Message from the R.E. Coordinator

Hallelujah! In the name of Lord Jesus Christ, I share a message for the start of the 2014-2015 R.E. term.

The theme for this R.E. year is “Living the Word of God.” When I came up with last year’s theme, “Reverence in the House of the Lord,” I knew that the following year should have a theme that builds upon and progresses from the first. So “Living the Word of God” has been set for a year, and we should think of it as a growing continuation of the virtues and actions we promoted in “Reverence in the House of the Lord.”

“Living the Word of God” encourages actions outside of church, where we are most of our lives. It encourages us to do exactly what the Bible wants us to do: “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” (Jas 2:17-18)

While the NKJV translation uses “works,” the NIV translation uses “deeds.” So although Houston TJC could always use more workers to help with church duties, the above verses are not limited to holy work such as interpretation, piano-playing or even cleaning. Rather, your faith in Jesus Christ and your identity as a Christian should show in your actions, your behavior.

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Mt 5:14-16)

And like last year’s R.E. theme, I share it for our mutual encouragement. It is not only something I want to promote and see the fruit of in the R.E. students, their families and the teachers, but also in myself.

May the Lord guide all of us so that we may be blessed in His presence and by His abidance, and may all the glory be unto Jesus Christ.

~ Sis. Margareetta Chiu

Important Dates

First Lesson of Q1: September 6
Gospel Tea Fellowship: September 20
Fall ESSC: September 26-28
Last Lesson of Q1: November 29

Kindergarten Class Q&A

Q: What cool things did you do this summer and what do you thank God for?

Evan: I love spending time in the swimming pool and I thank God for my new Sketchers light up shoes.

Hannah: I thank God because I love swimming and church.

Isaac: This summer I went to watch baseball in a baseball stadium and I really thank God for helping me not fall in the water.

Micah: I went traveling with my family to Boston and Canada. I also thank God because I got to taste Maple ice cream!

Zacchaeus: I really thank God my family went on a road trip to Vegas and had a great time!
Working Together in the Lord

BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
(Psalm 133:1)

On Saturday, August 30th, 2014, a large group of willing brethren and friends, young and old, gathered together to care for the house of the Lord. After a full day of Sabbath worship, they voluntarily stayed behind and endured the afternoon heat to remove dead bushes, replant new bushes, and trim the trees in the front and side yard of the church. This was no easy task and required upwards of four hours of work.

These pictures hopefully capture the beauty of coming together with one heart and one mind to serve our Father in heaven who loves and cares for us. What a deeply moving reminder and lesson for us all. So much can be achieved when we are united as one! Furthermore, what a wonderful experience it was for our little ones to be able to participate in this effort. At the end of the evening, one of the youngest R.E. students remarked with joy, “My shoes got really muddy because I worked really hard for God today!”

May our servitude to one another and our heavenly Father always bring us bountiful joy in Him!

Home Away from Home

Praise and thank God that Elizabeth had a wonderful experience at the Pre-K class in Taipei church this summer. The class, which was also attended by the parents of the students, was during Sabbath afternoon service and lasted for about an hour. Two wonderful teachers taught 10-15 students to sing praises to God while having fun with instruments, and to kneel down to pray in words of understanding. The students also enjoyed making a card in the shape of a shirt and tie for Father’s Day (August 8 in Taiwan), and an airplane that flies really high! Praise God and thanks to the teachers for their effort in the Lord!

~ Sis. Iris Franz
Regional High School Theological Seminar (RHTS) Reflections

In the name of Jesus Christ, I write a reflection. I honestly hope that if this reflection gets published, it remains anonymous as I feel some of these things are personal.

So this year I went to RHTS in Queens church. I remember submitting my registration and then minutes later I received an e-mail saying I was too young to join. After many rounds of e-mails, thank God, they made an exception for me (not because I was exceptionally mature, but because my plane ticket had already been bought). I remember seeing all the Bible reading and thinking that I should’ve gone to SSC instead. But after I managed to finish all the Bible reading, I was really excited to begin RHTS. I remember meeting my group, from which I made many new friends, in addition to renewing friendships with one another.

I still remember the first day of the classes. I sat through them, almost on the verge of tears in many of them, because I felt like I was a jerk and too proud. I prayed about it during the first few prayer sessions and, thank God, I felt like God accepted my apology. But even after all the prayers, I felt like I should’ve gone to SSC instead, but I knew there was no turning back.

By the middle of RHTS, I felt my spiritual growth accelerate in addition to my maturity level. I was able to understand the classes and I really thank God I didn’t back out of RHTS. I started feeling the power of intercession. For example, I prayed for brother ***** and he received the Holy Spirit. After that experience, I knew that God really does like intercession.

I also found the importance of having spiritual friends. By the end of RHTS, I felt like I was closer to God than ever, but I knew that I had to actually keep my goals to maintain a Christian life. Thank God, my group also felt the same way and we decided to do a daily Bible reading and prayer program together via Skype. I felt that doing a Bible reading/prayer plan with others helped me stay on track.

All in all, I learned a lot from this RHTS. Whether it was the Bible studies, classes, or personal experiences, I felt like I learned a lot this RHTS. May all the glory be unto His name. Amen.

~ Bro. Joshua Wong
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I share a reflection on the Regional High School Theological Seminar (RHTS) in 2014. RHTS has officially been the longest church seminar I’ve attended in my life and yet, it went by like it happened in a day. I thank and praise God that He gave me the opportunity to attend by far the most edifying and fruitful seminar I’ve ever been to.

Classes in RHTS surrounded the theme “A Life of Prayer.” All of the classes had a large impact on me because every message really cut through the heart. One of my favorite classes was called “Prayer of the Saints.” In this class, we studied the prayers of people in the Bible and extracted the teachings from them. From David’s prayer of repentance, to Abraham’s prayer of intercession, all the way to Nehemiah’s prayer for the protection of the Israelites, there was always something new that we could incorporate into our prayer lives.

Our main prayer that we focused on was The Lord’s Prayer. I really learned the true meaning behind every word in this prayer that we know by heart. For example, we studied the first phrase, “Our Father who art in heaven.” What is the true meaning behind the word “Father”? It means that our prayers should be personal and that the Most High and Mighty God we know in heaven is small enough to listen to our prayers. It speaks of God’s love and compassion because a father provides, protects, and sustains. We indeed do not and should not treat him like any old idol. Our God in heaven is our Father. Now, as I think about this first phrase of The Lord’s Prayer, it puts tears to my eyes. Having been able to learn about the meaning of The Lord’s Prayer, I could also incorporate the format of The Lord’s Prayer into my own prayers in RHTS.

Through everything in RHTS, I gained the most from prayer encouragements and prayers. After all, the theme was “A Life of Prayer.” In prayer, I was able to realize that becoming close to God doesn’t come through having that one experience of “seeing God.” Halfway through RHTS, I saw that this was not the right way of thinking. We should not come to a seminar just to pursue a single experience where we see a vision or see a miracle where God appears and talks to us. Rather, it comes from small moments of drawing close to God over a long period of time. With this understanding, we can know that the life we live is reflective of how good our prayers are. We should live a life where God can be glorified, even in the smallest tasks we perform.

Our journey of faith is progressive, and we always hope that we can stay at the top of our spiritual mountain. For me, I prayed, and am still praying, that I can stay on top of this mountain so that I may reach above the clouds in the next SSC, instead of tumbling down. It says in Psalm 24:3, “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?” I hope that in coming SSC’s and RHTS’s I can climb and stand in His holy place.

This concludes my reflection. May all the glory, praise, and honor be given unto His holy name.

~ Sis. Sophia Wong
NYTS Reflection

Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I share my experiences at NYTS 2014.

Thank God that I had the opportunity to attend NYTS, despite having a full time job as well. This is the second time that I have attended NYTS so I had the same expectations as last year which were quite high. Upon arrival at Irvine church, I was met with warm welcomes from friends I had not seen in so long. It was truly wonderful to catch up with these people and to hear what was going on in their lives.

Once NYTS officially started, I met my group and to my surprise, they put me with a lot of people that I did not know. A lot of my group members were first time NYTS students and they were really shy and quiet. This is what I had feared the most, that my group would be the socially awkward one and that no one would be talking for 2 weeks. However, thank God after getting to know my group better, the silence turned to a lack of silence and we all become quite close friends.

NYTS has always been a time for me to quiet my heart and to truly give 100% of my attention and energy in classes and prayer. These are the precious moments that I yearn for every year once NYTS comes around. The moments when you get to sit down and just think by yourself about the past and how God has blessed you and also how you want to improve your life for God. The first week of NYTS, I spent most of my prayers for myself and my group members. We were all going through trials and we really needed the guidance of God to understand what His will is for us. It was nice to have so many people constantly praying around you and with you.

The classes in the first week were pretty standard, except for the book of Zechariah. That book is really hard to understand! But thank God, Pr. Hu was able to explain it more clearly to us. One thing that stuck out to me was our music teachers for the first week of NYTS. It was a young couple from Chicago and little did I know they were world famous musicians. They taught with such power and understanding of music which really inspired everyone. But most of all, they bore a wonderful testimony about how they came to believe. (If you haven’t heard it, go online and watch it!). For both of them to have so much talent and fame in the music world, God humbled them and led them out of their trials because God wanted them to dedicate their lives to Him.

Thinking back on the testimony made me reflect on what I have given to God. Yes I may partake in holy work at church but does that mean that I have completely given my life into God’s hands? I needed to make sure that everything I did was a good and pure sacrifice to God. Towards the second week of NYTS, I started pondering on the meaning of prayer. I felt so selfish continuously praying about my own affairs that I started to lose power in my prayers. I started to think of new things to pray about and thank God I was presented with many.

For the longest time, I did not know what it meant to pray for the church. I figured that the most critical thing was just making sure that the church is safe. But little did I know that our church is going through a lot of struggles. We are short of full-time workers and the number of churches just continues to grow. There are dissensions among believers due to false prophets and also false beliefs. I suddenly felt an urge to help pray for our church because we are in need of God’s help and guidance. I know that as long as we stick with the truth of God, then God will bless our church.

Overall from this NYTS, I have learned many things about myself and also our church. There is so much more to our lives than just school or our careers. In order to be a good servant of Christ, we must attend to the King’s business which is our Lord Jesus Christ and His church.

May God continue to guide and bless us. Hallelujah! Amen.

~ Bro. Thomas Hsu

E1 Class Q&A

Q: What has been one of your favorite things about E1 class this year?

Faith: When the teachers draw the story on the board, sometimes it’s funny!

Grace: Listening to the Word of God with your friends.

Lydia: I like it when we get to sit down. I like activity time because I really love drawing.

James: I like it when we get treats at the end of class sometimes.

Cody: Same as James! And the teachers are nice.
Onward Bound!

In the name of Jesus Christ, I share my reflection about preparing for university. I really praise and thank God for the opportunity to attend five weeks of church events this summer. My goal this year was to be able to renew my spiritual life and come up with both specific and realistic goals to help me during my first year at university. I truly enjoyed every seminar I went to because I was able to focus on different parts of my spiritual life including: R.E., my servitude, and my own spiritual cultivation.

I learned many valuable lessons during my summer but the main thing I took away was that God has a purpose for us. His power, love, and grace are beyond us and if He wants us to have something or to do something, we don't have to do anything but have faith and do His will. He will provide the best for us and our needs (Jeremiah 29:11). For myself, I am truly comforted knowing this before entering into my first year of university in another city.

I considered many goals to pursue after this summer but I wanted to ensure they were both specific and realistic tasks I could keep up with, to fulfill greater purposes of being a better spiritual friend, a better family member, and a better child of God. I hope to rekindle my New Year’s resolution of my “Cultivation/Testimony Book.” In this book, I want to actively cultivate myself spiritually by taking notes while I read the Bible—to write down what I read, what I learned, and how I am going to apply it in my life. I also want to write down the graces—big or small—that God has bestowed upon me, so I can not only remember them myself but also share them as testimonies in the future. I thank God for allowing me to build up my spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and cultivation skills before going to university. May all the praise and glory be unto God’s holy name.

~ Sis. Sarah Wong

Parents’ Reflection

It is finally our turn to experience every parent’s dream and worry: our first child, Sarah, has moved out for college in Austin, Texas. It is a bag of mixed feelings. On the one hand, we are happy for her to experience independence and to take care of herself. On the other hand, we feel sadness, as we can’t physically be there for her when she is happy or sad...

By the grace of God, our children have been able to grow up in a church environment. We thank God for the labor of our dedicated R.E. teachers. In Proverbs 22:6, it says: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." At church, we relied on our R.E. teachers to do the first part: "Train up a child in the way [s]he should go." Although we seemed to have done our job, at various points in time, we have wondered if our children could do the latter part: "When [s]he is old [s]he will not depart from it."

Our children spend a great portion of their time at home compared to church. We, as parents, really have a much greater influence on our children’s lives. Therefore, we can’t solely rely on our R.E. teachers to train up our children. We need to provide regular parental guidance, and demonstrate to our children how to live a godly life and make God-pleasing decisions, not just with the words of our mouths, but also with actions.

If we could turn back time, there are certainly things we could have done differently for our children. However, we do believe “that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28). Although Sarah has left home and will be facing new challenges, we will continue to ask God to watch over her so that she can always make good judgments. Our hope is that she will always put God as her first priority and serve Him faithfully wherever she goes. Amen.

~ Dn. Patrick & Sis. Lenny Wong
2013-2014 R.E. Year-End Special Service Pictures
2013-2014 R.E. Year-End Special Service (continued)