Religious Education Newsletter

True Jesus Church in Houston 2015-2016 Q1

Message from the RE Coordinator

Hallelujah! Thank God, it is that time of year again. The start of every new year, whether it be a new calendar year or a new RE year, when it is always a great time to reexamine how we are doing and set new resolutions and goals for ourselves. This new RE year is no different.

When Anita and I attended the RE Coordinators' Workshop in preparation for the new RE year, we were particularly struck by a newly coined term “baptized truthseekers” to describe an old phenomenon. We were encouraged to examine our RE program to see whether our students are merely baptized truthseekers who, when they graduate from high school, also graduate from the RE program and church at the same time. Have our students found God? Is their faith firmly rooted in their own personal relationship with God? Or do they only come to church because they follow their families?

In order to help bring our students to the Lord as believers rather than baptized truthseekers, we envision an RE program where everyone will say, "We are one family in Christ." We hope for everyone in the RE program to feel a sense of belonging and ownership in the church, just as they do in their own families. In order to reach this vision, we will focus our action steps on three goals: (1) KNOW our heavenly Father; (2) LOVE our brothers and sisters; and (3) CARE for God’s house.

Let it be our common prayer and effort, that in this RE year, no matter whether we are parents, teachers, or students, we can strive together to draw closer to God and to grow in love for our fellow brethren. And may our love and concern for the house of God be deepened and strengthened, as we continue to grow as one family in Christ. ~ Sis. Cindy Lee

Important Dates

First Lesson of Q1: September 5
Gospel Tea Fellowship: September 19
Fall ESSC: September 25-27
RETW: November 14-15
Winter SSC (Dallas): December 20-25

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A Life of Joy

I don’t know when it was that the quiet passing of time marked the start of my sixties. Looking back at the last half a century of following the Lord’s footsteps, although at times from a distance, grace and joy truly abound!

Following an invitation from Sister Lenny, and in line with the theme of the summer SSC in Houston, here is a look at my "Life of Joy."

Friends who know me, whether believers or non-believers, usually think of me as an optimistic person who is always smiling, and unfamiliar with sorrow. Unbeknownst to them, God has allowed me to face times of mental and physical fatigue, frustration, conflict, anxiety, loneliness, and even periods of depression.

As (Proverbs 17:22) tells us, “A merry heart does good like medicine.” Nowadays, the results of my annual health check-ups are always within the standard range, and I can enjoy the physical health that God has granted me by traveling to places near and far.

There are many teachings within the Bible pertaining to how one can achieve a healthier and more joyful life. This sharing focuses on two points in which I have had the most personal experience for our mutual encouragement.

1: Constantly Pursue After "Growth"

I always find myself smiling from ear to ear every time I watch the videos that my son sends of my granddaughter. With each video, I can see her progress: turning over for the first time, crawling for the first time, her first steps, her first words, understanding and following instructions.…

Growth itself is a thing worthy of excitement and joy, not only for the concerned person, but even more so for all who care about him/her!

Our family has a fig tree which was purchased a decade ago from a flea market, at less than three feet high. We’ve watched it grow over the years to a remarkable height. This is no exaggeration as it is now around two stories high and 22 feet wide. Every July, it comes into full bloom, bearing more fruit with each year. Just last year, it produced a record 142 pounds of figs! Even after everyone has had their fill of the figs, in various forms such as in salads and jams, or even frozen, there isn’t a friend or relative who can easily forget the sweet aroma of this fruit. Every morning, I open my curtains to be greeted first by this tree. It’s as if it’s waving at me and saying, “Remember to grow like me and bear much fruit!”

Although physically, I can no longer grow, thank God, I can continue to learn and to grow in my mind and virtues. As recorded in (2 Corinthians 4:16), “Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” Each time I learn something new, gain a new skill, have a new feeling or realization, or overcome a bad habit or negative way of thinking, my heart is overcome with joy. How wonderful! I’m not old yet, I can still learn, and I am still growing!

Leave the safety of your own comfort zone! Taking the first step to do something new, that is growth. It can be as simple as trying a new recipe, taking a new route, volunteering for something new, or giving a gift to someone who may not be lovable. Furthermore, take care of unfinished items on your to-do list: travel alone, preach the gospel to strangers, mend broken relationships, or accept new tasks such as translation, hymn leading, writing and so on (much in the same way that I am writing this article :-)).

If we arm ourselves with the mindset of a novice, and a child-like curiosity towards the world, we will enable ourselves to learn and grow every day. We will feel ourselves progressing all the time. This is my secret to obtaining joy!

(continued overleaf)
A Life of Joy (continued)

2: A Heart Full Of "Thanksgiving"

The difference between complaining and giving thanks is that with the former, you feel wronged and that others are in debt to you; the glass is always half empty. And with the latter, you feel that others are so good to you, even though you are unworthy of such abundant grace; the glass, then, is always cherished as half full. The heart of one who is full of complaints is sorrowful, while a person of thanksgiving is full of joy.

Jesus said in (Luke 17:17), "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" Do we, too, often suffer from the same issue as the nine lepers and take God’s grace for granted? Do we deem ourselves to be spiritual Jews, and therefore naturally deserving of God’s grace? If we feel entitled to God’s grace or that it is coincidental, how will we ever receive more joy?

God has granted me endless grace: elderly parents who are still alive today; a loving and supportive husband; obedient sons who love the Lord; filial and virtuous daughters-in-law; a clever and adorable granddaughter; and good health so that I can serve the Lord. Whenever I think about this, my heart feels embraced by joy, and a smile appears on my face. Without realizing, I start singing the hymn “My Wonderful Lord.” Such sweetness beyond compare!

In (Philippians 4: 6), God promises us the following: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through in Christ Jesus.” That said, how can we not rejoice!

Having hearts full of thanksgiving is not only beneficial to God and man, ultimately, we ourselves will be edified the most. Think carefully, if we always feel that we are owing to God and man, quite naturally, you will “give” more; and, as a result, experience the joy of being more blessed to give than to receive.

Many people think that life is only toil and sorrow as described in Ecclesiastes—a bitter sea with no meaning. Little do they know that God has already shown us the path of life, and given us fullness of joy in Him and pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). Furthermore, our loving God wills us to draw nearer to Him in pursuit of joy. As recorded in (Philippians 4:4), we must rejoice! This means that joy is not merely accepted passively. Rather, you can choose “to be” or “not to be” joyful, and can obtain it through active pursuit. Growth and thanksgiving are the ways in which I have pursued after a life of joy. When the flowers bloom, the butterflies will follow. I hope that you, too, can obtain this same joy. May all of us live a life of joy to glorify God and benefit man!

~ Sis. Janet Kuo

Central Region Summer SSC Pic

Graduating Students

Kindergarten Class
Hannah Chung
Isaac Taing
Micah Chong

J1 Class
Helmy Chiang
Timothy Yen
Central Region Summer SSC Reflections

This SSC was great, I learned a lot of new things. This SSC’s theme was living a life of joy and that’s what I mainly learned about. Some things I learned were that happiness and joyfulness aren’t the same thing. I also learned about physical traits and spiritual traits like joy and happiness. And the rest of SSC was good and I really enjoyed the food and everything else too.

~ Bro. Preston Chin

(Philippians 1) We should always be thankful to Him because He is our Savior and Creator. Because He died for us, we should want to preach the gospel. Jesus loves us so much that He died for us. Live the 10 commandments for Jesus (ex. Don’t murder, life is precious, you don’t get it back). We go on Saturday for church and others go on Sunday for church.

(Philippians 2) Worship with people who believe through unity and believe in the same thing. Jesus was humble, He was praised by others because He didn’t praise himself. He even served like a servant. Live life in the light for Jesus so we can show His light in the darkness of the world. I feel joy in living my life following in Him. Work with people who are positive.

(Philippians 3) We give Him everything, we owe Him everything, we even owe Him our lives. Why? Because He died for us on the cross to take away our sins. In all the things I do for God, I should be aware of evil workers because they might influence us. No matter what we do in life, we need to always think of Jesus. When we think of Jesus we should always think of going to heaven. If we want to go to heaven, we need to look towards Jesus’ path and people who follow it.

~ Sis. Faith Wong

In the name of the Lord Jesus, I bear a reflection. This SSC was different, I suppose. At every SSC, I’m always repenting for my sins, but like I said at the last SSC, I did not. Well, it was a smaller portion of my prayers this time. But I had fallen quite far during the six months away from seminars. Instead of only sinning, I didn’t really believe in God anymore. I had some doubts and troubles with the church and it made me wish to leave. I didn’t feel joy in coming to church anymore.

This SSC did help to alter my perspective on many things. First thing was, I knew our financial situation but I still ignored it and continued to ask for more. A new phone, money to hang out with friends, etc. My parents always gave me the money. I’ve always known that I was selfish for doing so but this SSC made me confront that. Another thing is my relationship with my parents. I never knew how we’ve become strangers until other church members were in shock about my family. I may not be able to say, “I love you” but I will try to say, “Thank you.”

I laugh at myself when I think about before this SSC. After seeing the love of these brothers and sisters, I felt God again. I finally understand seeing Jesus through others. I’m glad I decided to come to this SSC. It gave me many firsts which I did not expect. I’ve only ever shed tears when repenting and yet, not for that reason, I cried. I was praying for others to receive the Holy Spirit and for some reason I began to cry. It was a satisfying feeling.

I hope after SSC I can understand joy. Even now, joy still seems very foreign to me. This concludes my sharing. May all the glory & praise be unto His holy name. Amen.

~ Anonymous

(Philippians 1) We should always be thankful because He’s our Savior. We should pray in thanks because He always provides for us and He’s our Lord Jesus Christ and because He loves us. He loves us so much He died on the cross for us and the world. To live in Christ is to obey the Ten Commandments. People don’t always believe in the same things we. Because they don’t believe, they make fun of us. Let our conduct show that we follow Jesus Christ.

(Philippians 2) Through unity we should worship with the people who think the same. Even though we don’t have the same beliefs, we can’t say we are better than them. Jesus Christ would never be boastful, but instead He was humble. He was so humble He washed feet like a servant. We bear the light of Jesus Christ. I feel good living my life following Jesus Christ. Paul is thanking God that Timothy praises Him in the same way. Work with people that offer good influences.

(Philippians 3) All for Christ means giving our life to Him and because He gave His life for us. Everything is for Him, but if it isn’t, it’s for nothing. In all the things I do for God, I should be aware of dogs/evil workers because they might steal from God. No matter what we face in life, we should always look towards going to heaven. When we think of Jesus Christ, we should always think of going to heaven. When we think of going to heaven, we need to stay on Jesus Christ’s righteous path.

~ Sis. Grace Wong

In the name of Jesus Christ I share my reflection. This SSC was about a life of joy. This SSC was very encouraging and inspiring to me. I learned new stories, new memory verses, new friends, and new teachings. I specifically enjoyed this SSC more than other SSC’s because I felt that I reached/achieved my personal goal.

My group decided to fast for many days and decided to make our own prayer requests and goals. I met my spiritual buddy and we spent a lot of time helping each other, and fasting with each other. It was a great experience. This SSC I thought that the homework and evaluation were slightly difficult. I enjoyed the challenge that the counselors gave us. We studied the book of joy (Philippians). We learned many teachings, like to always rejoice no matter the circumstance. I will take all of the teachings and try to apply them all to my life.

~ Bro. Jeston Chin
Central Region Summer SSC Reflections (continued)

In the name of Jesus Christ I bear my reflection. The theme of this SSC was a life of joy. There were fewer RE students this SSC compared to the past, yet many of the students were still brimming with joy. The main book we studied was the book of Philippians. We learned how the four chapters of Philippians are about the joy of the gospel, service, change, and contentment.

We also studied the sermon on the mount, about the Beatitudes and what each really means. Then we learned about the laws that Jesus seemed to abolish, when in fact He was fulfilling them. We learned in depth how to take notes and carry out Bible studies, such as summarizing each point and putting a title for each point. Lastly, we learned about how the joy from the Lord is strength and how it differs from worldly happiness. I thank God I was blessed with the time to attend a fruitful SSC this year. May all the glory and praise be unto Him.

~ Bro. Timothy Yen

West Coast RHTS Reflection

In the name of Jesus Christ, I bear a reflection about RHTS. So this year I was fortunate enough to go to the RHTS at Baldwin Park which is in California. On the first day (Sunday), I met with my group as everyone does on the first day but I felt like this group was different because I didn’t know anyone. In retrospect, I feel like it was good that I didn’t have any friends in the group because I wasn’t distracted by the people in the group.

The classes were good this RHTS but most of the things I was touched by were not from classes. One moment I was touched by was on Friday night. It was after the sermon and while we waited for the local members to leave the chapel, we decided to sing a hymn. However, instead of leaving (like we initially thought they would), the local members stayed and sang with us. I feel that this moment really touched me because it reminded me that even though I didn’t know most of the members, we still worship the same God.

There is a stereotype that West Region seminars tend to be more lenient. This may be true but I think it is because the attendees are very spiritually cultivated. Many times, the chapel would be too small for all the people fasting. I think that this is because the instructors did a good job explaining to us on why we need to have a good faith.

I found the classes themselves very effective because of how intimate they were. In some cases, we were separated by gender for sessions due to the depth of the topics we discussed. I felt like this was good because it really made me scared about the possibility of my committing a huge sin against God.

Overall, I feel this RHTS was different but it was very edifying. May all the glory be unto His name. Amen.

~ Bro. Timothy Yen
East Coast SSC and RHTS Reflections

Hallelujah in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I give my reflection. The East Coast SSC started off a little bit slow for me. I felt like I could not connect with my group members. In my mind, they messaged around too much and didn't really have a care in the world. However, soon after, I realized how wrong I was. Most of them had anxiety from school and home. I had assumed I was the only one in the group. I was proven very wrong.

One very important lesson I learned did not come from the specified classes. I have this problem where I do not really like children. Well, they were doing this thing, since there's so many E2 students, which is called a Big Brother/Big Sister. It's pretty self-explanatory in which if they already rescheduled my flight. Naturally, I got frustrated. I already didn't like children, and now this. So, I said some words I shouldn't have said and just really like children. Well, they were doing this thing, the lessons I learned into my daily life.

I also experienced the feeling of things not going the way you want it to. A few hours before my flight, it was made known to me that my flight was cancelled. I panicked, and my dad panicked. We were all nervous and didn't know what to do because we couldn't reach the airline. I was planning to keep calling them, well into class, but the teachers made me go inside. I reluctantly did and during my prayers I asked God to help me. So, I managed to push it aside and thank God right after the class, I called my brother. He told me that even though he couldn't reach them, they actually sent an email saying they already rescheduled my flight.

Every SSC, I learn or experience something new. This SSC was no different. This concludes my sharing. May all the glory and praise be unto His holy name.

~ Sis. Deborah Lin

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I give a reflection about my experience at RHTS in the East Coast. Thank God that I was able to learn many valuable teachings during this seminar, and I hope that God will grant me the strength to apply all the lessons I learned into my daily life.

One of the most prominent teachings that I learned in our Doctrine of TJJC Sabbath class was to truly delight myself in the Lord on the Sabbath day, the day that the Lord has sanctified and blessed. On Saturday, I must learn to put down my own will of saying and doing the things I want to do, and instead search for what God wants me to do. In this way, He will truly grant me the blessing of peace and joy on the Sabbath. Another important teaching that I learned was in our class about the book of Ruth. Ruth was able to make a spiritually good decision when she chose to go to the land of Bethlehem rather than to return to the land of Moab. She demonstrates that even after living a life of emptiness and caring about the things of the world, we can return to God with our whole heart and receive His promised blessings. Naomi also demonstrates another lesson. She "went out full" to journey to the land of Moab and was "brought home empty." This conveys that for us, focusing on the things of the world is nothing but emptiness. However, we must know that God will empty us first before using us so that our hearts can truly be filled with God, and God only.

My prayers during RHTS were a constant search for God and to touch Him. I knew that if I touched Him, I would be healed of all my weaknesses and sins in the past. However, after many prayers of pleading with God to let me touch and experience Him, I hadn't gotten the prayer that I desired. I told this to my counselor, and she advised me to draw back from asking God for this and instead think of His love during my prayers. In the next fasting prayer I thought of all the ways He has shown me love in the past year. I have received nothing but blessings especially in my school and family life, and once I remembered this, I could truly taste His sweetness and goodness, and I had finally found the prayer that I had been searching for.

I thank God that I was able to attend this RHTS. I've made the determination to increase prayer and Bible reading time, and I pray that He gives me the strength to do so and to continue to feed the fire of wanting to be close to Him. This concludes my reflection. May all the glory and praise be unto His holy name. Amen.

~ Sis. Sophia Wong
2014-2015 RE Year-End Special Service Pics