

Graceland
CBCSD Newsletter #28
April 18, 2021

*"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of ... is a land of the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it...
(Deuteronomy 11:11-12)*

Words from the Editor:

Do you constantly use your electronic devices, thus interrupting your daily devotion plans and even your relationship with your family? Did something you learnt or experienced in the past affect your views, making you live in bondage for many years? The theme of this issue is "Spiritual New Insight." Brothers and sisters share how God helps them re-prioritize their lives or change their views through His words and experiences in life, which also help them to improve their relationship with God and with others. May the Spirit of Truth help us to be sensitive to the spiritual, be willing to obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit and do more things after God's heart!

Spiritual New Insight



Breaking Cellular Habits

By Emily Xu, Main Campus

Ever since I became a Christian, I have always wanted to rise early and read the Bible. I tried every year as part of my New Year's resolution; unfortunately, either I was unable to wake early, or I got up and got distracted.

Right around last Christmas, I started thinking again, "Another year is coming, what can I do about my repetitive failures in this New Year's resolution?" As I was miserably pondering, an idea occurred to me like a lightbulb flashing on. I realized that my cell phone was the culprit of my repeated failure in completing my New Year's resolution. Once I woke up, I'd reach for my phone and naturally check emails and messages. Soon, morning devotions were forgotten. We have a family rule that no electronics are allowed in the kids' bedrooms. Due to virtual learning last year, the rule was loosened, but electronics still can't be in bedrooms overnight. I decided to apply this rule to myself when The Holy Spirit asked me, "Your kids' electronics are not allowed to stay in their bedrooms overnight, why not yours too?" Ah-ha! Since that revelation, my cell phone has spent the night downstairs.

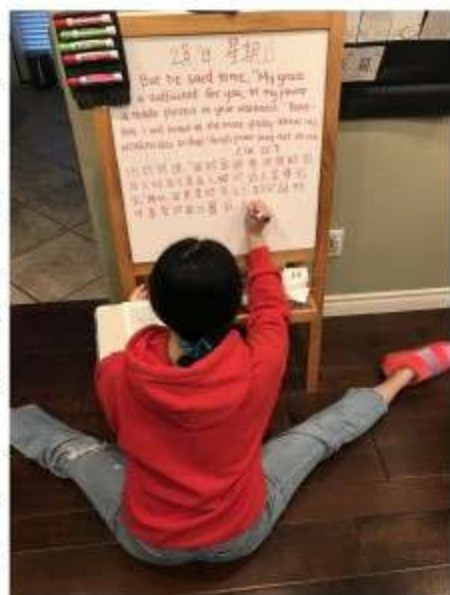
We have another routine, which is copying the daily verse from the Bible app to the whiteboard in English and Chinese. I started getting



up early and had the time and attention to copy down the verse and read the corresponding chapter. Soon after, I wanted to incorporate a daily one mile run into this morning plan, so I started listening to the Bible while running. When 2021 arrived, I found our church calendar which includes a year-long Bible reading plan. Hallelujah! It seems that

several small pieces appeared in place at the right time to make my resolution easier to accomplish. All I needed to do was follow each step. Now, my day starts like this: I wake up naturally, go downstairs, and open the Bible app to copy down the daily verse in English and Chinese. Then I find the church calendar's Bible reading of the day, put on air pods and running shoes, and go. In the first light of dawn, I jog my mile, breathing in the cool air while listening to God's word and the background music of birds chirping and flowers rustling. It fills my body, my mind, and my soul with warmth.

Two months have passed, and my resolution lives on; so far, I have only encountered pleasant surprises. Since I left my cell phone downstairs, I've discovered more free time for reading in bed instead of scrolling through social media. I was hoping to have 30 minutes of reading time daily and now I have an abundance of time from breaking my constant phone-checking habit. I have discovered new knowledge and connections in the Bible because of all the books I have the time to read, coupled with my daily Bible listening and the weekly Bible Study Fellowship. Further, my husband and I had the time and knowledge for deeper conversations that could delve into theological questions. Everything, including the college decision-making process, could be traced into Christian theology. But these are not the only benefits. Not long ago, my 12-year-old daughter asked if she could join me for a weekend morning run. So each of us wore one air pod, running one after the other, sometimes even quickly commenting on a Bible story. My 16-year-old gets up earlier than me on the weekends, and she helps me with copying down the daily verse. The Chinese version takes her a while, but it is nonetheless precious time spent together.



Our God is a God who is willing to help us grow. He guided me to leave my cell phone, and through that small change we were blessed. This change enabled my resolution and further lifestyle improvements like my ability to run a full mile although I had never passed the half-



mile mark in my youth; it gave me time to listen to and ponder God's Word and even created special bonding time for our family as we enjoy God's Word together. God always does immeasurably more than all we could ask for or imagine of. ◆



Enlightenment Through Cooking

By Michael Hsu, Main Campus

When I was little, I came across this Mencius saying: “A gentleman never steps into the kitchen.” Since I was a boy, this saying naturally was kept deep in me, until one day it was so internalized that it spread into my skin and became a way to prove my manhood. Later, every time my mother tried to teach me cooking, I refused without hesitation. I believed the ancient saints must be right. For a man, enjoying food but not knowing how to make it is the ultimate truth among truths.

Then I became a Christian. In the Bible, I most liked this verse: “...the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man.” I felt God had stamped His approval on my self-cultivated motto. It reaffirmed my belief that I was truly walking in the truth of all truths. Therefore, when my mother again tried to convince me to learn cooking, I added one more reason, derived from the Bible. Even after I got married, no matter how my mother tried to persuade me or my relatives suggested that I help my wife with the cooking, I thought that whatever they said was heresy.



Then one day, I was so bored with the same old dishes my wife cooked that I complained. My wife said, “How about you make it yourself?” I felt she was not very obedient to me, the head. Out of the intention of teaching her a lesson and being a good example for her, so that she would learn what dishes would be good for me, I cooked.

However, I tasted joy that I had never experienced before through cooking. When I delivered the dishes to my wife, seeing the enjoyment on her face gave me so much satisfaction; furthermore, after my wife had the food I cooked for her, she proactively took over the dishwashing job and she stopped nagging me! All of this made me ponder: why did my wife become humbler when I, the head, cooked?

One day when I was doing my devotion, an idea came to me: “Christ is the head of the church and of every man, but Christ is the Lord who serves people; in a similar manner, the husband is the wife’s head not to boss the wife around, but rather to serve.” I felt like I had seen a new bright light, shining through the cloud of pride in my heart. From then on, with a more joyous and serving heart, I started to help my wife with the cooking. My nagging wife suddenly stopped nagging.

Through this experience of learning to cook, I was led onto a path of blessing. Even more, I found a new and deeper meaning while reading the Bible. When we read the Bible, it’s better not to hold any presumptions from selfish desire or worldly value.

Since then, I am also more attentive to social topics such as “women’s rights from a biblical basis.” I am deeply convinced

that as a Christian, a husband should not

**A house is not
a home without
God in it.**

treat his wife with a worldly domineering attitude. Only when a husband willingly and humbly serves and loves his wife can the essence of “God is the Lord of my house” be present. ◆

Amen



From Sickness to Health and From Blessings to Gratitude

By Gloria Liu, North Campus



My husband and I are both in our 80s already. In the beginning of January, we were both tested positive for COVID-19. With weeks of medical treatments, quarantine, and intensive care, we have mostly recovered from the sickness. During this precarious life and death struggle, we experienced firsthand the depth of godly love from family members and brothers and sisters in Christ. Their generous helping hands and continuous prayers transcended the physical barriers between us.

First of all, we are grateful that God has watched over us all along and the Holy Spirit has comforted us with His words: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16 : 33) While our bodies were stricken and shaken by the virus, His words brought us peace of mind and renewed conviction.



Secondly, we are grateful that God has bestowed on us a daughter-in-law who is an embodiment of grace, beauty,



kindness, and talent that is second to none. She was the one who noticed that I sounded different and was coughing over our phone conversation. When she rushed over, I had already developed a fever over 40 degrees Celsius. She immediately drove us to urgent care where we both

tested positive with massive inflammation in our lungs. Despite the risk of being infected herself, she insisted on keeping us company for more than 6 hours. Since the hospital was out of beds, she brought us back to her home and took upon herself all the responsibilities of caring for us as our son was away in Shanghai. She made sure we were quarantined strictly and had proper medical treatments, enough oxygen supply, and good nutrition and care, all of which played a key role in our ultimate victory over the virus.

Lastly, we are also very grateful for the many prayers from the brothers and sisters at our Oceanside nursing home. Our peace-giving God has surely answered their prayers and has protected us and healed us with His amazing grace. With heartfelt gratitude, we pray that all the praises, honor, and glory be unto God our Father in Heaven! ◆



Sunday School on Judges and Ruth

By Donna Cheng, Central Campus



Since the pandemic, our church couldn't gather in person, so every meeting and bible study was moved online. Because of that, I had the opportunity to join Sunday School for the Old Testament. Before the pandemic, I had not been going to Sunday School for a while due to my commitment in the Children's Ministry. When I returned, it was like a good rain after a long drought. I indeed needed such a learning opportunity.

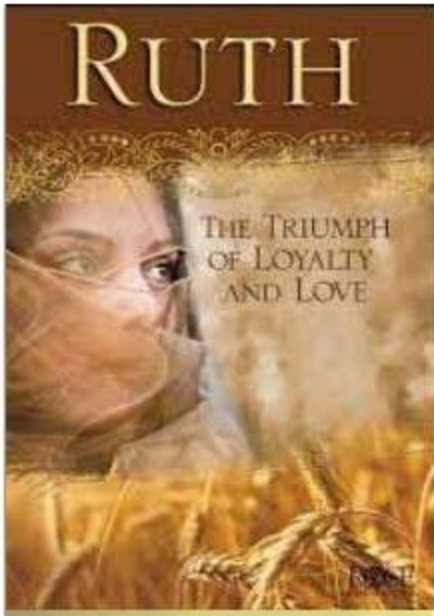
I especially thank the Sunday School teachers who wholeheartedly contributed to the lessons. In every single class, lecture notes were elaborately prepared with citations of pictures, words, maps, and historical backgrounds. They explained profound theories in simple language, refined the main themes of our readings with context, threaded the past to the present, related the ancient to our current reality, stimulated students to think and discuss about the pandemic and the election, and pointed out that spiritual significance remains valid even now.

In *Judges*, the Israelites forsake God to follow the Gentiles' idols. God's wrath fell upon them and they were subjugated by those Gentiles.



When the Israelites finally cried out to God in their suffering, God appointed judges to help them escape from their enemies. However, when the judges died, Israel returned to worshipping idols and doing evil, thus falling short in the eyes of God. When I saw that the Israelites lived with this evil cycle, I was very uncomfortable. However, this also taught me that if we truly repent in front of God, He will always come to our rescue.

In *Ruth*, I saw the light and hope of God's salvation. God used a Gentile woman, Ruth, to fulfil His purpose. Ruth followed her mother-in-law Naomi out of her faith and returned



to Bethlehem, where she met Boaz and had her son Obed, David's grandfather, through which Jesus was born. In the genealogy of Jesus, Boaz was born through Salmon and the Gentile woman Rahab. This shows how Gentile women, even in the Old Testament, became a member of God's kingdom and accomplished God's will through their faith.

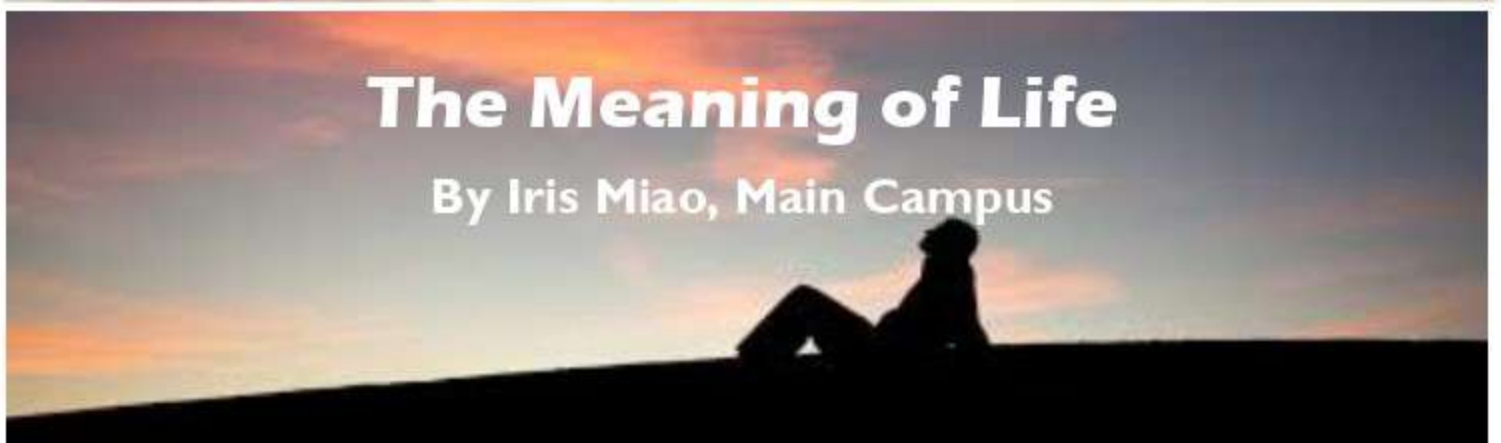
Through the questions and discussions in Sunday School, I also learned Old Testament law and the spiritual significance of Sola Fide (faith alone). Although Moses' law was for protection and the blessing of the Israelites, to lead them in a holy life worshipping the one true God, the laws also revealed sin to humans without the possibility of being set free by their own righteousness. Therefore, the sacrifice and atonement were put in place because the law couldn't solve the problem of sin. Only when Jesus came and became the sacrifice, made human through God's grace, could humanity be saved through faith alone.

I am thankful God gave me such an opportunity; I have learned so much through it. I would encourage everyone to participate in Sunday School and grow together in the Lord. ◆



The Meaning of Life

By Iris Miao, Main Campus



I will never forget the deep pit near my childhood home.

One day, at the tender age of 6, I was walking by that pit and caught off guard by the sight of what appeared to be a few human thigh bones. I was so terrified that I scrambled home immediately. From that moment onwards, the fear of death started to haunt me. At night, I would stare at the swaying shadow of the tree outside of my window and think to myself: "What a terrible thing it would be to die and turn into those

hideous bones, unable to behold such a beautiful world.” A few days went by, and I couldn’t help telling my dad about what was bothering me. My dad responded with a fit of laughter at first and then addressed me solemnly: “Every human being has only one life to live and will die one day, yet there are still many years and a long road ahead of you. The fact that we all have only one life to live makes it more important to live with meaning.”



My dad’s words became my motto from then on and I refused to settle with mediocrity. I studied hard and worked hard to stay competitive. I would feel like I was on top of

the world when things went well and in the darkest pit when things went badly. I was self-centered and my self-worth was based on the success or failure I had, measured by the world’s standard. Again and again, I was frustrated and embittered by the defeat I encountered and yet, I insisted on persevering.

Three years ago, I reached rock bottom. My youth had passed and I felt that my life had no impact no matter how hard I strove. My efforts were not being recognized and appreciated at work even though I sacrificed my family time. I attended a professional training class one day and made acquaintances with a few successful role models that I had wished I would become. I was surprised to discover that they were all devout Christians. I had always equated religion with superstition in the past and therefore was desperate to find out how the Bible led people as successful as brother George Chu to believe in God.

After a quick overview of the Bible, my worldview started an amazing transformation. I saw the divinity of Jesus Christ through His sacrifice on the cross, and the unwavering conviction and unstoppable faith of



Nehemiah through his relentless pursuit of God’s will despite his repeated setbacks and frustrations. I started rethinking the purpose of my life. God loves me no matter what, even if I were as tiny as a grain of sand. Wasn’t that the meaning of life that I’d been searching for?

I found inner peace after I learned to view the world around me using God's perspective. What used to be competition and scheming at work has now become cooperation between imperfect people, and I pray to God continuously that He would use my imperfection to accomplish things that are pleasing to Him so that His name would be glorified. I used to overthink what to say for fear of offending other people and sometimes was envious of those who could communicate well. Now, if my intentions in speaking are good, I know God will either help me say the right thing or give me an opportunity for growth. I used to care a lot about what others said about me and now I am more focused on what God would say about me.



Sometimes temptation leaps out to accuse me, "Look at how miserable you are! The most insignificant of all. Are you going to just accept that?" But another voice would jump out to remind me of all the transformation I've experienced since I came to believe in and depend on God. In the past, I read many books about wisdom, yet my heart was still full of bitterness. After I learned to view the world through God's lens, I am no longer in need of those books. Knowing God is the beginning of my wisdom and the source of my peace.



I knocked on the door and God opened it for me; I asked for wisdom and God opened my eyes; I sought the meaning of life and God revealed His love for me. I believe that God will guide me through the rest of my life as long as I have the faith to follow Him, seek His will and glorify His name. ◆

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