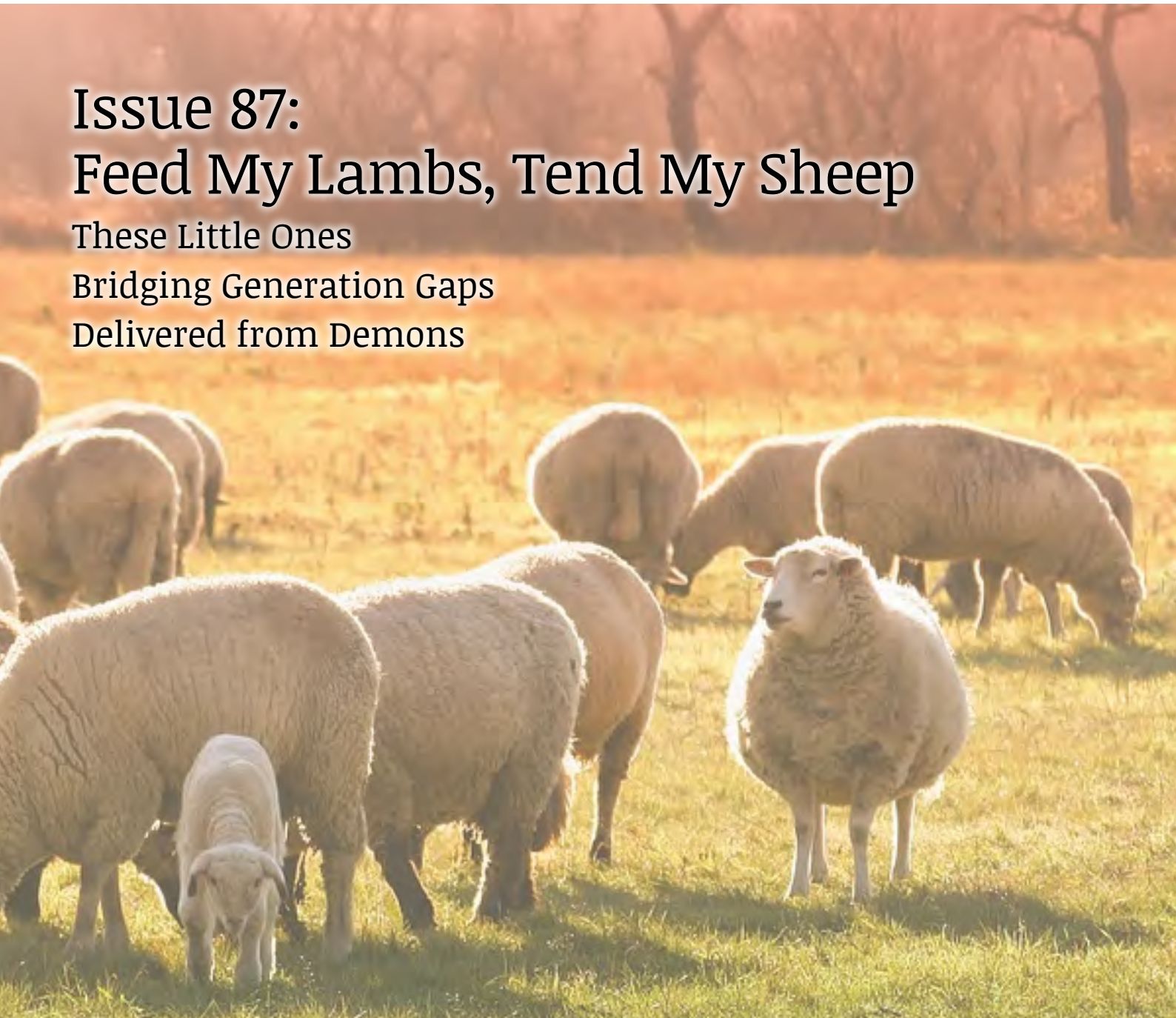


Manna

Issue 87: Feed My Lambs, Tend My Sheep

These Little Ones
Bridging Generation Gaps
Delivered from Demons



Feed My Lambs, Tend My Sheep

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Jn 13:34a)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)

In the above verses, the word “love” is translated from the Greek *agápē*, which is associated with the selfless love of God. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes this type of love as something that is greater than giving away all our possessions to feed the poor, or even delivering one’s body to be burned. Truly, Jesus’ love is beyond human comprehension; how can we love one another on the same scale?

Agápē is also the word Jesus used when He asked Peter before His ascension, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” (Jn 21:15b).

Simon Peter was not so sure in his reply: “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You” (Jn 21:15c). Here, instead of *agápē*, he used *phileō*, which denotes brotherly love.

Jesus asked the question again, using the word *agápē*. But on the third asking, He used the word that Peter was more comfortable with: *phileō* (Jn 21:16–17). Jesus knew His beloved disciple was not yet ready to comprehend His love, or the love He wants him to have. Jesus was willing to wait for Peter to mature in his spiritual understanding, as He knew he would. Later, Peter exhorts fellow believers to become partakers of the divine nature by diligently adding to their faith, eventually progressing from brotherly kindness to love (2 Pet 1:5–7). By this time, Peter was able to distinguish between brotherly love and the true *agápē* love that comes only from knowing the Lord Jesus.

When Peter replied that he loved his Lord, Jesus told him to feed His lambs, and to tend and feed His sheep. This is Jesus’ primary command to those who love Him. He not only wants His disciples to love one another, but to love the little ones the way He loved them (Jn 13:35; Mt 25:40, 45). We carry this out by feeding the pure milk of God’s word to those who belong to the Lord (1 Pet 2:1–2).

Today, we all rightly yearn for the name of our Lord Jesus to be glorified through church expansion. However, the growth of the church is measured not only by membership and the number of church locations. The true growth of the church is in elevating the quality of faith in the hearts of all members. If members possess the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus, through diligent Bible study and practice of its teachings, their faith will be rooted and they will know how to seek God’s will. Then the evangelistic work will naturally progress. When the members’ faith is sound, the entire church will enjoy the grace of being in the Lord, underpinned by the members’ urge to share.

This issue’s theme articles discuss how to care for the “little ones” and reach out to the lost sheep, pointing out how precious these are in the Lord’s eyes. One article stresses the importance of taking care of the elderly members—a pastoral work that should not be neglected. Since we are blessed to be in the True Jesus Church community of faith, where we have the truth, the spirit of God, and a supportive family in Christ, we are encouraged to look to the future with great anticipation.

Read on, and prepare to be motivated!

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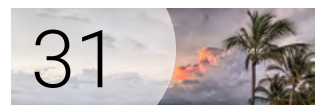


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These Little Ones

The theme of unity is never too far away when we read Paul's epistles. No matter what the main message or theme of the letter, Paul often returns to the same idea: the oneness of God's chosen people. The common thread that ties God's people together is not based on race, social status, gender, background or tradition—there is no distinction between Jews, Greeks, Gentiles, slaves and freemen, circumcised and uncircumcised, male and female (Rom 10:12; Eph 3:6; Col 3:11; Gal 3:28). God's richness and His promises are the same to all; Christ is in all, and we are all one in Christ. Since all who are baptized have put on Christ and have been renewed according to His image, we have left behind our former conduct and identities (Gal 3:27–28; Col 3:10; Eph 4:21–24).

However, being human, we are all set in our ways. For this reason, Paul reminds believers to be mindful of the dangers of drifting away from one another, consciously or subconsciously. This is a clear and present danger, of which we must beware, making the effort to prevent and minimize divisions that could blow us apart. We need to learn from the past to avoid repeating these patterns of division.

In the Book of Matthew, Jesus preached

that we should not neglect, ignore or despise the “little ones” (Mt 10:41–42; 18:5, 6, 10; 25:40). Jesus was not only speaking of little children, but of the “least” of His brethren. Who are these little ones?

THE OVERLOOKED AND WEAK IN FAITH

It is common to see members going out of their way to receive and show respect to God's workers. But how often do we show a fraction of this

“ These little ones are like babies—the ones who seem to be less spiritual and weaker in faith. They do not contribute much, but much time and effort is spent on them by workers who visit, exhort and pray for them. ”



care towards those who seem less important? We tend to view things from a human perspective—we deem certain individuals more worthy than others. Of course, the “laborer is worthy of his wages” (1 Tim 5:18; 1 Cor 9:9–11), but Jesus also reminds us not to neglect the little ones among us (Mt 10:41–42).

These little ones are like babies—the ones who seem to be less spiritual and weaker in faith. They do not contribute much, but much time and effort is spent on them by workers who visit, exhort and pray for them. Sometimes, such efforts seem futile when they fail to progress in their faith. Frustrated and disheartened, workers may give up and begin to ignore them and their needs. However, Jesus warns us not to despise these little ones, because our Father in heaven does not want them to perish (Mt 18:10, 14). Therefore, Jesus proclaims: “Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me” (Mt 18:5; see also Mk 9:37).

Another way humans assign value is to categorize ourselves into groups—often subconsciously—and prioritizing the needs of one group above another. This happened in the early apostolic church, when the Hellenist widows felt neglected by the Hebrew followers in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1). We cannot speculate as to why this happened, but it is clear that one minority was overlooked or felt they were treated unfairly. Perhaps what they received was the same as the Hebrew widows, but was actually insufficient for their needs. If it can be so easy to misjudge the situation when it comes to serving food, how much more damage would we cause if we overlook the spiritual needs of the spiritually weak or the neglected minority?

In Jesus’ ministry, He often saw the multitude as lost sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9:36). Why did the religious leaders not address their spiritual needs at the time? The dialogue between Nicodemus and the Pharisees reveals the latter’s contempt for the general public—a people beyond redemption because they did not, and possibly could not, understand the law (Jn 7:49). The Pharisees were also

“Should we not backup our exhortation with practical help, seeking to alleviate suffering through offering some physical care? As James reminds us, saying, “Depart in peace” but offering no tangible help is no real help at all.”

prejudiced against everyone from Galilee (Jn 7:52), as the region had a population of mixed ethnicity, being in close proximity to large Gentile cities. Galileans were deemed to be slack in their practice of Jewish rites and religion. The attitudes of the spiritual leaders at the time are encapsulated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30): the priest and the Levite did not want to defile themselves by helping the dying man; they considered their holiness more important than saving life and showing love.

THOSE IN NEED

We all have needs, and these needs change over time. In good times, it is easy for us to uphold our faith. However, in extreme situations, when we are under immense physical and mental strain, our faith may be severely challenged. Job was a faithful man, but his faith was put under duress when he lost his children, his wealth and his wellbeing overnight (Job 1:13–19; 2:7). Even his wife and close friends challenged his faith and integrity (Job 2:9; 22:15; 25:6). At the nadir of his faith, Job needed help, but help was not forthcoming. The little ones are not only those at the fringe of the religious community, but those who face faith-shattering experiences. Even the strongest of us can become a little one, longing for God’s deliverance and support from the community of faith.

I was touched by a sister’s testimony of when her child was born with a life-limiting condition—the sorrow she felt was only compounded when visiting church members asked her to trust in God. The advice, while laudable and biblically correct, appeared to put the onus on the sufferer, implying that her sadness was a result of not trusting in God. Should we not backup our exhortation with practical help, seeking to alleviate suffering through

offering some physical care? As James reminds us, saying, “Depart in peace” but offering no tangible help is no real help at all (Jas 2:16).

During a recent visit to a church in South America, a member disapprovingly shared how some migrant members would ask for prayer intercessions when they get in trouble with the authorities. There are many stories of detentions, deportations, overstayed visas, rejected asylum applications and heavy fines for tax evasion. Many of these troubles are self-inflicted, while others are borne out of a combination of bad luck, inequality and desperate choices. While we do not condone illegal behavior, or understand the motives or forces that lead some believers into these situations, we should nevertheless pray for them. We were all sinners when Jesus died for us (Rom 5:8), so we cannot deem someone more or less deserving depending on whether their actions fit into our own value systems. More importantly, we should not consider ourselves spiritually superior. Jesus even warned His disciples that they were no better than other sinners—they too would perish unless they repented (Lk 13:3).

We learn from the above examples that some members have unique and special spiritual needs, not experienced by the majority of members—increasingly, these situations involve wide-ranging mental health issues. The church has the responsibility to help, even when it is a hard or unfamiliar challenge. These members cannot be ignored. We should examine our mindset to eliminate any prejudices we may have towards such special situations.

OVERCOMING PREJUDICE

Prejudice is an unreasonable opinion or feeling, formed with little thought,



knowledge or context, and based on preconceived notions. Often, we respond to events based on our bias, and our gut feelings about the people involved, rather than objective evaluation. We can also become prejudiced through a lack of empathy—we assume that everyone should react and think as we would in any given situation or crisis. However, we come from different cultural and economic backgrounds, as well as having different skills, spiritual knowledge and secular experiences. We must realize that everyone's experiences and responses will differ, and we cannot take a cookie-cutter approach when offering help.

Be Mindful of Barriers

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Mt 18:6)

It is sobering to consider that our salvation may be jeopardized if we become stumbling blocks to others. Of course, we would not intentionally prevent others coming to God, but we may do so unconsciously by acting according to our own values. The disciples prevented the little children from approaching Jesus, and rebuked those who brought them to Him (Mk 10:13). They asked Jesus to stop people

performing miracles in His name, and told Bartimaeus to be quiet when he was calling for Jesus (Mk 9:38; 10:46–48). They even asked Jesus if they should send fire from heaven upon those who rejected them, much to Jesus' disdain (Lk 9:54–55). The disciples put up barriers around Jesus, thinking He was too busy, and the people too insignificant to receive His time and attention. We should ask ourselves, what barriers do we put up today?

Barriers can be both tangible and intangible. A simple example of a tangible barrier is the service timetable. Some members are unable to attend Sabbath services because of socio-economic or personal reasons. Should the church ignore these members' spiritual needs, on account of the sanctity of the Sabbath commandment? On the contrary, we should show love towards these members, and build up their faith until they are able to keep all of God's commands. We can

observe positive examples of churches accommodating such members by holding additional services outside of Sabbath, and providing support for those currently incapable of making the sacrifice. If our children fail to learn and follow our instructions, we do not cut them loose; we nurture and patiently remind them, using discipline when necessary, until they are mature enough to act independently. The same is true for the little ones in church—those stronger in faith should maintain contact with them, showing love and concern. When they are touched by the love of God, they will understand His grace and come to Him voluntarily (Lk 19:8).

An example of an intangible barrier is the feeling of being unwelcome at church. Those who are spiritually immature are sensitive to feeling unwelcome, ignored, and unloved when they come to church. If they cannot feel the love of God, they will stop coming altogether. However, those who are equally immature, but are comfortable in church attendance and service may be inclined to close ranks and focus more on those who are firmly within the community of faith. By doing so, these are no different from the Pharisees—well versed in the Scriptures, but not having the love of God in them (Jn 5:38–44).

Paul reminds us to emulate Christ, who saw people's needs rather than their weaknesses. We should see the good in our brothers and sisters, reminding ourselves of the oneness of our faith, and dealing with one another with lowliness, gentleness and longsuffering (Eph 4:1–4).

Reconsider Our Values

During His ministry, Jesus often

“An intangible barrier is the feeling of being unwelcome at church. Those who are spiritually immature are sensitive to feeling unwelcome, ignored, and unloved when they come to church. If they cannot feel the love of God, they will stop coming altogether.”

“ Our love should never be partial or selectively dispensed only to those we deem deserving, according to subjective or societal values. God’s love transcends such divisions. ”

challenged the prevailing social values. To present things from God’s perspective, He re-framed and questioned the highest markers of success, such as wealth, power, intellect and outward piety. He received much criticism for socializing with sinners. Without shame, He said, “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk 2:17). He blessed the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who mourn (Mt 5:3–5), and He judged the widow’s two mites to be worth more than the great riches others had offered (Mk 12:43).

Elitism, whether material or spiritual, has no place in God’s kingdom. In most societies, the elite are typically served by commoners, but in God’s kingdom the first shall be servant of all (Mk 9:33–35; 10:45).

We should not assign greater value to those members who are more physically, financially, intellectually or spiritually capable in church (cf. Jas 2:3–5). As we can see from the three parables in Matthew 25, such factors do not count towards how God will judge us in the end. In a nutshell, in order to be saved, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Mt 25: 1–13); utilize our God-given talents (Mt 24:14–30); and manifest our love to all, especially the least of our brethren (Mt 25:40). Our love should never be partial or selectively dispensed only to those we deem deserving, according to subjective or societal values. God’s love transcends such divisions.

Understand

In Paul’s epistle to the Romans, we read of a dispute between the believers. We can see that it was concerning food, but the exact details are unclear (Rom 14:1–3). The issue certainly had nothing to do with salvation, as Paul opposed any link between food and salvation (Gal 2:12). However, divisions were fomented

because one group of believers ate certain things, while another group abstained. This caused mutual discontent, as each group despised or judged the other.

Misunderstandings are often not one-sided affairs, neither are they always the fault of the “stronger” party. We naturally try to infer or surmise why a misunderstanding occurred, but the situation is usually too complex, with unseen factors, for us to apportion blame. For example, the Hellenist widows felt neglected, but they might have been overlooked for a different reason, not necessarily cultural ones (Acts 6). A more contemporary example is when an English-speaking member within a multi-ethnic church complained that the elderly Chinese members rarely spoke to her. Of course, the elderly members should consider this member’s comfort and greet her warmly; but on the other hand, if we consider the language barrier and the difficulty of mastering a new language in old age, we can understand why they may lack the confidence to approach this member and converse with her. We can view any situation from a positive or a negative perspective. But it is vital that we understand the needs, habits and limitations of each party.

Paul writes, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22b). This does not mean that he compromised his beliefs

or behavior; rather, it means that he learned to understand the needs of others. He sought to avoid being a stumbling block to those who seek God. Elsewhere, he reminds us to look out not only for our own interests, but for those of others too (Phil 2:4).

Every decision or action taken by the church should take into account the needs and wellbeing of all members. We will usually find that the “spiritually strong” majority have fewer needs, so greater care and honor should be bestowed on the “weaker” and “less honorable” parts (1 Cor 12:22–26). When planning the timetable, social events, meetings and pastoral visits, we should cater for the needs of the minority. If travel costs for a church trip are prohibitive for some, could the church subsidize their costs? Have we adequately trained interpreters for the minority who do not speak the language in which sermons are delivered? In the heated discussion of a general members’ meeting, do we bypass the interpreter, resulting in confusion for the minority language speakers? Do we only assign church work to those we deem good enough, based on our personal standards? The questions are endless. But the key is to understand other people’s viewpoints and opinions, and to communicate without judgment when misunderstandings occur.

CONCLUSION

We are all new creations in Christ, having been renewed in knowledge according to His image (Col 3:10). Though we have our differences in church, we should bear with and forgive one another, as Christ forgave us (Col 3:13). It is God’s love that binds us together in perfection (Col 3:14). We may esteem spiritual gifts, but these

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are temporal, whereas love endures (1 Cor 13:1, 3). Therefore, we should reach out to those who are different from us, and not neglect or despise those who behave differently.

Pay more attention to the little ones—those who have special spiritual needs, and are most likely spiritually immature or traumatized by life-changing trials. We should consider the needs of others and offer tangible help, whether or not we believe it to be deserved. In doing so, we unknowingly feed, clothe and visit Jesus in our midst. Elder James writes that pure religion is visiting orphans and widows in their afflictions, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (Jas 1:27). We work hard for the latter, but rarely take note of the former. Today, the orphans and widows refer to anyone who needs our prayers and physical support. As John writes: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn 3:18). Jesus demonstrated this by

healing and comforting the sick and the poor, as well as encouraging the young rich man to give up his wealth to those in need (Mt 11:5; 19:21). The apostolic church carried this out by looking after the physical wellbeing of the members, alongside preaching the gospel (Acts 2:44–47).

Some members are deemed to be weak because they are spiritually immature, have insufficient faith, or their actions and ethics do not meet biblical requirements. However, Jesus never gives up on the weak ones, so neither should we. We should speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15), patiently exhort, and guide them until they can stand on their own two feet. We should imitate Jesus’ boundless patience and compassion upon the multitude by looking past our own prejudices and values, reaching out to the little ones, and understanding their needs. Only when we learn to bear one another’s burdens will we be able to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:2).

“Some members are deemed to be weak because they are spiritually immature, have insufficient faith, or their actions and ethics do not meet biblical requirements. However, Jesus never gives up on the weak ones, so neither should we.”

Steven Shek
Edinburgh, UK

Hallow God's Name

The Lord's Prayer is a passage many Christians know by heart. Perhaps we recite it daily, and teach our children and newly baptized members to do the same. We study it as the model prayer, and often share its teachings in sermons and seminars. Certainly, each line of the Lord's Prayer is noteworthy for our learning and reflection. However, the second line, "Hallowed be Your name," is often rushed over and overlooked in our sharings. Yet, to hallow God's name is one of the first things we must do as God's people.

Hallowing God's name is not only something each of us should personally practice, but also something we should encourage our fellow brothers and sisters to uphold. When we see someone failing to hallow God's name, do we exhort him to return to God? Reflecting on how to truly hallow God's name in

“ Reflecting on how to truly hallow God's name in our lives not only helps us to improve our personal relationship with God, but also allows us to take better care of His sheep and keep them within the fold. ”

our lives not only helps us to improve our personal relationship with God, but also allows us to take better care of His sheep and keep them within the fold.

How can we ensure we are hallowing the name of God?

HALLOW GOD IN OUR HEARTS

The definition of “hallow” is to “honor as holy.”¹ Peter, in his letters,

1 Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. “hallow,” accessed October 19, 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hallow>.

encouraged the believers to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1 Pet 3:15). The phrase “in your hearts” means that when we hallow God, something should happen within us. In order to hallow God, we must first let Him be our fear and our dread (Isa 8:13).

Naturally, what happens within our hearts has an outward effect. The most obvious expression of this inner fear is through our praise and worship. However, it is not enough to keep singing a hymn



such as *How Great Thou Art*² to laud God's name ever-harmoniously, then to disregard Him the minute we leave church. This kind of singing would just be flattery (Ps 78:36). God does not need our admiration; but the very fact of His nature demands that we honor and fear Him in how we act.

Before Moses began his life of servitude, God told him to take off his sandals because the ground on which he was standing was holy. From this instruction, Moses was moved from within to follow what was revealed to him by God. In true belief and full awareness, Moses further responded by hiding his face because he was afraid to look upon God (Ex 3:5–6). If we truly hallow God in our hearts, we would hallow Him in our actions.

Someone with a strong and genuine faith will fear God in his heart and life, not just in his worship. To hallow God is not just to respect Him or be amazed at His creation and salvation. It requires a deeper understanding of God's goodness and, equally, His severity (Rom 11:22).

HALLOW GOD ON A DEEPER LEVEL

Within broader Christianity, Christ is generally portrayed as the Lamb of God, the Good Shepherd and a loving Father (Jn 1:29, 36; 10:7, 11, 14; Jer 31:3; Rom 8:39). However, let us consider honoring God on a deeper level. In Revelation, it describes how the Lamb is "slain" (Rev 5:6, 12) and records "the marriage of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7). If we study the Book of Revelation, we will realize that it describes a day when the wrath of the Lamb will be poured out (Rev 6:16; 14:10). We must absolutely keep this truth about Christ and His judgment at the forefront of our minds. This will naturally direct us to treat Him correctly, with fear and respect, in each step of our life and in whatever we do (Prov 3:5–6). So rather than just focusing on the comforting goodness of God, we should also consider His severity (Rom 11:22).

We believe that Christ is the Holy One



of Israel (Lk 1:35; Acts 2:27; 13:35). If we worship God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23–24), we need to take heed of how the Holy One dealt with those who tested and tempted Him time and again (Deut 32:8; Ps 78:41; 1 Cor 10:1–11). Our God is not a pushover; people who hold an incomplete view of God may think and do whatever they like in private, believing that they are safely hidden. But this is self-deception.

*Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD,
And their works are in the dark;
They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"* (Isa 29:15)

God sees and knows all things. Hence, we should continually reflect on our relationship with Him—whether we honor and fear Him on a deeper level of understanding, and with our whole being.

HALLOW GOD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Be Trained in Righteousness

To escape God's wrath, we need to accept correction based on God's righteousness. To expose self-deception in ourselves, we need to be honest and allow the Holy Spirit to pinpoint areas where we are not aligned with God's righteousness. This process will bring about a fulfillment of the prophecy for the descendants of Abraham: when God's people hallow His name, those "who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who complained will learn doctrine" (Isa 29:22–24).

Then, those who have been *trained* in God's righteousness will progress towards *pursuing* His righteousness, as Paul did. Rather than asking themselves, "Am I doing anything wrong against God?" they will ask, "What else must I do to become more righteous in God's eyes?" (Phil 3:9–14).

“If we truly hallow God, we will learn to love His judgment, because it teaches us to turn to righteousness. In this way, through love and fear of Him, we will be refined and ready to meet Him on the day of judgment.”

² By Carl Gustav Boberg, translated by Stuart K. Hine.

Be Ready to Embrace Righteousness

If we are actively pursuing God's righteousness, we need to embrace and accept the righteous judgment of God, who is holy.

*"But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment,
And God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness."* (Isa 5:16)

The Bible describes two ways in which God will be "hallowed in righteousness"—both of which relate to His judgment.

First, it records how on the day of judgment, those who are condemned will agree with God's judgment and hallow Him. Everyone, even unbelievers and disobedient Christians, will fear God, the all-consuming fire (Heb 12:28–29; Rev 6:16–17; 2 Thess 1:7–9; Rom 3:4, 19).

Second, God will use His word to judge those in His church, who will turn from unrighteousness to righteousness to show they truly hallow God. How shall this come to pass? Let us refer to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain
of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.* (Isa 2:2–4)

If we truly hallow God, we will learn to love His judgment, because it teaches

us to turn to righteousness. In this way, through love and fear of Him, we will be refined and ready to meet Him on the day of judgment:

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev 19:7–8)

HALLOW GOD BY SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

As we can see, our perfection in righteousness occurs not just on an individual level, but through the church as a whole. The whole church must come to hallow God's name, through and through. So, as watchmen, we need to call our brethren to repentance when they are heading the wrong way. We cannot let God down by being too gentle with their feelings that we neglect to remind each other of our duty as faithful servants of God. When we see unrighteousness, are we willing to speak the truth in love, however harsh it may seem (Eph 4:15)? It is important we do so; if we do not, we are letting our brethren fall into a false sense of salvation (Jer 6:14; Ezek 13:10). And if we allow them to backslide past the point of no return and insult the Spirit of grace, how can we, ourselves, escape (Heb 10:29)? We need to exhort everyone to honor the name of the Lord Jesus. It is by His holy name that we have all been saved (Acts 4:10, 12). Since we are indeed the true church in the end time, let us move courageously towards the likeness of the restored apostolic church:

*I will restore your judges as at the first,
And your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.* (Isa 1:26)

Bridging Generation Gaps

God's concept of the church has always been that of a multi-generational congregation. The age diversity is beneficial, as the church would be able to harness the natural strengths, skills and experiences of each generation to accomplish her God-given mission.

Regrettably, the reality of inter-generational relations often falls short of this ideal. Instead of promoting teamwork between diverse individuals, with contrasting but complementary strengths, we feel more comfortable gravitating towards people with similar views and backgrounds as us. This often results in a division between the young and the old. How then, should we bridge these generation gaps in church?

ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THE UNITY OF GOD'S HOUSE

If we recognize that the church is the household of God, then we must accept that God intends for the church to have members of all ages, not unlike any other complete household. Within a diverse community, it is inevitable for different age groups to have different opinions, preferences and working styles. After all, each generation has grown up within distinct sociopolitical eras, encountering different experiences, and exposed to varying trends, technologies, theories and social norms. And it is human nature to differentiate ourselves from the previous or successive generation, resulting in divisions within the household of God.

Senior members may lament that the youths of today are so different from how they themselves were at the same age. Their complaints often eventually lead to a disgruntled list of flaws, with youths perceived as rash, immature, irresponsible, self-centered, arrogant, or rude. On the other hand, youths of this era, raised to confidently speak their minds, may be similarly unrestrained in their opinions of the senior members. They may think the senior members are behind the times and out of touch with reality, with senior members perceived as judgmental, stubborn, narrow-minded, and increasingly irrelevant. Such strong sentiments are not only anathema to fostering reconciliation, but also exacerbate divisions in church.

Jesus highlighted: "Every kingdom



divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Mt 12:25). Instead of fanning the flames of difference, we should "[endeavor] to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). Such an endeavor has to start with a willingness in each of us to adopt a reconciliatory approach, "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love" (Eph 4:2). Both young and old must have the same wisdom that seeks to build up, rather than pull down the house (Prov 14:1).

The first step is to avoid stoking animosity between the generations in church. But this can be further enhanced if we switch focus from what separates us to what unites us—the common mission of the church. After all, by fostering a relentless focus on the one Lord, Jesus, and the higher purpose of His church, it will be increasingly clear that no petty differences should drive a wedge within the household of God.

MUTUAL RESPECT AND SUBMISSION

Relationships can only be established if there is mutual respect and appreciation. This is simple in theory, but relationships become strained when individuals fail to put this into practice. When a person, either young or old, expects or feels entitled to the other first showing respect and appreciation before reciprocating, then the gap between them only widens.

Traditional approaches dictate that youths should respect their elders; this is particularly true in Asian cultures. Some seniors may go so far as to say that youths should never question those older than them. Youths, on the other

hand, may not subscribe to such norms, believing that respect should be earned, not rewarded on the basis of age alone.

To resolve such opposing perspectives, we must adhere to the Bible's teaching:

You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD. (Lev 19:32)

Paul even instructed Timothy, who was vested with the authority of a preacher, to be mindful when pastoring older members:

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity. (1 Tim 5:1–2)

From the passages above, it is clear that youths should indeed respect older members. However, before senior members take this for granted, it is important for them to acknowledge what the Lord expects from them:

The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness. (Prov 16:31)

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. (1 Tim 5:17)

Instead of focusing on how others fall short of what is expected of them, it would be far better for each to challenge himself to do the right thing. Youths should indeed respect and submit to their elders. At the same time, senior members need to realize that such respect and honor can only be earned through their righteous conduct, their diligence and labor for the word and doctrine.

In addition, the Bible actually does not mandate a one-sided dynamic

between young and old. Rather, both are expected to mutually submit to one another, just as Peter taught in the early church:

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility." (1 Pet 5:5a)

PARTNERING IN COMPLEMENTARY STRENGTHS

The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head. (Prov 20: 29)

There are inevitable differences between the young and the old. But if we can learn to admire each other's respective strengths, we will be able to integrate as one body and household to contribute towards the ministry. If the young and old can complement each other by deploying their unique gifts in partnership, they can surely accomplish far more than they would if they stayed within their own age groups.

Such exceptional strength, unleashed through complementary partnership, was experienced in the Israelites' battle against the Amalekites at Rephidim (Ex 17:8–13). Moses instructed the young Joshua to select some men to go out and fight the physical battle. As for Moses himself, being too old for physical battle, he went up the hill with Aaron and Hur to pray for the battle. Joshua did not question Moses' instruction, despite being the one to face the ever-present danger and demands of frontline battle. Joshua "did as Moses said to him" (Ex 17:10). He did not despise Moses for appearing to take a back seat and not joining them on the frontline. Equally, Moses did not insist on leading the battle from the front, which may come with more visible glory. Moses wisely chose to let Joshua play to his strengths, while he made his contribution in a complementary way. During the battle, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. When he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. When Moses' hands became heavy, Aaron and Hur supported them. Israel's eventual victory over the Amalekites would not have been possible if either the young Joshua or the elderly Moses refused to

“ There are inevitable differences between the young and the old. But if we can learn to admire each other's respective strengths, we will be able to integrate as one body and household to contribute towards the ministry. ”

“ While it remains good for the young to accord basic respect to the elders, the elder can also receive advice from the young, just as Job did. The key does not really lie with age, but with he who is wise and able to “understand justice.” We must be prepared to learn and heed advice, regardless of the advice-giver’s age relative to ours. ”

acknowledge his own strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, they would not have been victorious if they had not willingly worked in complementary partnership.

In contrast, there was a less favorable outcome during Rehoboam’s reign (1 Kgs 12:3–20). When the people came to entreat Rehoboam to lighten their yoke, he asked them to return in three days while he sought counsel from his officials. He first consulted the elders who had stood before Solomon, his father. They advised him to listen to the people and speak good words to them to win their loyalty forever. Conversely, when he consulted his peers who had grown up with him, they encouraged him not only to disregard the people’s plea, but to be even harsher than his father was. This is a clear example of how the young and the old can hold vastly differing opinions. The young might have spoken out of misplaced confidence and exuberance that their childhood friend was now king. Rash and oblivious to the suffering of the people, they believed Rehoboam should establish his sovereignty by showing strength. The elders, on the other hand, were driven by their many years of experience in helping Solomon administer the nation. Having their finger on the pulse, and the maturity to understand how to earn the people’s loyalty, they believed that Rehoboam should establish his authority by winning over the hearts of the people. Unfortunately, Rehoboam chose to follow the advice of the young and spoke roughly with the people. This resulted in the kingdom being divided into two. The discourse between Job, his older friends, and the young Elihu provides a positive counter-example

of inter-generational relations. In Rehoboam’s case, the young only wanted to listen to the young and were unwilling to consider advice from the older generation. In Job’s case, his three friends had spent much time analyzing and speculating on the cause of his suffering, to no avail. It was only when they had failed to arrive at the truth of the matter that Elihu, who was young in comparison, spoke up. As the Bible records, “Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job” (Job 32:4). Hence, we can see how Elihu exercised basic respect for the elders:

*“I am young in years and you are very old;
Therefore I was afraid,
And dared not declare my opinion to you.
I said, ‘Age should speak,
And multitude of years should teach
wisdom.
’But there is a spirit in man,*

*And the breath of the Almighty gives him
understanding.
Great men are not always wise,
Nor do the aged always understand
justice.”* (Job 32:6–9)

From this passage, it is clear that while it remains good for the young to accord basic respect to the elders, the elder can also receive advice from the young, just as Job did. The key does not really lie with age, but with he who is wise and able to “understand justice.” We must be prepared to learn and heed advice, regardless of the advice-giver’s age relative to ours.

Seamless Succession

As one generation succeeds another, it is important that we ensure a smooth transition. Senior members must take an active interest in the youths, to patiently understand and nurture them. Youths, on the other hand, must be diligent to observe and learn from the senior members as they serve, to understand the context of different church matters, and the decision-making process. For succession to be seamless and the church to continue progressing, youths need to embrace the positive traditions that senior members have put in place and build on them. The Bible encourages us: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk



in it" (Jer 6:16); "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess 2:15).

As time marches on and each generation comes of age, the church traditions handed down to them can start to appear backwards or irrelevant. It can be tempting to do away with such practices in the name of progress and modernization. But, unless these practices are against biblical principles, youths should consider the bigger picture and not dismantle these traditions so hastily. At the same time, senior members should not resist change and forward-thinking ideas, as long as they take the church in the right direction, in line with biblical principles.

The Bible has left us many wonderful examples of seamless succession. Moses had Joshua, who followed him closely. Joshua was with Moses on Mount Sinai, rather than with the people singing and dancing around the golden calf (Ex 32:17–20). Later, he was again aligned with Moses when the people were disheartened after spying out the promised land; he pleaded with them not to rebel and turn back to Egypt (Num 14:5–10). Over many years, Moses mentored and nurtured Joshua to continue the work that was originally committed to him. Just before his death, Moses, at God's instruction, handed the reins over to Joshua (Deut 31:7, 14–15, 23).

Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha, who then followed him (1 Kgs 19:19–21). Thereafter, Elisha faithfully followed Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, to Jericho, and finally to the Jordan (2 Kgs 2:1–7). He went all the way with Elijah, till the latter was taken up. Elisha took up the mantle that had fallen off Elijah, and inherited a double portion of his spirit (2 Kgs 2:8–14). In this manner, Elisha succeeded Elijah's work.

Paul nurtured Timothy and Titus, as though they were his sons, addressing them as "true son[s] in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4). Not only did Paul guide them when they ministered together, but he also wrote letters to encourage them when they were physically apart.

Furthermore, he instructed them to ordain ministers (Tit 1:5–8; 1 Tim 3:1–13), and commit God's word and work to "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). This points to the importance of seamless succession and continuation of the ministry.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

*"Thus says the LORD:
'I will return to Zion,
And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.
Jerusalem shall be called the City of
Truth,
The Mountain of the LORD of hosts,
The Holy Mountain.'
"Thus says the LORD of hosts:
'Old men and old women shall again sit
In the streets of Jerusalem.
Each one with his staff in his hand
Because of great age.
The streets of the city
Shall be full of boys and girls
Playing in its streets.' "* (Zech 8:3–5)

Is this not a heartwarming and beautiful scene of Jerusalem—the church—to look forward to, with both old and young enjoying peace and harmony? As we continue our life of faith, worshipping and serving in church, we must recognize that our attitude, our decisions, our actions and reactions will all contribute to the church environment. The progress of the church also hinges on these: Do we really care about the household of God? Do we seek to mend any gaps we encounter? Will we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Are we prepared to respect, appreciate and submit to one another in the Lord? Do we have the patience to nurture and the humility to be nurtured?

We can make the difference and, together, move towards this image of the perfect church at peace.

Based on sermons by
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Living the rest of Our Time

Editor's note: This article is based on two sermons delivered by Elder Shen Chuan Chen during a Senior Members' Day service in Singapore, to a congregation of senior members and their family members.

After some missteps in his life of faith, Peter the impulsive fisherman matured—with the guidance of the Holy Spirit—into a faithful apostle courageously bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth. He

became a pillar of the church, tirelessly strengthening his brethren. His epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, are filled with the wisdom of an elderly man, and set important standards to which believers of all ages should adhere. “Living the rest of our time” is a phrase that comes from this elderly apostle.

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO LIFE

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the

same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.
(1 Pet 4:1–2)

Everybody hopes for comfortable and smooth-sailing lives. However, the complacency that may seep into such lives could cloud our spiritual vision. Material affluence, status and influence are common life goals. Yet, mindless pursuit and enjoyment of such goals will gradually erode our spiritual wellbeing. God, therefore, gives us some suffering as a test, to help us check the direction of our lives. Peter advises us that having the right attitude towards such suffering is a useful weapon. It helps us to remain watchful and separate ourselves from sin. After learning to suffer for Christ, we will no longer live indulgently.

“ For believers reaching their silver years, what adjustments should they make in their daily and spiritual lives to live the rest of their time well? What support can the church and their families provide? ”



In the past, we lived like Gentiles: pursuing the things of the world, eating, drinking, and making merry (1 Pet 4:3). This might have seemed to be the ideal life, but Peter warns us that this is foolishness. No one knows how much time we have in this world. As in the parable of the ten virgins, will we be ready to take our place with the Bridegroom when He arrives unexpectedly, or will we be caught unprepared (Mt 25:1–13)? Young or old, we must make the most of our remaining time by living in obedience to the will of God.

For believers reaching their silver years, what adjustments should they make in their daily and spiritual lives to live the rest of their time well? What support can the church and their families provide?

MAKING THE BEST OF YOUR SILVER YEARS

1. Make Homes Safer

As we age, more health issues crop up and we tend to be less steady in our movements. Hence, to ensure that we live the rest of our time in a reasonably healthy state, we must modify our living environment—specifically, our facilities at home. Interestingly, this element of physical safety can be found in a construction-related biblical passage!

“When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.”
(Deut 22:8)

Israelite homes had flat roofs on which people could walk. Homeowners were thus instructed to incorporate this safety feature: a parapet to prevent people from falling. Similarly, our homes may have been built or decorated to our previous tastes. However, if we have reached our silver years or have elderly parents and relatives living with us, we should take note of what additional fixtures, fittings or layout changes are needed to make the home senior-friendly. To minimize the likelihood of accidental falls, it becomes necessary to make modifications such as railings for the stairs and in bathrooms, better lit rooms, night lights, and so on. In fact,

“These elderly members enjoy catching up with each other over tea. This arrangement has lasted for almost ten years now, indicating that there is a growing group of people who want to draw close to God and to each other, encouraging each other to sustain their faith as they grow old together.”

even the type of accommodation may need to be reviewed. While a house with two or three stories is ideal for a large family, it may be more practical for elderly members to downsize to smaller apartments or single-story homes if they are living on their own.

2. Make Services More Convenient

Secondly, aging also means that we tire more easily and, with poorer eyesight, travelling at night may not be as convenient as it was when we were younger. This makes attending evening services challenging for elderly members. It would be a pity if such members who are eager to attend services are hindered from doing so because of physical frailty. A solution adopted by some of the churches in Taiwan is to change some evening services to morning services. Undoubtedly, when we adjust service times, there may be misconceptions about the nature of the service, and the target audience. But these can be overcome.

Another schedule adjustment made in some Taiwanese churches is to hold the morning prayer service at a later time. In eastern Taiwan, believers from the A-Mei tribe used to hold their morning prayer services at 4 a.m. Getting to church before daylight may be manageable for the middle-aged, but could be unsafe for those in their seventies or eighties. Therefore, the church decided to begin morning prayers at 9 a.m. so that the elderly believers could participate. Later, some churches in central Taiwan adopted this service time change, enabling more retirees to come to worship the Lord.

Having services start a little later has

also been useful in prolonging the time that these retired members can enjoy fellowship with each other. In the church at Feng Lian, morning prayer takes place from 9 to 9.30 a.m. Afterwards, these elderly members enjoy catching up with each other over tea. This arrangement has lasted for almost ten years now, indicating that there is a growing group of people who want to draw close to God and to each other, encouraging each other to sustain their faith as they grow old together.

The Bible is full of exemplars who maintained their faith well into old age. In the Old Testament, we see Jacob first as a man anxious to get as much as he could out of secular life. However, in later life, he had little care for the matters of the world (Gen 47:9, 28). His main priority was to draw close to God—worshipping Him whilst leaning on the head of his staff, even as he was close to his last breaths (Heb 11:21). In the New Testament, Luke tells us of Anna the prophetess, who worshipped night and day, fasting and praying into her old age (Lk 2:36–38).

Similarly, we have exemplary believers today. There was an elderly sister in central Taiwan who was part of the first generation of True Jesus Church believers. Hailing from a village church, she had been baptized at a very young age. On one of my visits, I found her sitting in bed reading her Bible. I asked her how much she read each day. She replied, “Whenever I feel like reading the Bible, I just read it.” Her frailty may have confined her to bed, but she did not allow that to stop her from reading the Bible. Sometimes she read for so long that her daughter-in-law would

make her take a break, and take her out for a stroll. This sister was ninety years old at that time. Despite her advanced years, she still had such a great thirst for the word of God.

There was another elderly Hakka believer who had been a teacher. After he retired, he resolved to copy the Bible by hand. In fact, he had already copied the Bible at least once previously.

Doing all of these different activities—praying, singing hymns, reading the Bible, copying out Bible passages—enables our elderly members to encourage one other when they gather. Some believers may have previously been too busy with their careers or families to focus on their faith. They may now feel a void in their lives because they are retired or their children have grown up and left the family homes. This is a good time for them to strengthen or rebuild their faith. Therefore, churches should consider what sort of logistical adjustments can be made—service times, transport arrangements, assigned workers—to facilitate this.

3. Make the Effort to Dress Up

Thirdly, there are also personal

adjustments that an elderly member has to make in his or her life. Some feel that, given their advanced years, they can live in any way they want. So they do not bother to dress up before leaving the house or take care of their personal hygiene. “Who’s going to bother looking at an old person?” is a common excuse. But an elderly brother once commented, “Since I am getting old, I need to dress nice and smart.” This brother was so particular that he took three showers a day! In short, age should not be an excuse for untidy dressing or neglecting personal hygiene. We go through the trouble of dressing up in our best for a special occasion. Dressing up for services, especially for Sabbath, reflects how we view coming to worship God. It is also a sign of respect toward our brethren in the community of faith.

4. Learn to Let Go

A fourth adjustment we can make is in household management. Specifically, we have to learn to let go of the reins. When we were young, our parents led the way. When we had families of our own, we were the heads of our households and made the decisions for our families. But as we age, our physical and mental stamina decrease.

We do things more slowly and become more forgetful. This is the time that we should start handing over the baton of family leadership. While we have a lifetime of experience in many matters that our children and grandchildren can benefit from, there are also many areas where they may know better. Hence, we must also start to heed the advice of our children and their spouses, rather than insist on deciding everything for ourselves.

Conflicts can arise even if all parties have the best intentions and love for each other. This is because, as human beings, our thought processes differ. As the senior generation, we should be conscious that while our children honor and respect us, they too have grown up and are capable of making good decisions. Therefore, we should entrust all household matters to the next generation.

A common source of conflict is the education of our grandchildren. We may occasionally disagree with how our children are teaching the next generation, but we must entrust our grandchildren to their parents. For example, when there are contrasting



“ While we have a lifetime of experience in many matters that our children and grandchildren can benefit from, there are also many areas where they may know better. Hence, we must also start to heed the advice of our children ”

ways of child discipline within a family, it will be confusing to the child and will only end in conflict. When our children scold and punish our grandchildren, we can comfort the latter afterwards but never interfere during the disciplining process. Raising grandchildren is not the responsibility of grandparents, because we no longer have the strength and vitality to do so. Complement our children's efforts, but do not contradict or try to overrule them.

Another issue is sickness. Many elderly members keep quiet about their illnesses and refuse to visit the doctor. We have to let our family know. For Christians, there are only two paths to take when we are sick. First, pray. Whether it be a major or minor illness: pray. But if the problem persists, we must seek medical attention. Some elders choose to endure their ailments quietly because they do not want to trouble their busy children. But when the untreated illness gets worse, it will become a greater burden on the whole family. Therefore, the moment we feel ill, pay attention. Do not dismiss it or hide it from our children. Our children will help us to determine the next steps. While we may feel we have more experience or we know our body best, do not forget that we are no longer young.

HOW CAN CHILDREN SUPPORT THEIR ELDERLY PARENTS

Those reaching their retirement years in recent times (the Baby Boomer Generation) are generally better educated and more affluent than their parents' generation. Many of them have savings, which, together with other changes in social attitudes, have led to a lower expectation of children caring for their elderly parents. However,

for Christians, as a moral principle, it is important for us to provide for and look after our parents. It is one of God's commandments that we honor our parents (Ex 20:12). In fact, this is a commandment so important that the apostle Paul repeats it (Eph 6:2), and reminds us that those who do not care for their own families are worse than non-believers (1 Tim 5:8).

The patriarch Jacob came to Egypt when he was 130 years old and died at the age of 147 (Gen 47:9, 28). Jacob lived out his final seventeen years in Egypt. Not coincidentally, Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sold to Egypt. In other words, Jacob looked after his son for seventeen years. When Jacob was old, Joseph “repaid” those seventeen years. Young people should consider the length of time their parents have spent providing for and taking care of them. This, then, is the time one should spend caring for their parents. Although society has changed drastically, we should heed biblical examples and ancient wisdom to show care and concern for our parents.

Another way of honoring and caring for our parents is to not bring them shame. In the Old Testament, an example of children who brought great—if not the greatest—shame to their parents is the two sons of Eli the high priest. Their egregious acts culminated in the most

humiliating time in Israelite history: when the ark of covenant, symbol of the Lord God's presence, was taken captive (1 Sam 4:19–22). A key warning from the entire series of events is summarized in the name *Ichabod*, which means “the glory has departed from Israel.” Eli was not a wicked man. After all, he had once received the revelation of God—the Lord spoke with him. His family ought to have been a glorious family. But in his old age, Eli's sons caused his humiliation and the family's downfall. They held the offices of judge and prophet, but brought unprecedented calamity upon the family and nation.

The lesson to our young believers today is a reminder to keep our faith. This is the greatest hope of all God-fearing parents. Such parents are greatly comforted when they see their offspring serving faithfully in church. Conversely, children who draw further and further away from the church cause great anxiety in their parents. Therefore, let us maintain and keep our faith so that we do not see a repeat of *Ichabod* in our lives.

The third aspect about caring for our parents is our attitude towards them.

*Hear, my children, the instruction of a father,
And give attention to know understanding;
For I give you good doctrine:
Do not forsake my law.
When I was my father's son,
Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother,
He also taught me, and said to me:
“Let your heart retain my words;
Keep my commands, and live.”*
(Prov 4:1–4)

Times have changed since our parents

“ The lesson to our young believers today is a reminder to keep our faith. This is the greatest hope of all God-fearing parents. Such parents are greatly comforted when they see their offspring serving faithfully in church. ”



entered adulthood, so our ways of thinking will inevitably differ from theirs. But differences should not be an excuse for disrespect. In ancient societies, elders were held in great esteem as the source of deep wisdom drawn from life experience. However, in the last thirty to fifty years, there has been a dramatic decline in the status of the elderly. One reason is the rise of computers, which has revolutionized our society. Children and young people today are known as digital natives—they seem to understand technology and all things digital almost instinctively. On the other hand, older people are far less knowledgeable or comfortable in this arena. Such a digital divide has had a massive impact on households. In the past, parents would be the ones guiding children through their academic work. Today, young children impatiently tell their elders off for being unable to handle their digital devices. This is a simple example of how technology appears to have ushered in different values and culture.

However, our young people must remember that, one day, they too will age and be slower to grasp the prevailing technology. Apart from humility and considering others better than ourselves (Phil 2:3), a critical attitude for the young and technologically-proficient is to remember what is

important. Advances in science and technology can improve the standard of living. But these are only gadgets and tools. Do not be so immersed in these that we forget the things that are essential to life: our God, our faith and harmony in our homes. These should be the areas that we invest our time and effort in because they truly improve the quality of life.

LOOK FORWARD WITH HOPE

*The silver-haired head is a crown of glory,
If it is found in the way of righteousness.*
(Prov 16:31)

Some people fear aging and the inevitable aches and pains. But Christians need not fear; in fact, we can look forward to the future with great anticipation for two reasons. For one thing, after having worked for a few decades, most of us would be at a comfortable part of our lives and careers. Retirement gives us time to enjoy doing whatever, and going wherever, interests us. But the more important thing to remember is that each day brings us closer to the grace of God. We are blessed to be in the True Jesus Church community of faith as we have the truth, the spirit of God, and a supportive family in Christ. Moreover, when we place our hope in the Lord Jesus, it is a steadfast and glorious hope because, while all may change, Jesus will remain the same. This is the true

reason why the silver-haired head is such a crown of glory.

To ensure that elderly members are truly able to enjoy their days in comfort and glory, adjustments are necessary. Individuals and their families need to make home modifications to ensure physical safety. Churches can adjust schedules to sustain worship activities for them. Elderly individuals can also recalibrate their roles within their families to improve familial interactions. All these enable us to praise the Lord and lift up our praying hands in His name, to remember and meditate on God in the night *as long as we live* (Ps 63:4–6). Meanwhile, our young must not despise the old. Heeding biblical principles of conduct and, in particular, the teachings on interactions between the young and old—found in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians—will enable all of us to live the rest of our time well and to make these years glorious.

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Reach Out to the Lost Sheep

“**W**hat man of you,” says Jesus, “having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” (Lk 15: 3–4). As it turns out, many of us would not go on such a mission. Anything from fear to sheer complacency persuades us to stay with our ninety-nine, leaving that lost one to stray afar.

But God has no such weakness. Jesus came into this world to recover those lost souls. He often compared Himself to that shepherd, willing to risk all for one.

And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Lk 19:9–10)

“*Jesus assures us He cares, above all, for the lost and stray. But why? Why this obsession over the wanderers and those by the wayside, especially if they were the ones who chose to leave the well-trodden path?*”

Again and again, Jesus assures us He cares, above all, for the lost and stray. But why? Why this obsession over the wanderers and those by the wayside, especially if they were the ones who chose to leave the well-trodden path? More pertinently, why should we also care?

THE PRECIOUS ONE PERCENT

Firstly, every sheep is precious in God’s eyes. In the parable of the lost sheep, that

one stray represents one percent of the shepherd’s flock. What is puzzling, and what makes this parable so powerful, is the fact that the shepherd abandons the rational calculations we are always so eager to perform. The mathematics of divine love does not count the individual sheep as one of many dispensable and replaceable creatures. To God, each sheep equals one hundred percent—the subject of His full and undivided love and devotion.



Movies and fiction tell us to rejoice at the downfall of the bad guy. Not so with God. Every “fallen” man is one waiting to be picked up and placed onto the higher ground of fellowship with God. He does not delight in the perishing of any of His creatures; He wishes for all to come to Him, regardless of our pasts, repentant and resolute.

Secondly, there is no place too remote, no distance too great, that God cannot call back His flock. What was the shepherd thinking? Did he consider the vastness of the wilderness he had to search? Maybe wild predators had already got to that lamb. These factors did not stand in the way of his devotion to those under his charge.

All of us have the gift of imagination—there is little we are incapable of conceiving. The trickiest concept for us, it seems, is the goodness of salvation. We may know some troubled members who have not only lost their way, but have turned their backs, stepped proudly onto the wrong path, and strode off defiantly. It is admittedly hard in situations like this not to feel a certain helplessness, even a niggling feeling of resentment: *Let them learn the hard way. They don't deserve to be chased.* This is not the way to think because this is not how God thinks. Created in His image, reborn in the blood of Christ, cherished by the Almighty, each and every one of us is worth all the trouble. Whenever it becomes difficult to see the goodness in people, see the goodness in God. He has made the first and hardest move to reconcile us to Him, and all who are redeemed should know better than anyone else the unmatched power of grace and love.

This leads us to the third point.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into



the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim 1:15–17)

For those of us in the True Jesus Church, the elect of God, even if we have surrendered ourselves to sin, God will not quickly surrender us. Paul, the self-appointed “chief of sinners,” knew how deeply lost and unworthy he was. Knowing this does not give us license to despair or to see the equal ugliness in others. Rather, to know our baseness is the first step to knowing God’s glory and love. The chief of sinners knew he was in the best place to tell other sinners of a greater Chief who, though not one of them, loved them all to death and beyond, and desired to be with them.

We were all once lost, but now have

been found. In turn, Jesus has called us to find others. But how shall we go about this search?

REACH OUT LIKE JESUS

Firstly, we have to make the first move to reach out to our brothers and sisters, instead of waiting for them to come to us. Jesus has set the example. In Luke 15:1–2, we read of Jesus doing what all the esteemed religious leaders failed to do. Jesus had the respect and adoration of many, but a growing suspicion and an agenda were being set against Him. The worst thing He could do was to associate with the one group of people whom both the common folks and the lofty Pharisees were united against: sinners. But that is exactly what He chose to do. He went into the houses of tax collectors, broke bread with prostitutes, and reached out to lepers. Friend to the friendless and unloved, Jesus did more than receive these people when they came to Him. He went to those abandoned long ago by their community, stood with them, and shared their burdens when they were downcast. We must try to do the same. For the hand that steadied Peter on the waters, that performed great miracles and blessed thousands, was the same hand that reached out and comforted sinners.

Start with the little things. Check in

“We were all once lost, but now have been found. In turn, Jesus has called us to find others. But how shall we go about this search?”

with our brothers and sisters regularly through texts and phone calls, organize outings and arrange family visitations—these are things we can easily do to remind others of the ever-present love of God in their lives. Small but consistent actions, such as sharing our favorite verses on social media and leaving notes of encouragement, can go a long way. Even just telling people that we are keeping them in our prayers is a very meaningful gesture.

Secondly, we must remember to be patient and never lose hope. Luke 15:11–32 tells the story of the prodigal son, a lost sheep if ever there was one. Not only was this profligate wanderer physically far from his father, his heart was also removed from his father's love and his home. A whole world separated son from father. But not in the father's mind. This father patiently kept his eyes on the horizon, waiting each day for the slightest hint of his son's shadow, ready to embrace and call that disgraced delinquent his son once more.

The father waited for the time he knew would come. We too must wait for God's time, and know, by faith, that it shall come. It may take a long time for things to change. But when it does, when minds and hearts change, they change quickly. Our words, pleading and pitiful, may never seem to be enough, but through God all things are possible. For God can and does use sufferings, trials and all manner of dead-end situations to bring about the greatest miracles and spiritual resurrections. All that is asked of us is that we remain as the father—waiting, watchful, praying always with all our faith—so that we can endure until God's time comes.

Thirdly, we must remember to not be judgmental towards those who are weak. Jesus, betrayed and abandoned by those who promised Him their devotion, resurrected and glorified, stood on the shore and approached these fallen men, asking “Children, do you have any food?”

“No,” they answered from their boat out on the sea, not knowing who it was they were speaking to (Jn 21:1–5).

That was it. Jesus did not interrogate

them on their actions, nor did He seek to sear guilt and shame into their hearts. Without a shred of spite, He called out to His children, and welcomed them back with a miracle of fish. The simplicity of this love is what makes it the most beautiful and divine. Just as the father greeted his prodigal son with a feast, so Jesus fed His children, who had been equally lost and confused. This was a double miracle: the supernatural display of extreme power and extreme love. And so, the children return home.

CONCLUSION

*Shall the prey be taken from the mighty,
Or the captives of the righteous be
delivered?*

But thus says the LORD:

*“Even the captives of the mighty shall be
taken away,*

*And the prey of the terrible be delivered;
For I will contend with him who contends
with you,*

And I will save your children.”

(Isa 49:24–26)

People lose their way sometimes. It happens to the best of us. The beauty of being a Christian, of knowing the God we know, is that while we may have shameful histories and painful presents, we also have an everlasting future built on blood, with love and grace, by Jesus Christ. Let us continue to pray for the deliverance of those who are still lost, by the power of our Almighty God.

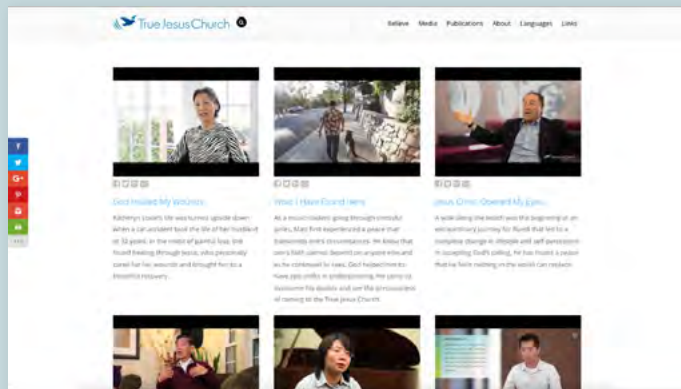
■ be more grounded in the faith, and
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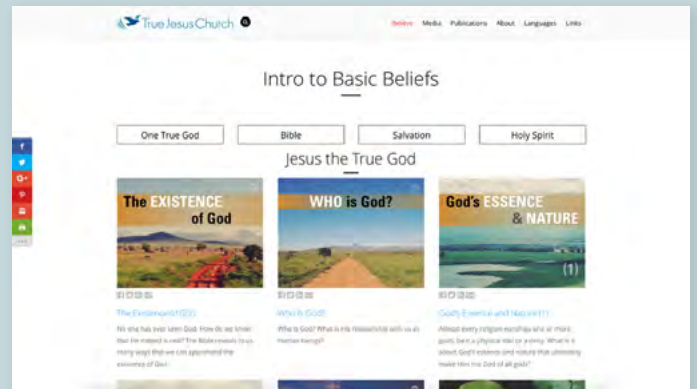
"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of the clouds,
to preach to those who dwell on the earth—

Revelation 18:2

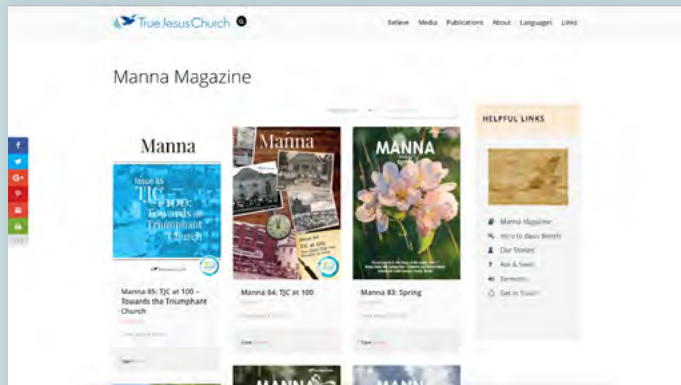
and share the truth today



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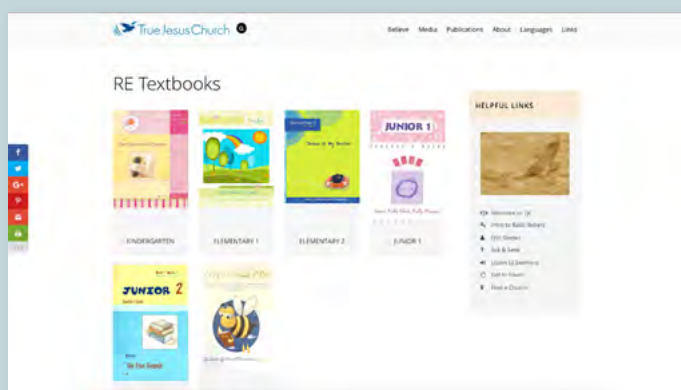
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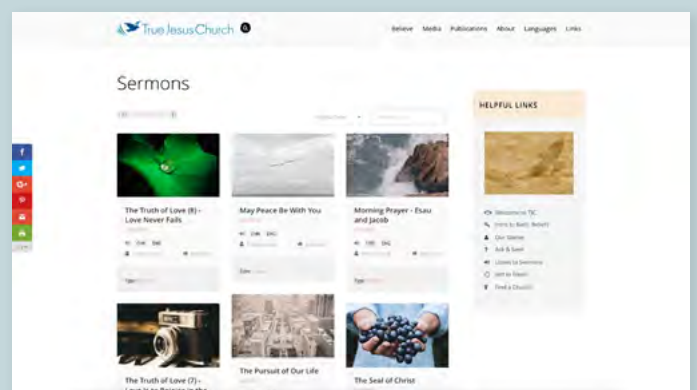
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ist of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
-to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people."

ion 14:6

Raymond Leacock
London, UK

My Journey into Full-time Ministry

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I take this opportunity to share how I became a full-time minister. I hope my testimony will encourage other brethren who are considering this path, and that they will take courage from seeing how God guides, builds and trains us for His ministry—even before we start.

HOW I CAME TO THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

What are my experiences of God and His church? It began in 1986, when I was thirteen and attending another church. That church had invited members from the True Jesus Church (TJC) for fellowship, and that was my first encounter with the TJC. During one of the prayers, when the TJC members encouraged us to pray for the Holy Spirit, I could feel that my prayer was

“ I knelt to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus and said, “Hallelujah,” to praise the Lord. Soon I received the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues. I was so overcome with joy that I had to stop praying for fifteen minutes. ”

different: I was able to focus and engage in deep communication with God, without struggling to think of what to say to Him.

Between 1988 and 1990, I attended services regularly at the TJC in Central London, which was located in Pitfield Street at the time. There was one particular evangelistic service in which the key message was to be born of water and the Spirit. The sermon made me determined to pray for the Holy Spirit.

Then, during one Sabbath in church, I sensed a change in my prayer. That night, while watching television, I felt in my heart a strong urge to pray. Only my brother and I attended the TJC, so to avoid disturbing my parents I went into the bathroom. I knelt to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus and said, “Hallelujah,” to praise the Lord. Soon I received the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues. I was so overcome with joy that I had to stop praying for fifteen minutes. After my initial



astonishment wore off, I continued to pray with tears of gladness.

Soon after, I received water baptism. However, attending services proved to be difficult as my parents were not church members, and they would challenge me week after week. Although I found it hard, I can see on reflection that the sufferings of other brethren, whose testimonies I have heard, and the persecution of Christ's followers recorded in the Bible, were far greater.

In September 2003, I married Sister Wendy Chan, and together we had a son, Zeph. However, life changed when Wendy was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in December 2007 and had to undergo treatment. This period was a trial for our family and relatives, and a test of our faith and prayers. As I look back, I can see that the prayers of the church members helped to spare my wife of physical suffering. Her joy was evident, and we were able to testify of God's grace while facing the illness. God's help was even more apparent seeing other patients in the hospital struggling with their treatment. We experienced God taking care of us and drawing us closer to Him. His grace could be seen, for example, in how my employer allowed me the flexibility to juggle competing priorities: my work, the hospital visits, and caring for my family.

LEARNING TO PERSEVERE THROUGH PRAYER

After Wendy had completed four rounds of chemotherapy, further tests confirmed that she was in remission. It was during this time that my brother also had a kidney transplant. Both these matters, plus a change in circumstances with my employer, prompted me to think about the future. Before her illness, my wife had said that since I was so involved with church work, I might as well think of applying for the theological training program (TTP) to become a full-time minister. Back then, I had laughed at the thought. However, her words came back to me while she was in remission and my brother had undergone a successful transplant. I wanted to do something

“ Compared to my secular work, I realized that doing church work was far more rewarding and joyful. I knew that serving God and His church, and helping people to find salvation through Jesus Christ, was the most satisfying work I could do. ”

more meaningful in life. Compared to my secular work, I realized that doing church work was far more rewarding and joyful. I knew that serving God and His church, and helping people to find salvation through Jesus Christ, was the most satisfying work I could do.

Through prayer, I reached a decision. It would mean a complete change of direction in life, but I was certain. I spoke at length with my wife, parents and in-laws; they all accepted my decision. After that, I had a meeting with the Leicester TJC board to discuss and submit my application to the General Assembly of the United Kingdom (UKGA).

THE INTERVIEW AND UKGA DECISION

The next step in the TTP selection process was an interview by a panel appointed by the UKGA. Although I was familiar with the panel members, I did not know what to expect in terms of the questions they would ask or their reactions to my responses. As it transpired, they asked about my family life, my prayer life, how I would reach out to brethren from different backgrounds, and about sermon delivery. The most testing question concerned what I would do should Wendy's illness relapse.

The panel later gave their decision to the UKGA Board and to me. I had been accepted and would be sent to the United States to start the TTP. Meanwhile, I continued supporting the pioneering work in Cardiff. My wife and I would regularly share ideas on how to promote the evangelistic work and hymnal worship in the UK.

After a time, Wendy became ill again.

Like during Peter's imprisonment, the believers offered constant prayers for us (Acts 12:5). In May 2010, the Lord called my wife to rest in Him. I now faced life without my helper and friend. Likewise, my son and relatives would have to adapt to life without Wendy. Six months ahead of the TTP, I went through a tough period and a steep learning curve. I had a choice: to struggle in my grief or to focus on God, who grants us peace.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

I decided not to delay starting the TTP, even though I had the option to go later. The day before travelling to the USA, it finally sunk in that I would have to leave my family and become a theological student. I spent time talking to my son, who was four-and-a-half years old at the time. I wondered if our relationship could be sustained through Skype conversations across different time zones. Would he remember me? I can only describe this type of struggle as being like that of a soldier about to go to battle. However, I was confident God understood what I was going through and would give me strength. I also reminded myself that my trials did not compare with those of other ministers.

Aside from a slight acquaintance with a few preachers in the USA and a superficial knowledge of some American terms, I did not know much about my destination. Despite this, I felt positive about travelling overseas to the household of God, to gain a deeper understanding of His church, His people and His work. I was resolved to continue following the Lord and not look back with one hand on the plow (Lk 9:62; Mt 16:24; Lk 5:27).

As a theological student, I gained

extensive knowledge about the Holy Scriptures from the lecturers and my classmates. I also discovered how to apply these lessons to serving God and leading a disciplined life. I was encouraged to be strong and to gain strength from the Bible's teaching: that the end of a matter is better than its beginning (Eccl 7:8). By God's grace, I was able to share my personal experience with a brother whose father was suffering from leukaemia.

Some time later, my theological training took me to Taiwan. Once again, I had to adjust to a new environment and slightly different teaching methods. While I was there, I was able to appreciate how God worked in the lives of the brethren, and I was thankful for having the opportunity to assist in the church work.

I completed my theological studies in due course and returned to the UK in 2013 to undergo my practicum. It was time for me to know the members in the UK, to adapt to working with the preachers and to follow the church's arrangements to serve the brethren. Part of my training included missionary trips to Kenya and Ghana.

During this time, I started feeling incomplete and realized I should get married, both for my own sake and for the sake of my son. I believe my fellow workers and the church members also shared my concern, although they did not openly say so. Thank the Almighty God for His arrangement; He had brought Sister En Tsz Yan (Victoria) into my life in 2011, when she visited the UK from Taiwan with a group of brethren. By God's grace, we got married in 2016. Since then, the church members have witnessed my joy. Indeed, to find a wife is a good thing, and it is a favor from the



Lord (Prov 18:22). I again have a helper, a companion, who makes me complete for God's ministry: together, we can glorify God.

From a young age, Victoria had studied English and hoped that she would be able to help the church ministry in some way; now she knows what God had planned for her. Zeph appreciates having a mother who cares for him and is willing to guide him. And I know that I can focus on God's ministry. Indeed, God provides in His time, and His arrangement is better than our own. This is the grace and blessing of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. His arrangement makes me recall the words of a church minister who once said that the virtues of a preacher's wife, among other things, should be to love God and to love His church. I thank God for His providence.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT

The apostle Paul was chosen by God to minister. After fasting, prayers, and the laying of hands, he was sent by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2–3). However, Paul still had to go through a learning process: to understand who the Lord was and what He wanted him to do; to learn about the church and about himself.

Concerning the work that God had planned for him, Paul had to grasp the scope of his ministry. He learned how to submit to the Holy Spirit, who sent him to specific places to preach and to teach. Wherever he went, and with each subsequent missionary journey, Paul discovered more about the believers—their virtues and their spiritual needs—so that he knew how best to help them. Paul also came to know what he could do, what he could not do, what to avoid, and what was helpful. He developed close working relationships with his co-workers: the apostles, brethren and elders—relationships in which Christ was at the centre, and which were founded on the truth of the gospel.

Today, there are things we can do to progress our service for God and the church ministry:

Prayer (Acts 6:4)

Prayer is essential if we are to gain guidance and spiritual power when doing God's work. Through prayer, we

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“ God is willing to send out the laborers, but the question is, have we shown our concern through intercession? Let us not forget to ask God to choose those who have the heart for His ministry. ”

can ask God for wisdom to understand His word and the ability to share it accurately with others. The word of God is both the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), building us up, along with others in the community of faith.

Endurance and Perseverance (1 Pet 4:1–2)

We need these qualities to fulfill the will of God. Preachers have very limited time to prepare for upcoming work. We may be physically in one church, but our mind could be pondering over an issue that concerns another church. Different churches have different needs requiring our attention. For this reason, we will experience both joys and burdens when serving the Lord. We need to be able to persevere and manage conflicting priorities.

Accountability (Lk 17:10)

Even though preachers are trusted to carry out their duties, it is important to let the local church ministers and church board members know, out of courtesy, what matters we are dealing with, along with any concerns or suggestions for their consideration.

Discipline (1 Cor 9:27)

As servants of God, we need to maintain our focus, be discerning, and not be complacent. We also need to remain teachable, heeding our co-workers who walk in the truth (Tit 2:11–12; Heb 13:7). Mission and purpose become sharpened in the course of pastoring, preaching, teaching, counselling and generally carrying out God's ministry.

Pastoral Care (Jn 21:15–17)

Sermons, convocations, visitations, fellowships—these demand much of our time, and it is likely we need to serve throughout the day and into the

night. The fruits of our labor may be seen quickly, or it may take time for God to manifest His work.

Family (1 Tim 3:4–5)

Aside from the refreshment one gains through fellowship with the brethren, it is important for preachers to draw strength and support from our own family members. Returning home means catching up with the family, as well as dealing with the mundane matters of running a home. Our children may want to tell us about their achievements at school or in their religious education lessons, and may have pressing Bible questions. At home, we cherish the limited time we have with our family, and we gain comfort when we see our children's progress in the Lord.

Intercession (Mt 9:37–38)

Serving as a full-time preacher, I can see the need for more brethren to be trained for this role, as the church has growing responsibilities in the UK, Africa, Europe and elsewhere. What can the church members do?

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Mt 9:37–38)

Jesus highlighted to His disciples the lack of workers, and taught them to pray to God over this matter. God is willing to send out the laborers, but the question is, have we shown our concern through intercession? Let us not forget to ask God to choose those who have the heart for His ministry (Acts 1:24–25).

“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John

to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. (Acts 1:21–23)

Barsabas and Matthias had accompanied Jesus and His disciples from the beginning. Although they were not ordained workers before this point, they would have witnessed the works of the Lord and learned to be like-minded and faithful to propagate Jesus' teachings, in the same way as the apostles. While the Lord Jesus was on earth, He observed the devotion with which Barsabas and Matthias served. He was able to decide who would be involved in His ministry, and at which point they would be sent. This is similar to how Barnabas and Saul were chosen to serve (Acts 13:1–3). God does indeed observe how we minister before He chooses us for His ministry.

In church, there are various roles, some of which seem more prominent than others. God has appointed apostles, teachers, and those gifted to help and administer—all varied but vital roles (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11–12). With God's help, we should take note of how God is guiding the next generation, and how we can help those brethren to discover the gifts with which they can serve God and glorify His name.

CONCLUSION

May the Lord Jesus Christ continue to bless His church and enable us to abide in His word. Let us seek to fulfill Daniel's prophecy of the end time:

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” (Dan 12:3)

Amen.

Mimintha Mok
London, UK

Delivered from Demons

Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus I testify.

I was born into a Buddhist and Taoist family in Malaysia, and some of my relatives served as temple mediums. When I was six years old, my cousin started mentoring me in copying and reciting Buddhist scriptures, and I became a fervent worshipper. However, from the age of twelve, demons tormented me and disturbed my sleep every two to three days. At times, the frequency increased so that it became a nightly occurrence. They snatched my blanket away and pressed down on me, and I felt like I was falling into hell. Occasionally, they ridiculed me with their blood-curdling voices; it was petrifying. No amount of struggle or recitation of Buddhist scriptures in my heart—because I could not find my voice—could save me from these ordeals. If I did manage to move my

fingers, the demons would challenge me afresh. My younger sister, who shared a room with me, was sometimes woken by my pathetic struggles and would attempt to rouse me. I remember feeling too terrified to sleep. My parents spent a fortune on charms and amulets from the many temples we visited. I drank a lot of ritual water, prepared by burning paper charms and mixing with water, and incessantly recited Buddhist scriptures, but nothing helped. The demons continued to torment me for the next nine years.

In 2000, when I was fifteen, this unceasing torment led to a diagnosis of severe insomnia and depression. I constantly battled with sleep and demonic attacks; not willing to succumb, I would convulse to the point of throwing up. Many times, I took a knife, wanting to slash my own wrists to end all this misery, but I lacked the courage to go through with it. During

this period, a dear cousin of mine became demon-possessed and stopped eating and sleeping. She finally died of multiple organ failure. When I attended her funeral, as well as mourning for her, I was anxious that I might end up like her. Only my family knew of my situation; I had to keep all this under wraps from even my closest friends, for fear of being labelled psychotic. I had neither peace nor hope for the future. I no longer believed in the existence of a benevolent higher power, only the existence of demons, and I was convinced that their power was unrivalled.

Around 2004, at the age of nineteen and still suffering from depression and insomnia, I became fascinated with Oriental numerology and astrology, favoring tarot card readings and the Western zodiac. I found that I had psychic powers of clairvoyance and prediction. I was said to have the



potential of a great fortune-teller, who could help others avoid tragic fates. I did not know that the spirits who aided me were evil. So I began fortune-telling as a hobby, performing it on my friends. I did not ask for money, because seeing them achieve what they wanted was enough to satisfy my pride. Ironically, even as a fortune-teller, I could not foresee an end to my own torments. I was always physically exhausted.

COMING TO KNOW GOD

In 2006, I began a new job as a call-centre team manager. But because I was suffering from severe insomnia, I appeared listless at work. This prompted my colleagues to inquire about my welfare, and I opened up to them. I even asked them, "Do you believe there are demons in this world? Or do you think I have a mental illness?"

One of them, a Christian, replied that he believed demons exist, because the Bible says so. He suggested I pray to Jesus, "the God who created the heavens and earth and humankind," to help me out of my misery. In a fit of anger, I retorted, "You don't need to preach to me about Jesus. I have worshipped a multitude of gods and none has been able to save me from insomnia and torment! I do not believe there is a God! I only believe in the existence of demons and a mystical force in the universe that facilitates foreknowledge. There is definitely no God!" He persisted, asking me to just try, saying that prayers to Jesus are free of charge. When I heard the word "free" I was stunned—to me, "peace" could only be bought with money—if I forgot to put money in the coffers of the temple or to recite Buddhist scriptures, then this "peace" would expire.

However, curiosity drove me to try praying before bedtime. This was the

“ From the age of twelve, demons tormented me and disturbed my sleep... They snatched my blanket away and pressed down on me, and I felt like I was falling into hell. ”

beginning of God's patient and loving guidance. I knelt and prayed to Jesus in the manner my colleague taught me. Amazingly, I spoke to Him for one hour! I had never said a Christian prayer before; it was unbelievable, like unburdening to a close friend or a father, and I found myself becoming emotional. In my ignorance, I even said to Jesus that, since all my ancestors were Buddhists and Taoists, if He saved me I would be unable to switch my religious allegiance. I said that I hoped He could make an allowance for this.

When I fell asleep that night, three demons entered my bedroom. I saw that they were taller than the house itself! I was petrified and shaking uncontrollably. I had never seen such gigantic demons! I tried my best to recite Buddhist scriptures, but to no avail. I thought I was going to die or go mad.

At my wits end, with tears welling up in my eyes, I suddenly thought about my prayer to Jesus earlier and hurriedly cried, "Lord Jesus, please save me!" Before I completed the sentence, a strong ray of light shone on me and, even though my eyes were closed, I saw two angels with wings appear before me. The holy brilliance of the light shocked me—it was otherworldly. In an instant, the three demons melted away and I fell asleep.

When I awoke the next day, I thought it had all been a dream. I thought it

impossible for angels to exist—that was too far-fetched. Although I did not believe in God, I knew I had experienced a miracle, and I felt unusually joyful and peaceful. I was no longer depressed. I told my mother that my depression was healed and I did not require any medication or charms from the temple, without disclosing that I had prayed to the Lord Jesus and had witnessed the appearance of angels. Although I was puzzled by the turn of events, this peaceful period lasted for over six months.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S POWER AND PROTECTION

In 2007, my newfound peace was shattered during a holiday in Thailand with my friends. At noon one day, I was taking a nap in the hotel alone and suddenly realized I could not move. Countless demons came out of the walls to attack me. In my terror, I remembered the Lord Jesus who had previously saved me, and I immediately prayed to Him for deliverance. The Lord again sent angels to protect me. The same brilliant light shone on me and, with a loud bang, the demons were driven back and they disappeared. I knew that this was not a dream; it was real. But still I stubbornly refused to believe in God's existence.

Fortunately, God did not withdraw His love, for I had another six months of peace. Gradually, I came to realize that this God, Jesus, was different from others. He had not only delivered me instantly when I called on His name, but had also filled my heart with so much peace and joy that I was depression-free and sleeping soundly every night for a year. Before this, I had endured nine years of disturbed sleep—I had almost forgotten what sleep was like. The change in me was miraculous.

One night I was unable to get to sleep, because I had an important meeting the

“ Countless demons came out of the walls to attack me... I remembered the Lord Jesus who had previously saved me, and I immediately prayed to Him for deliverance. The Lord again sent angels to protect me. The same brilliant light shone on me and, with a loud bang, the demons were driven back. ”

“In the process of searching for the truth, I sincerely sought God’s forgiveness and salvation, making a clean break from idolatry, fortune-telling and consulting with spirits.”

next day. I again thought about the Lord and prayed to ask Him to help me sleep. I fell asleep, but woke to see a huge face shining brightly, surrounded by a golden mist. Somehow, I knew from the depth of my soul that I was looking at the Savior. He put His hand down gently and two angels instantly appeared before me. I felt as if my body was floating in mid-air, like I was a minute grain of sand in the Lord’s palm. I felt that I was full of sins, and scenes of all the wrongs I had committed throughout my life played out in my mind. I cried uncontrollably and sincerely pleaded with the Lord to forgive me. I resolved to turn over a new leaf and asked Him to guide me. Then I fell asleep.

DIVIDED LOYALTIES

The next day when I woke up, I was greatly moved. I immediately prayed to Jesus and promised to go to His church just once. I had accepted that He is the true God, the only God who could save me, but I had to hide my belief from my family. So I only prayed to Him occasionally. Nine years of suffering ended—I no longer suffered demonic attacks and insomnia. However, I continued to dabble in fortune-telling as I was deeply deceived by this mysterious power by which spirits would reveal my clients’ pasts to me. Later, with growing pride, I imagined myself in control of my life, and doubted God’s place in my life.

As a result, the same old problems resurfaced in 2011, but, this time, no matter how I prayed, there was no deliverance from Jesus. Not only that, the demons also started disturbing my sister for the first time. Every other night, she would shake and call out for help. All I could do was wake her and help her sit up in bed. When I looked at her, it was as if I were seeing my previous self.

LED TO THE TRUE CHURCH

Jesus had given me five years of peace, between 2006 and 2011, so why was He ignoring me now? Was I to blame? I sincerely repented in prayer and asked for His deliverance as before. Mid-prayer, He let me recall my unfulfilled promise—to attend His church. I told Him I was confused: many of my friends were Christians from various denominations, including the Catholic Church; there were also many different churches nearby, and I did not know which one to attend. I prayed that the Lord would send someone to bring me to church—His true church.

Miraculously, after this prayer, the devil no longer disturbed me or my sister in our sleep. Two days later, I met a friend I had not seen for a long time. Surprisingly, he started to preach to me, and I decided to attend a service with him, to find out more about the church he enthused about. I discovered that this church was True Jesus Church, located in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. During this period of truth-seeking, I told the church ministers what I had encountered, and they referred me patiently to the Bible. I found that the Bible confirmed the existence of angels. It says that demons are actually fallen angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their abode and therefore sinned against God (Jude 6), whereas angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:14).

I discovered for myself that the gospel preached by the True Jesus Church accords fully with the teachings of Jesus, and that she is the church established by the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, the church of the living God and the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). After a month of prayer and studying the truth, I knew with certainty that this

was the church God wanted me to join. I realized that my psychic powers and night disturbances had all originated from the devil (Acts 16:16–18). In the process of searching for the truth, I sincerely sought God’s forgiveness and salvation, making a clean break from idolatry, fortune-telling and consulting with spirits.

A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

I thank the Lord that, after two months of studying His words and attending doctrine lessons at church, I received His precious Holy Spirit. In 2011, when I was twenty-six, I was baptized into Christ, and He led my mother to be baptized the following year. God’s compassion is enduring; although I did not know Him in the past, He had chosen me. Three times when I prayed, He sent His angels to save me, and He never stopped showering His loving kindness on me. Since coming to the true church, I have been completely free from evil torment.

Examining my faith today, I recall all my past difficulties and trials. I now have peace and quietness, because I know that I can rely on God to overcome all tribulations. I truly thank the true God, our Lord Jesus Christ, for delivering me out of darkness into His marvellous light, and making me a citizen of His kingdom, so that I am able to enjoy peace in this life and have the hope of eternal life. I am convinced that, apart from Jesus, there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12).

May all glory be unto the Lord. Amen.

Setting Kindness on Fire

in the Dominican Republic

Editor's note: In Manna 85, we featured the testimonies of voluntary African ministry workers, recounting their experiences of God's amazing grace and guidance during their missionary work in the continent. This time, we focus on the ministry in the Dominican Republic, overseen by the General Assembly of the United States (USGA). Despite obstacles, the field is evidently ripe for the harvest; may the Lord raise up more willing workers.

**Liliana Ventura
Baldwin Park,
California, USA**

Dates of Trips: Between 2010 and 2014

For His merciful kindness is great
toward us,
And the truth of the LORD endures
forever.
Praise the LORD! (Ps 117:2)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bear testimony of the Holy Spirit's work among believers and truth-seekers in the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic (DR) in the Caribbean, was where Christopher Columbus first landed when he arrived in the Americas in 1492. Since its colonization by European explorers, the country has developed slowly; it continues to be ravaged by poverty, natural disasters and corruption. Anecdotally, most heads of household make approximately USD \$100 a month to feed a family of four. Many live in slums made of repurposed aluminum or wood, with no electricity or running water.

The True Jesus Church has a church building located in San Pedro de Macoris, on the southeast coast of the

island, and a prayer house in the capital, Santo Domingo.

I started traveling to the DR in 2010 as a Spanish interpreter for Chinese- and English-speaking preachers. Since then, I have been to this lovely island nation a handful of times and I have discovered that the weather is warm, but the people are even warmer.

As volunteer mission workers, we often think we travel to the DR to give our time, our talent, our knowledge, our kindness, our work, our wealth. However, the truth is that we go there to receive. Every time I visit the DR, I return with a cup overflowing with testimonies and thanksgiving.

CARIBBEAN BAPTISM

On my first visit to the DR, in 2010, with Preacher Jason Hu, I witnessed the



“ We travel to the DR to give our time, our talent, our knowledge, our kindness, our work, our wealth. However, the truth is that we go there to receive. Every time I visit the DR, I return with a cup overflowing with testimonies and thanksgiving. ”

baptism of Brother Floro’s two young children, Ariel, aged three at the time, and Marielis, aged seven months.

Ariel was terrified when he was taken to the edge of the water. Although he lived on an island, he had never been in the sea. He clung to the preacher and his assistant, crying and screaming as if in great pain. Nevertheless, he was able to calm down long enough to be baptized, and he emerged from the water with an inexplicable glow. Praise God, his fear had vanished, replaced by joy and laughter! He might be too young to understand, but he had likely experienced the pure joy of redemption in the spiritual realm. How else could we explain such a drastic change in behavior and demeanor? Surely, the grace of God brings peace beyond understanding into the hearts of those who love Him and become His children through water baptism (Phil 4:7).

STREET EDUCATION

Despite challenges of poverty, hunger, lack of educational access, and shortage of healthcare options, the children in the DR love Bible stories. On one occasion in Santo Domingo, with Preacher Steve Hwang, a college student volunteer and I came across a group of five children, all aged between four to seven.

They were curious about the *chinitas* (Chinese girls) visiting their community. When we explained we were from a church and were there to visit our church brethren, they asked if we knew any Bible stories. Soon, we were sitting on the street, teaching a religious education class! The children’s eyes lit up when they recognized Bible characters and they sang the hymns we taught them with gusto.

Who could have known that a routine visit could suddenly turn into an opportunity to share the word with children? Without a doubt, God loves little children, and yearns for them to know Him and receive His truth (Mt 19:14).

ACTIVE KINDNESS

Every trip to the DR brings opportunity to practice the qualities of a good and faithful servant. From past visits, I have learned humility, diligence, and patience. During one of my most memorable trips, I learned the power of kindness.

We often associate kindness with being friendly, considerate, in a passive manner. However, the meaning of kindness in the Bible (ἡμερότης, *checed*, Hebrew: “loving-kindness; steadfast love; grace; mercy; faithfulness; goodness; devotion. ... Biblical usage frequently speaks of someone ‘doing,’ ‘showing,’ or ‘keeping’ *checed*.”¹) refers to a zealous force that complements mercy and love. This form of active kindness is what I learned, firsthand, on this particular trip.

Kindness of the Poor

The believers in DR are profoundly kind

1 Strong’s No. H2617. James Strong, *The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2010).

and generous, despite their financial and material limitations.

Brother Floro and his family prepared a typical Dominican soup and dessert for us. Brother Borges and Sister Ramona insisted that we have lunch at their house, preparing for us a banquet with enough food to last them a month. Brother Huang gave up two bedrooms in his home for us, while he made do with a small bed in the living room.

As I witnessed every member’s kind and generous offerings, it felt like I was watching the widow giving her only two coins over and over again (Mk 12:41–44).

Kindness of the Rich

Moved by photos of the DR members’ simple Sabbath lunch of bread and butter, a brother from the church in Queens, New York, USA, sent funds to buy his DR brethren a sumptuous Sabbath fellowship meal. This brother had never met them. Yet, the DR members could feel his love for them, across the thousands of kilometers, and were very grateful for his kindness.

Members in more developed countries may consider themselves wealthy, living with all the convenience and abundance our hearts could desire. Yet, our abundance in possessions is often accompanied by our lack of faith, love, and kindness towards one another. From this spiritual perspective, our DR members are wealthier, demonstrating Christ’s loving kindness in their lives.

Kindness of the Almighty

Sister Ramona’s turnaround is a further testament to God’s kindness. I recall how she stubbornly refused water baptism for so many years. I remember the anger and defensiveness that characterized her former self whenever we visited her and her husband, Brother

“ Every trip to the DR brings opportunity to practice the qualities of a good and faithful servant. From past visits, I have learned humility, diligence, and patience. During one trip, I learned the power of kindness. ”



Sister Ramona's smile after her baptism.

Borges. She never smiled. During this trip, she was so different. Ever since she received the Holy Spirit the previous year, she had become gentler, and happier. God had turned her heart of stone into one of flesh. She had overcome her earlier philosophies and was intent on being baptized.

When asked why she had changed so drastically, Sister Ramona answered, "I can no longer remain blindfolded now that I have seen the truth in this church."

At the time of her baptism, the family was building their new house. If she left their home for the baptism, the unattended construction materials were likely to be stolen. However, Sister Ramona responded, "We used to live in a rented apartment. I had prayed for a new house of our own. But I also said to God, 'If this house or anything you give us will separate us from You, it is better if You give us nothing at all.' If the Lord calls me back today, how can I tell Him, 'I can't go yet, I have this house to finish'? This house cannot stand between God and me. Even if the Lord should call me right now while we are eating, how can I tell Him, 'Come back after lunch'?"

When we confirmed that we could proceed with her baptism, Sister Ramona's face lit up with a smile that reached her eyes. Then she got up and danced around—this was the first time I had seen anyone dance for joy!

On the drive to the baptism site, Sister Ramona kept singing. When asked why she was so happy, she answered, "Today is my birthday; when I am baptized, I'll be a newborn baby of God." When she rose out of the water and came to the shore after her baptism, her face shone with a bright smile. She never used to smile; now, she never stopped smiling.

Through Sister Ramona's journey, I observed the kindness of God, not only towards her and her husband, but also towards her neighbors and the church in the DR. Truly, it is God's kindness to all of us in the family of Christ, that we have welcomed a new spiritual baby sister into our fold.

JOINING IN

I would not exchange my experiences in the DR for anything in the world. We are placed in the right place and at the right time so that we can reach out to God, and bring others to do so as well.

"And He has made from one blood every

nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."
(Acts 17:26–27)

For some, God's mission for them seems clear. For those equipped with a command of Spanish, serving in the DR ministry is a natural fit. However, even if we have not mastered the language, we can still participate in this holy work. At the very least, now that we have read of the DR brethren, we can serve by remembering them in our prayers.

It is God's kindness that I have had the opportunity to spend time with our DR brethren. I praise God for their progress in faith, and for the opportunity to learn new life lessons through them.

May all glory, praise, and honor be to our heavenly Father. Amen.

Candace Chang Cerritos, California, USA

Date of Trip: July 11–21, 2014

Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify of God's grace during a ten-day visit to the Dominican Republic (DR). On this trip, God showed me how precious and powerful the complete gospel of salvation is. He also reminded me of what it means to share God's grace with others.

A HIDDEN TREASURE

When we arrived at the capital, Santo Domingo, our group (a preacher, a theological student and I) met with a brother from the United States (US) who had been there for few months. He took us to San Pedro de Macoris, one and a half hours' drive away. This is where most of our members reside.

We rented a house at San Pedro de Macoris, and that very evening, a truth-seeker named Danny brought some of his friends to the house, and the preacher led a study on the doctrines



of Holy Spirit, baptism, and the church. Such Bible studies, often going late into the evenings, along with visits and interactions with local truth-seeking friends, revealed a yearning for the truth rarely found at home in the US. We spent our days distributing leaflets and preaching at a plaza, and on the university campus. We found the locals more willing to accept our flyers than members of the public back home, and at the campus, many students would stop and listen to our message.

On top of general outreach, we also focused on those who had shown interest in our church's beliefs through the earlier evangelistic efforts of one brother, who was there to help with the church construction. One interested party was a local lawyer, who had been given a basic beliefs booklet earlier. When we visited him, he had carefully studied the contents, and filled the booklet with tags and notations. When we shared the doctrines with him, we could see from his expression that the verses affected him even before we explained them. Unlike preaching in the US, where there is lackadaisical attitude in seeking God and in knowing the truth,

in the DR, there was enthusiasm and open-mindedness towards listening to biblical truths.

The gospel of salvation is powerful as it leads men to the kingdom of heaven. Evangelizing in the DR reminded me how beautiful and pure our doctrines are, and how blessed I am to have received them.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (Mt 13:44)

ALWAYS READY TO SHARE GOD'S GRACE

God, through the DR members, showed me the joy in serving others and in sharing His works. Throughout our stay, the members willingly and joyfully shared their possessions with us, and with zeal, they consistently testified of God's grace in their lives.

For example, during this trip, we stayed with a member in Santo Domingo. The mother in that family, who had immigrated to the DR many years ago,

received us with warm hospitality, cooking many meals for us just as she always had for visiting church members. From her house, we travelled to visit our members living in the capital. One home we visited was that of Brother Borges and Sister Ramona, and we shared the Bible with their neighbor. I realized that many local members evangelize in their everyday lives. On the bus journey to San Pedro, a local brother travelling with us just stood up and preached to other commuters. Perhaps to some, it would be odd to preach at such a time and place, but not to this brother; for him, preaching had become second nature—something he was always ready to do.

On the last day, we visited Brother Floro's home. The house, constructed from repurposed metal sheets, was modest, and in this humble abode lived Brother Floro, his wife, and their children, Ariel and Marielis. The members in the DR do not have much, but they are eager to share what they have through acts of service and words of praise to God for His grace in their lives. Seeing how they enjoyed fellowship with one another, how they boldly shared their faith, encouraged me to also proactively share what I have received from God with those around me.

GOD GIVES THE INCREASE

Lastly, this trip to the DR reminded me of my role in God's salvation plan. A sharing based on Psalm 127 at the start of the trip continues to resonate within me:

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

Although evangelism in the US may not be easy, our duty is to pray and preach the word at all time and in all places. Ultimately, God will prosper His work and call those who belong to Him.

May all the glory and honor be unto His holy name.

“The members in the DR do not have much, but they are eager to share what they have through acts of service and words of praise to God for His grace in their lives. Seeing how they boldly shared their faith encouraged me to also share what I have received from God.”

Ezra Chong
Bercham, Malaysia

Lessons from Paul's Early Ministry

Paul embarked on at least three missionary journeys, with some counting his voyages to Rome and Spain as a fourth. In my opinion, the first journey is the most important because Paul learned a number of important lessons, which set him in good stead for the rest of his service to the Lord. In this article, I will share these for the benefit of our church workers today.

THE WILL OF GOD

God has His own plan and timing in relation to the ministry and His workers. This is evident in Paul's example.

Acts 9 describes the conversion of Paul, formerly known as Saul. He joined the disciples in Damascus, and "[i]mmediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:19–20).

Everyone was amazed that this

“Previously, Paul might have assumed that his fervency and zeal were sufficient for doing God's work; but he came to learn that God has His own plan.”

persecutor of Christians had converted and was now fervently preaching Jesus:

But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 9:22)

However, his zeal soon attracted the attention of the unbelieving Jews, who, after some days, plotted to kill him (Acts 9:23). The disciples managed to help Paul escape, letting him down over a wall in a basket (Acts 9:25). Such were the beginnings of Paul's life as a Christian. Things did not improve when he arrived

at Jerusalem and attempted to join the disciples there. The latter were afraid of him and did not believe that he was one of them (Acts 9:26). Fortunately, Barnabas came forward to bring Paul to the apostles and explain how he had encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus, and that he was now boldly proclaiming the name of Jesus.

In Jerusalem, Paul tried to evangelize and debate with the Hellenists. But, like the Jews, they also sought to kill Paul (Acts 9:29). Once they discovered the unbelieving Hellenists' intentions, his



“ We should not make misguided claims, saying, “Thank God, the Lord worked with me.” Such statements suggest that it is my plan, my work, and the Lord Jesus follows my lead. The emphasis is on “I,” and on “me.” Are we the master and Jesus the worker? Does Jesus follow us? Is it our plan, our work? No. It is the other way round. ”

fellow Christians took Paul to Caesarea and sent him on to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

We can imagine that Paul must have been confused as to why his new faith in Jesus and his zeal in preaching brought nothing but trouble and danger. As he would later recall:

“Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’ So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’ ” (Acts 22:17–21)

Paul was doing his utmost to preach Jesus as the Son of God. Yet the Lord was telling him to leave quickly, as the Jews would not heed his words. Paul then attempted to reason with the Lord. He pointed out that, as he had previously been a prominent Jewish leader—one who had demonstrated great fervor by imprisoning Christians—would they not see his dramatic turnaround as proof of this gospel’s truth? But God’s thinking differed from Paul’s. God’s will was to send Paul away from the Jews, and to make him an apostle to the Gentiles. But He did not do it immediately; there would be a long period of preparation—one that Bible scholars estimate lasted at least a decade.

Acts 1:8 sets out God’s plan: the gospel would first be preached in Jerusalem and Judea, targeting the Jews (Acts 1–7); then, it would go to Samaria (Acts 8). This latter would be a transitional stage—a watershed—as it would be a massive cultural shift for the Jewish Christians to preach to, and associate with, non-Jews. As it transpired, the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to the Samaritans, a people of mixed heritage, for this task. The final stage would be to preach to the end of the earth—to the Gentiles (Acts 13).

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ” (Acts 13:45–47)

God’s will for Paul, disclosed over a decade earlier, was finally about to be fulfilled.

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:2–3)

In Acts 13:9, Saul’s Hebrew name is changed to Paul, a Greek name, as is fitting for an evangelist dedicated to the Gentiles. In Acts 14:4 and 14, Paul and Barnabas are referred to as “apostles.” In his letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote that the three key workers of the church, Peter, James and John, all acknowledged God’s plan that Paul and Barnabas would be their fellow workers—apostles to the uncircumcised, the Gentiles (Gal 2:7,9). Previously, Paul might have assumed that his fervency and zeal were sufficient for doing God’s work; but he came to learn that God has His own plan.

When we do church work today, we, likewise, need to understand the Lord’s will. This includes being clear on which area of the ministry He wants us to focus on. Some time ago, a faithful and zealous worker in the True Jesus Church aspired to become a preacher. For reasons unclear, he was unsuccessful in doing so. He pondered over the reasons for a long time, but continued to serve the Lord faithfully. It was not until he was elected to take on an important role to oversee God’s work in the General and International Assemblies that he finally understood; his colleagues remarked to him, “We can see that this is God’s plan for you.” He stood and testified for the Lord, shedding tears as he did so.

Testimonies like this remind us not to be discouraged. We may want to serve in a particular area, but it is important to wait for the timing and plan of the

“ Today, we should pray that the Lord opens this door for us too, so that we can see Him manifest His divine power. As God’s workers, we certainly have to do our part, but we must also entrust every aspect of the work to Him and ask Him to direct us. ”

Lord to be revealed. Meanwhile, we should remain faithful. When Paul came to understand God's purpose for him, he was able to serve Him faithfully to the end.

GOD'S WORK, NOT OUR WORK

Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27)

After the first missionary journey, Paul returned to Antioch and reported on all that God had done. He did not talk about what he had done, for he knew that it was not his work. This is a good reminder that, as God's servants, we may work hard in our service, but the outcome does not depend on us—it is in the hands of the Lord.

In church, there was a preacher who was sent to minister in different regions; he served God day and night, visiting lost sheep and doing outreach work. He thought that by putting in much effort, he would eventually reap the fruits of his labor. But things did not go as planned; in fact, he saw no results whatsoever. There came a point when he realized that he needed to rely on God. He knelt down to pray with tears, reflecting on the reasons for the poor outcome. Amazingly, after many prayers, he noticed that the lost believers started to return to church of their own accord. Moreover, truth-seekers came with their friends. Now, he understood that the ministry and its outcome belonged to God. Many years later, he encountered a similar situation. And when he knelt down to pray, God gave him the same experience. He regretted not relying on God from the start, and having to learn the same lesson a second time.

In contrast, this was not a lesson Paul ever forgot—he never failed to emphasize what “God had done” above his own works (Acts 15:4, 12; 21:17–19). Therefore, when he wrote to the church in Corinth, he took care to point out that workers have different roles and responsibilities, and there is no need to compare, compete, or take sides to argue whose work is more important.



The ancient city of Perga.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ... For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. (1 Cor 3:5–6, 9)

As God's fellow workers, we must work with the Lord. We should not make misguided claims, saying, “Thank God, the Lord worked with me.” Such statements suggest that it is *my* plan, *my* work, and the Lord Jesus follows *my* lead. The emphasis is on “I,” and on “me.” Are we the master and Jesus the worker? Does Jesus follow us? Is it our plan, our work? No. It is the other way round. Paul was very clear on these points. He was aware that he was merely fulfilling his part of the work; it is God who leads and gives the growth.

In Revelation 3:7, Jesus says He has the key of David, which opened the door of evangelism for the church in Philadelphia—a door that no one can shut. Paul uses the same metaphor on a number of occasions, reporting how God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9a; 2 Cor 2:12). He also makes this request:

Continue earnestly in prayer, being

vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains. (Col 4:2–3)

Paul learned the lesson that, as it was the Lord's work he was doing, God would be the One to open the door for evangelism. Today, we should pray that the Lord opens this door for us too, so that we can see Him manifest His divine power. As God's workers, we certainly have to do our part, but we must also entrust every aspect of the work to Him and ask Him to direct us. When the work is completed smoothly, do not say, or even think, it was “because of me.”

KNOW THAT THE LORD STANDS BY US

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

(2 Tim 3:10–11)

Paul wrote to Timothy to tell him about the trials he faced during his first missionary journey. In Antioch,

“ Paul learned that he had to undergo hardship, persecution and difficulties, and that he needed to endure to the end. The Lord delivered him, but when the time came, he was willing to die for the Lord. ”

he and Barnabas faced blasphemy and opposition from the Jews, who were filled with jealousy because of the response of the listening crowds (Acts 13:45). Instigated by the Jews, prominent people of the city persecuted them and expelled them from the city (Acts 13:50). In Iconium, the Jews stirred up the Gentiles to go against Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:2), and a violent attempt was made by both Jews and Gentiles to stone them (Acts 14:5). In Lystra, the Jews from the previous cities rallied the crowds and stoned Paul, dragging him out of the city and leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19).

Paul related these trials to Timothy, so that Timothy would understand that there would be opposition, obstacles, persecution and sufferings (2 Tim 3:11). But he also wanted him to know that the Lord had delivered him from these things.

As God’s workers, we should likewise expect to undergo trials and tribulations; we should not think our journey will be smooth sailing. Paul forewarned Timothy, so that he would know what to expect, so he could endure, as Paul had endured. This lesson also helped Paul to endure later in his ministry:

At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! (2 Tim 4:16–18)

Paul was imprisoned in Rome and abandoned by everyone on account of fear. Far from being resentful, he said,

“May it not be charged against them.” God was his reliance and comfort: “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me” (4:17).

The same challenges are likely to face church workers today. Recently, church workers at an Eastern Hemisphere meeting learned of obstacles faced by workers visiting two different countries. In one country, an elder was detained at the airport; he quickly texted his fellow workers to pray for him. After interrogation, he was deported. In the second country, a preacher was questioned at length by immigration officers on the purpose of his visit. It was not a pleasant experience. So we know there will be challenges for the workers going into pioneering areas, but we must trust in the Lord. It is natural to feel anxious, but we can pray to God and trust that His will be done.

CONCLUSION

Paul learned a number of important lessons on his first missionary journey. First, he came to understand the will and timing of the Lord, and that God’s work is not dependent solely on man’s zeal. Second, Paul learned that the work belongs to God, and not man. God is the One who opens the door of salvation, whereas the workers are merely doing their part to work with God. Third, Paul learned that he had to undergo hardship, persecution and difficulties, and that he needed to endure to the end. The Lord delivered him, but when the time came, he was willing to die for the Lord.

May the Lord strengthen us to serve Him with the same spirit that Paul did!

Aun Quek Chin
Singapore

What God Has Joined, Let No Man Separate (Part 1)

Compared to society in general, divorced couples are relatively uncommon in the True Jesus Church. Undeniably, however, there are many couples whose hearts have long separated although they themselves have not. The ripples of marital conflict and broken relationships spread far, causing unhappiness for the entire family, and eventually hurting even the larger church family. It is thus critical for us to understand the fundamentals of marriage, and God's will in bringing a man and a woman together. Marital difficulties may be inevitable, but our Lord who esteems marriage is willing to help those in such situations. Jesus performed His first miracle—turning water into wine—for the benefit of a newly-married couple. Key to this miracle was the protagonists' belief in the Lord and their willingness to follow His instructions. No problem is beyond

the Almighty, but we must do our part by repenting and turning back to His path. By relying on Him, we can protect the institution of marriage, bringing blessing to our families and glory to God.

IS DIVORCE PERMITTED?

They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

(Mk 10:4–9)

Today, marriage rates are falling even as divorce rates rise.¹ One reason for this is that society no longer esteems the institution of marriage in the same way it once did. For those who do marry, separating when things do not work out is a natural solution. Such societal norms have crept into the church. Some believers are adamant that marriage and divorce are private matters, and do not welcome "interference" from the church. They forget that marriage is instituted by God, and that they are accountable to Him. This was also a problem in Jesus' time. When He reminded the Pharisees of God's will, they challenged Him, saying, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" (Mt 19:7).

1. OECD (2018), Family Database, SF3.1 Marriage and divorce rate, accessed December 16, 2018, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/SF_3_1_Marriage_and_divorce_rates.pdf.



Jesus replied, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Mt 19:8).

To some, it may appear that Moses was giving in to those who stubbornly asserted a right to divorce. However, Moses did not condone divorce; he merely set out the legal parameters.

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house...”
(Deut 24:1)

The Law of Moses clearly states that the only grounds for divorce was uncleanness in the wife. Before a divorce was granted, the matter would have to be brought before the elders who would judge whether the man’s reason was justified. The Pharisaic challenge to Jesus arose because the rabbis themselves were divided on what constituted reasonable grounds for divorce. One group, the Shammaites, argued that only sexual immorality or unfaithfulness were acceptable; another group, the Hillelites, held that the husband could divorce his wife simply for falling out of his favor.² So Jesus had to remind the Jews that the only justification for divorce was infidelity:

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” (Mt 19:9)

Jesus’ teaching holds true for Christians today. In the absence of infidelity, the covenant stays intact, and the couple remains as one body in the sight of God. If they divorce and one party re-marries, the latter commits sin. Therefore, we must heed Jesus’ words: “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mk 10:9). Since God made man and woman, and brought them together to be one body, one flesh, marriage is the will of God. We must, thus, remember

“ Jesus’ teaching holds true for Christians today. In the absence of infidelity, the covenant stays intact, and the couple remains as one body in the sight of God. If they divorce and one party re-marries, the latter commits sin. ”

that marriage is a divine institution, not a mere human invention.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

Many cultures have the idea that each person is destined to marry his or her soulmate—a match made in heaven. We may also have heard people say that if you cannot win a person’s heart, then it is not meant to be. The truth is, although marriage is established by God, He does not predetermine our spouse. So we need not worry that we may choose someone whom God has not intended for us—the “wrong rib bone,” as it were, or the wrong Adam. We are free to choose whom we wish to marry, subject to the important condition that God has set: we should find our spouse from within the church. Some misunderstand the rationale for this condition, thinking that it is based on the assumption that individuals in church are better. This is not the case, since none of us is perfect. In fact, there are many individuals outside of True Jesus Church who have good qualities. Nevertheless, God has stipulated this requirement because He cares about our faith.

In choosing a spouse, there are undoubtedly many considerations—the most fundamental being whether two people love each other. Another consideration may be health; for example, what if the object of one’s affection has many serious ailments? Looks are important for some people; while others prioritize strength of character, knowing that physical beauty eventually fades. Aside from personal preferences, the opinions of parents may also be a factor. All parents want a better life for their children. Hence they would be concerned whether their child and their child’s potential spouse

have the financial resources to build a secure life together.

How should the matter of faith feature in the choice of spouse?

Some dismiss faith as a factor, arguing that good character transcends choice of religion. However, the reality is that marrying someone of a different faith will bring many issues. Not only will it affect our personal faith, it will also have lasting implications for our children, grandchildren, and wider family. The couple may love each other and agree on most issues, but how will they decide in matters of faith? Should children be baptized? How should non-Christian in-laws be handled if they expect participation in their religious traditions? And if we decided to give in and give up on our faith, how will we give an account to God on the day of judgment?

Parents need to encourage their children to marry in the Lord. This starts with the correct mindset. Rather than focusing on wealth, societal accomplishments or status, parents should guide children to prioritize Christian virtues, such as the fear of God, in their choice of spouse. If we uphold the principle of marriage in the Lord in our lives, then God will esteem our marriage and the marriages of our children. On the other hand, if we consistently prioritize wealth over faith, status over service to the Lord, love for leisure over love for the Lord, how will God bless our marriages? When things go wrong, we cannot say to God, “Forgive me, I made the wrong choice. Let me switch spouses now.” To err is human, and for some things in life, we get second or third chances to try again. But marriage is not one of them because two have become one, and what God has joined, man cannot

² The ESV® Study Bible, The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 1860.

separate. This is why we must exercise much care in choosing wisely.

GOD'S PLAN

Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:22–25)

When God made Adam, He said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen 2:18). He then proceeded to put Adam into a deep sleep, removed one of his ribs and used it to create a woman. God could have created Adam and Eve simultaneously but chose to do so sequentially. This was not due to lack of planning for the Omniscient Creator. Nor could Eve have been a mere afterthought for a Creator who loves all His creatures (Ps 139:13–16). God deliberately delayed the creation of Eve. We can infer three possible reasons for this.

Being Alone Is Not Good

First, God wanted Adam to know that being alone was not good. When God brought his wife to him, Adam's reaction was telling: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:23). Adam had been lonely, and was extremely appreciative when God gave him a companion. It is a blessing to have a God-given spouse. However, there may be times when we do not treasure our companion. Worse, we feel glad when we are away from them. This ought not to be the case. Cherish the time we have with our spouse. Absence may make the heart grow fonder, but let us not take each other for granted when we are together each day.

Needing a Helper

In Adam's case, being alone was not

good because he was without a helper (Gen 2:20b). There is always a great sense of achievement when we are able to succeed independently. However, sometimes in life, one pair of hands is not enough and an additional pair of helping hands is warmly welcome. This is the second reason God created Eve through this process: He wanted Adam to realize that he had limitations before He brought him a helper. This is our amazing heavenly Father and Creator—He knows that no matter how capable one is, there will be occasions where support and help are needed. He provides such a person for us. In turn, we ought to thank God and treasure this helper for life.

Two Become One

The third reason for this sequence of events is that God wanted Adam to know that His will was for two to become one. Eve was taken from Adam's body, but through marriage, God joined them back into one. When Adam saw Eve, he said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." God enabled Adam to understand this truth, and He wants us to understand as well.

If we understand God's will in relation to marriage, we will not be casual over our relationships. Engaging in pre-marital sex is wrong because we are treating this most intimate of relationships as a game. God only permits sexual relationships within

REMAINING SINGLE IS A GIFT

It is a fact of life that, for a variety of reasons, some believers are still single despite being of marriageable age. Anxious parents may fret and urge them to quickly settle down. Well-meaning friends may incessantly offer to matchmake them, some going even so far as to propose non-believers!

While having a companion is good (Eccl 4:9–11), remaining alone can be a positive thing for some believers. The Lord Jesus Himself spoke about this:

"For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it." (Mt 19:12)

Jesus mentions three categories of individuals who may opt out of marriage. The first are those whom He terms "eunuchs from birth"—those who have certain congenital conditions that prevent them from being married. Putting pressure on them to do so would be inappropriate. The second are "eunuchs" because of a situation or their environment: for example, illnesses that make them unsuitable for marriage. The third category consists of those who wish to serve the Lord wholeheartedly, making a personal decision to stay single. The True Jesus Church does not impose marriage as an eligibility criterion on her full-time workers, as the church understands that marriage has its share of issues. If a worker of God decides that he or she does not want to bear the potential burdens that arise from marriage—and this worker has the special gift from God to remain single (1 Cor 7:7)—then we should respect and commend his or her decision.

In short, we should not presume that being single is undesirable. We must never ridicule those who are single, or assume they have a problem; if we do, then we are undiscerning and do not know the word of God.

the confines of marriage. When two become one, they are husband and wife and cannot be separated. In addition, there cannot be a third party, for this would be adultery—the breaking of the marriage covenant.

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (Heb 13:4)

We must honor marriage, the One who instituted marriage, and we must honor our spouse. Many forget they have to honor the marriage bed and ensure it remains undefiled. As a result, some defile the bed even before they are married. Others defile the marriage bed after they are married through adultery. God sees all things: even though the spouse may not know, God will know. The guilty party may view it as a one-off affair, or a bit of fun, but in God's eyes that person has defiled the marriage bed, and He will judge. Therefore, we need to stay holy before and during marriage, and be alert to possible temptations. The devil would like to destroy our marriage, and some have been enticed to sin against God in this way.

In 1 Corinthians 7:1–9, Paul advises those who have not received the special gift of singleness to marry. He explains that it is best for a man to have his own wife, and a woman her own husband. Paul's further advice is that a married couple should only abstain from sexual relations for a time, with consent—for example, to devote themselves to fasting and prayer. Afterwards, they should come together again and not deprive one another. God established

sexual union as a gift to humans. Thus, we should not view it as something unwholesome. Neither should we use it as a weapon, withholding it against our spouse: the husband should render to his wife the affection due to her, and vice versa. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Sexual relations are less frequently addressed in the True Jesus Church's pulpit ministry and, within more conservative societies, there may be some embarrassment about open discussion on this topic. But there is some urgency to facilitating a clear understanding in this area, as sexual relations is a key issue in the marital problems faced by couples in the church. When a husband and wife have problems, their sexual relationship will inevitably be affected. This leaves a foothold for the devil and, left unresolved, can lead the parties concerned to fall into temptation—that is, to look for fulfilment outside their marriage.

CONCLUSION

Satan would like to see marriages destroyed—for us to defile the marriage bed, and for us to hurt our spouse by withholding the intimacy that is due to them as part of this sacred covenant. Therefore, it is important that we understand God's will and His purpose in instituting marriage. In His infinite wisdom and love, He does not want us to be alone and lonely. He wants us to have a helper, someone with whom we can share a life and grow together as

one in faith and love. Marriage is a gift from God that we should honor. What God has joined, let no man separate.

“Some defile the bed even before they are married. Others defile the marriage bed after they are married through adultery. God sees all things: even though the spouse may not know, God will know. The guilty party may view it as a one-off affair, or a bit of fun, but in God's eyes that person has defiled the marriage bed, and God will judge.”

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FELLOWSHIP 2019

SOUTH KOREA

DISCERN THE TIMES AND JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES JUNE 6–16, 2019

CALLING ALL YOUTHS (aged 18–40 years):

As we are in the end time, the True Jesus Church would like to use this occasion to invite youths from all over the world to come together to share and reflect on the God-given mission for the church and to kindle our zeal through the power of the Holy Spirit. Registration will be open to 250 youths, and will close when the number of applicants reaches capacity.

ITINERARY

The event will have two parts:

June 6–9: Four-day fellowship at a Christian retreat near Seoul

June 10–16: Seven-day visitation and tour

HOW TO REGISTER

Besides the youth in South Korea, all interested participants should:

1. Obtain the information and registration form from his/her local church.
2. Submit completed registration form to their local church before March 31, 2019.
3. Wait for confirmation letter before completing online registration and booking flight tickets.

Registration Fee:

Fellowship: US\$100

Visitation and Tour: US\$500

May the Lord Jesus Christ move you to take this rare opportunity to meet and have fellowship with brethren in Christ from various parts of the world!



Call for Articles

Issue #89: Discern the Times

Articles due:

March 1, 2019

In Luke chapter 12, Jesus delivered a series of messages to the multitude concerning how to live a meaningful life: do not lay up treasure in this life, but be rich toward God; do not worry about our physical needs, but seek the kingdom of God and rely on His providence; do not be complacent, but be prepared for the Master's arrival. He drives these point home with two questions:

"Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?" (Lk 12:56–57)

As members of the True Jesus Church—the true church of the end times—we must carefully consider these questions. Are we discerning the times and judging correctly? Or do we deny the signs of the times, and carry out our lives as though Jesus will never come again?

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. ... Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God? (2 Pet 3:10–12a)

As the apostle Peter exhorts, in light of the end times, we must

live in holy conduct and godliness, and wait for God's coming.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

(2 Tim 4:3–4)

Have we become, as Paul warns, believers who are so distracted by alternative ideas, lifestyle philosophies, and fictions that we have become undiscerning towards God's word? When the disciples asked Jesus about the sign of the end of the age, He replied, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Mt 24:4b).

There will be severe deception in the end times, so we need sound biblical principles and spiritual discernment to keep us from harm. As the Lord's coming draws nearer each day, we must urgently prepare for these challenges. Let us reflect: What are the unique challenges we are facing today? Are we ready and able to discern? And how should we prepare ourselves, in holy conduct and godliness, to meet our Lord and Savior?

General Writing Guidelines

Content

- Content should be biblically sound and adhere to biblical principles.
- The 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.
- Do not plagiarize the work of other writers or institutions, published either in print or online. Any quotations, ideas, or concepts taken from other sources must be properly referenced.

Grammar/Style

- Use active instead of passive voice.
- Write concisely.
- Use concrete words and ideas instead of abstract concepts.
- Use "plain English" instead of obscure, academic language.
- Use the NKJV version when quoting Bible verses.
- Use American spelling, if possible. in print or online.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please email articles as Microsoft Word documents to manna@tjc.org

Please direct any questions to manna@tjc.org or Fax: +1-562-402-3190

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

Manna only accepts submissions written by True Jesus Church members. 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: 2500–3000 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: 2500–3000 words.

Exhortation

An Exhortation encourages and admonishes the reader in different aspects of the Christian faith.

Article length: 2000–2500 words.

Testimony

A Testimony recounts an experience in the Lord that will encourage and edify the reader.

Article length: 1500–2000 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?

Articles of Faith



Jesus the True God

Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh, died on the cross for the redemption of sinners, resurrected on the third day, and ascended to heaven. He is the only Savior of mankind, the Creator of the heavens and earth, and the only true God.



Holy Spirit

Receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, is the guarantee of our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.



Footwashing

The sacrament of footwashing enables one to have a part with the Lord Jesus. It also serves as a constant reminder that one should have love, holiness, humility, forgiveness, and service. Every person who has received water baptism must have his/her feet washed in the name of Jesus Christ. Mutual footwashing may be practiced whenever it is appropriate.



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 in Him so that we can have eternal life and be raised on the last day. This sacrament shall be held as often as possible. Only one unleavened bread and grape juice shall be used.



Salvation

Salvation is given by the grace of God through faith. Believers must rely on the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness, to honor God, and to love humanity.



Holy Bible

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is inspired by God, the only scriptural truth, and the standard for Christian living.



Baptism

Water baptism is the sacrament for the remission of sins for regeneration. The baptism must take place in natural living water, such as a river, sea, or spring. The baptist, who already has received baptisms of water and the Holy Spirit, conducts the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the person receiving the baptism must be completely immersed in water with head bowed and face down.



Church

The True Jesus Church, established by our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit during the time of the "latter rain," is the restored true church of the apostolic time.



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 salvation, and with the hope of eternal rest in the life to come.



Judgment Day

The Lord's Second Coming will take place on the last day when He descends from heaven to judge the world: the righteous will receive eternal life, while the wicked will be eternally condemned.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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