Testimonies of Experiences Before the Judgment Seat of Christ

THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD

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Explanation About Footnotes: This book contains two kinds of footnotes. Those marked with numbers (like this^[1]) are footnotes from the original text, while those marked with letters (like this^[a])are notes on the translation.

1. Every Word of God Is an Expression of His Disposition

By Hu Ke, Shandong Province

Whenever I saw these words spoken by God, I felt anxious: "Every sentence I have spoken contains within it the disposition of God. You would do well to ponder My words carefully, and you will surely profit greatly from them" ("It Is Very Important to Understand God's Disposition" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I felt anxious because understanding God's disposition is so important both to man's understanding of God and their seeking to love and satisfy Him. But when reading the words of God, I always felt like God's disposition was too abstract, and I didn't know how to understand it. Afterward, through fellowship from my church leader, I came to know that I should understand what God likes and what He hates from His words, and thereby come to understand God's disposition. I subsequently tried for a while to put this into practice and I saw some results. But I still felt at a loss regarding God's words, "Every sentence I have spoken contains within it the disposition of God," and had no idea how exactly to understand it.

One day, I read these words in a sermon: "God's disposition contains many aspects. It contains what God has and is, His thoughts, His ideas, His thinking and wisdom. It contains God's manner toward all kinds of people, such as His sentiments of mercy and care, and still more His wrath toward mankind's rebellion and resistance. Because God's every sentence contains His thinking, His wisdom and His ideas, because they all contain the background and source of His words, because they all naturally express God's manner toward mankind, with not one sentence that is without foundation, it is a very natural thing for every sentence to contain God's disposition. Every word human beings say expresses their life disposition, so won't every word of God contain His disposition that much more? This is easy to comprehend, but how to discover it and know it is not as easy as people imagine. If, when reading God's words, one does not try to figure them out enough, does not put in enough effort or has not enough experience, then God's disposition will not be easy to perceive, much less understand. What is needed then is for man to quiet themselves before God and to wholly put their hearts into God's words, and for their reading and trying to figure out God's words to be done during prayer; then you will slowly come to discover the frame of mind behind God's words. This is the beginning of entry" (The Fellowship From the Above). When I read this fellowship, it all clicked into place. As it turns out, none of the

things God does or says are groundless. Instead they are the natural expressions of what God's life is; they all contain God's thinking and wisdom, they all contain the purpose of God's speech and the result He wants to achieve, whilst at the same time they express God's views on all manner of things, His attitude toward all manner of people, and every single one of these aspects is precisely the essence of God's life and is an expression of God's disposition. Therefore, if one wants to know God's disposition, one has to, from within His words, seek to know what God has and is, God's thoughts and ideas and God's thinking and wisdom, as well as God's attitude toward all kinds of people, and so on. My understanding of God's disposition, on the other hand, was limited only to what God likes and what He hates. This kind of understanding was too one-sided. Therefore, my prayreading and my contemplation of God's words were without direction or purpose, and I didn't know from what aspect I should try to know God's disposition, and so the gains I made were naturally lessened. Besides this, I also understood that, if I wanted to understand God's disposition from His every sentence, I needed to quiet myself before God and make a lot more effort to try to figure out God's words. Furthermore, I needed to pray more and seek the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit, so that I could, from within God's words, understand the truth and understand the frame of mind behind what God has spoken as well as the background and source behind God's deeds, and so on.

I give thanks to God's enlightenment and illumination that allowed me to realize these things, and then afterward I started to focus on practicing and entering into this aspect. One day, I read a passage of God's words: "Whether or not this work is important is based on the needs of mankind, and the reality of mankind's depravity, and the severity of Satan's disobedience and its disturbance of the work. The right one who is up to the task is predicated upon the nature of his work, and the importance of the work. When it comes to the importance of this work, in terms of what method of work to adopt—work done directly by God's Spirit, or work done by God incarnate, or work done through man—the first to be eliminated is work done through man, and, based on the nature of the work, and the nature of the Spirit's work versus that of the flesh, it is ultimately decided that work done by the flesh is more beneficial for man than work done directly by the Spirit, and offers more advantages. This is God's thought at the time to decide whether the work was done by the Spirit or by the flesh" ("Corrupt Mankind Needs Salvation by the Incarnate God Most of All" in The Word Appears in the

Flesh). When I tried carefully to figure out this passage, I felt like I'd uncovered a great bounty. God's words show the development of God's thinking at that time, thinking of what method to use for the work in the last days. The first thing God considers in the process of His thinking is what method to use to do this stage of work so as to better achieve the result of saving mankind and make Satan utterly convinced. Then, according to the method of work, God considers what object to choose to undertake this work and thereby to achieve a better result. During this entire thought process, God constantly considered man and never considered His own interests or safety. God clearly knew that His incarnation would suffer much hardship, but this was not a consideration when it came to saving mankind. Instead, He still chose, based on the needs of mankind and the reality of mankind's depravity, the method of God become flesh to perform the work of the last days. Furthermore, God became flesh in China, this nation that is most backward, most dark and most resistant to God. God incarnate risks great danger to come to earth to work, He endures the frenzied persecution and pursuit of the CCP government, He endures the abuse and blasphemy of the various religions and denominations, and also endures the resistance, rebellion and misunderstanding of those of us who follow. The wounds and attacks inflicted on God's heart and the humiliation that God endures really are things no one can comprehend. Everything God expresses and reveals is all that He is in life: His selfless dedication to mankind and His paying the price for them. God's greatness and selflessness are revealed naturally in His work and His every sentence, and these also embody God's great mercy and selfless love. God's love for mankind is not just empty words, but is a deed done in reality, and a practical price that He pays. At that time, I got a vivid sense that God really is so great and so lovable, and even more I felt that God's disposition is so good! Although I had read these words of God previously, I had never understood the background behind the words Christ spoke or all that they revealed, nor had I understood Christ's love for mankind. Only now did I have some true understanding of these words of God: "Every sentence I have spoken contains within it the disposition of God."

Before, as I had never quieted my heart to earnestly figure out God's words, nor known from what aspect I should contemplate God's words, I lost so many good opportunities to understand God, so much so that even believing in God for years, I still have many conceptions and misunderstandings about God, and am still estranged from Him. Only now do I understand that if I wish to understand God's disposition, I must try earnestly to figure

out and seek the truth within God's every sentence. In this way, I will surely profit greatly. From today on, I wish to focus on putting much more effort into God's words, and seek to soon become one who has some understanding of God.

2. I Am Unfit to See Christ

By Huanbao, Liaoning Province

Since I first began believing in Almighty God, end-time Christ, I really admired those brothers and sisters who were following along at Christ's side, who could personally receive Christ's shepherding and hear His utterances with their own ears. I felt that it would be wonderful if I were able to hear Christ speak myself one day, and it would be even more glorious if I could see Him with my own eyes. But lately, through listening to Christ's fellowship, I have come to feel deeply in my heart that I am not fit to see Christ.

It was when Sermons and Fellowship on Entry Into Life 1-3 were issued. After listening to the first volume of fellowship, I felt that the brother from the above very well. When I heard Christ's fellowship in the second volume, at the time I didn't know it was His fellowship; I surmised this was probably a leader under the brother from the above, and especially when Christ fellowshiped about the issue of how to view knowledge, I didn't hear a very enthusiastic reaction from my brothers and sisters, so I was certain my guess was correct. I felt that speaker didn't speak as well as the brother from the above, so I wasn't listening carefully. When hearing the third volume, after the fellowship by the brother from the above, I heard Christ say, "About the brother's fellowship just now..." and I was even more certain that this speaker must be a leader under the brother from the above, because in the world, leaders always speak first, and their subordinates speak afterward. So I hit the button and turned off the player, thinking, "I'll listen to this later when I have time." On the day I learned from my leader that it was actually Christ's fellowship, I was shocked, and finally listened seriously to every word of the sermon.

After that, I began to reflect: Why did I yearn so to hear the fellowship of Christ myself, yet when He spoke to us, I couldn't recognize the voice of God? I began to read the words of God pertaining to my state and saw the following passage: "All men wish to see the true countenance of Jesus, and all desire to be with Him. I do not think that any brother or

sister would say that they do not wish to see or to be with Jesus. Before you have seen Jesus—before you have seen the incarnate God—you are likely to entertain all sorts of ideas, for example, about Jesus' appearance, His way of speaking, His way of life, and so on. But once you have really seen Him, your ideas will swiftly change. Why is this? Do you wish to know? Man's thinking cannot be overlooked, which is true—but more than that, the substance of Christ does not brook alteration by man. You think Christ an immortal or a sage, but no one considers Him a normal man possessed of divine substance. As such, many of those who yearn day and night to see God are actually enemies of God, and are incompatible with Him. Is this not a mistake on the part of man? Even now you still think that your belief and loyalty are enough to make you worthy of beholding the countenance of Christ, but I exhort you to equip yourselves with more things that are practical! For in the past, present, and future, many of those who come in contact with Christ have failed or will fail; they all play the role of the Pharisees. What is the reason for your failure? It is precisely because there is in your notions a God who is lofty and deserving of admiration. But the truth is not as man wishes. Not only is Christ not lofty, but He is particularly small; not only is He a man, but He is an ordinary man.... And this being so, people treat Him as they would an ordinary man; they treat Him casually when they are with Him, and speak to Him heedlessly, all the while still waiting for the coming of the 'true Christ.' You take the Christ that has already come for an ordinary man, and His words for those of an ordinary man. For this reason, you have not received anything from Christ, and have instead completely exposed your own ugliness to the light" ("Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I held myself up against God's words, and then I thought of how my own corrupt disposition and ugliness had manifested when I heard Christ's fellowship. I realized that I believed in Christ but I didn't understand His essence, didn't understand His being humble and hidden, had too many notions and imaginings regarding Christ, and that my perspective on things was absurd. In my notions and imaginings, other than those brothers and sisters with immediate access to Him, others could not possibly hear Christ's fellowship with their own ears. I imagined that Christ's fellowship would be accompanied by Christ publicly announcing His identity and that it would be spoken in a voice different from others with many elegant turns of phrase, like some kind of extraordinary man. Christ's fellowship, I

imagined, would be accompanied by the excited, passionate cheers of my brothers and sisters; and if it was the brother from the above and Christ speaking in turn, then Christ would speak first, and the brother from the above would speak last. I delimited the work and words of Christ within the boundaries of my notions and imaginings, because I imagined Christ in a particular way. When the facts were at odds with these notions and imaginings of mine, within my heart I did not treat Him like God. Instead, I treated Christ as an ordinary person and Christ's words as those of an ordinary person. While others gained much from Christ's fellowship, I gained nothing, and instead completely exposed my satanic face of being arrogant, conceited, and truth-despising, and made myself one who rejects and resists Christ.

Later, I saw in God's word: "You always wish to see Christ, but I urge you not to hold yourselves in such high esteem; anyone may see Christ, but I say no one is fit to see Christ. Because the nature of man brims with evil, arrogance, and rebelliousness, at the moment you see Christ, your nature will destroy you and **condemn you to death**" ("Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "You are not reverent in the presence of the truth, still less do you possess an attitude of yearning. All you do is study indiscriminately and wait with blithe unconcern. What can you gain from studying and waiting like this? Do you think you will receive personal guidance from God? If you cannot discern God's utterances, in what way are you qualified to witness the appearance of God? ... Only those who can accept the truth will be able to hear the voice of God, and only such people are qualified to witness the appearance of God" ("The Appearance of God Has Ushered in a New Age" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words cut me to the heart and made me further understand that I couldn't discern God's voice because I was too arrogant and too snobbish, too easily tempted to listen carefully and nod in agreement with those who have position and status, while I looked down upon those who I felt lacked position or status, such that even if they spoke the truth I wouldn't accept it. When I listened to fellowship I was not focused on the truth, or gaining edification myself, and instead devoted my mind to speculation and scrutiny, analyzing what kind of person the speaker was. I revealed nothing but corruptness and rebelliousness, notions and imaginings. Someone as arrogant, rebellious, and lacking love of the truth as me, someone without a shred of piety or yearning before the truth as me, how could I possibly hear and know the voice of God? How was I fit to see Christ?

Through that revelation I finally understood that even though I wanted to see Christ, I was unfit to see Him because Satan's corruption of me is too deep, I am very arrogant and rebellious by nature, I possess none of the truth, I do not understand the essence of Christ, I have too many notions and imaginings about God, and in my heart the God I believe in is still a vague God, an image of a mighty and eloquent figure. And when I truly see Christ, my notions may be revealed at any time and my arrogant disposition may flare up at any moment. As a result, because of my own rebellious nature I can only do things that offend God's disposition such as making judgments of God and resisting Him, thus doing myself in. Now I must equip myself with the truth, seek to know my corrupt nature and understand the essence of Christ through the words of God, and seek to become someone who knows and worships Christ.

3. Who Knows the Motherly Heart of God?

By Qingxin, Henan Province

In the past, I didn't understand God's work of saving mankind, thinking that if someone reveals corruption or commits transgressions in their duty that bring harm to the church's work, that person will face the retribution they deserve, or that they will be stripped of their duty or be subjected to punishment. Because of this erroneous viewpoint, I was always afraid of slipping up in my work and being dismissed or sent back home, so I thought of a little "trick": Whenever I did something wrong, I would try my best to not let the leaders know first, and scramble to make up for it myself and do my utmost to make it right. Wouldn't that then help me hold on to my duty? So every time I gave reports on my work, I would downplay big issues and simply erase the small ones. During the times I was passive I would do my best to cover it up in front of the leaders and present myself as very active and positive, terrified that they would know I was in an abnormal state and think that I could not do the work, and then remove me from my position. That is how I became very carefully guarded, tiptoeing around the leaders and God in everything I did.

However, God inspects people's hearts and minds, and my "perfect trick" could never escape God's eyes. In my experience, I discovered that the more I tried to cover things up, the more God would bring those things to light. For instance, whenever I tried to show off my "talents" in front of leaders, I would always mess up and make a fool of myself. Whenever I tried to cover up my passive state, "dark clouds" would always inadvertently surface on my face, which my brothers and sisters would see through. Whenever I tried to cover up errors or omissions in my work, the results of my work were like a mirror that revealed everything. Time after time of being embarrassed and tormented by my conscience because of my dishonesty made me fall down, yet I still did not understand from this the intentions and purpose behind why God works in this way, nor did I understand how God saves people. I merely waited passively for the arrival of God's righteous judgment and the impending punishment of the church.

However, reality did not progress as I had imagined. In my work, even though I was pruned and dealt with for not fulfilling my duty properly, I still received wholehearted guidance from brothers and sisters. They let me know what is doing work according to one's own will, what is handling things according to the principles, what is perfunctory, what is loyally fulfilling one's duty, and allowed me to understand that only by acting in accordance with the principles of the truth and with all their heart, with all their mind, and with all their strength can one fulfill their duty properly. In terms of entry into life, I got caught up many times in evil thoughts that I could not get rid of, leaving my heart in agony. I wanted to open up my heart, to seek and have fellowship, but I was too caught up in embarrassment to talk about it. That resulted in me falling into darkness and losing the work of the Holy Spirit. But after I risked everything and brought it all to light, I saw that brothers and sisters not only did not laugh at me or look down on me because of it, but instead they helped me and advised me, enabling me to live in the light and helping me find a path to practice and gain the power to overcome sin. Later on, I saw that when some brothers and sisters around me did something wrong or revealed corruption, the church did not just send them back home. Rather, the church did its utmost to have fellowship with them and support them, giving them chance after chance. Even if some people were sent home in the end, it was only because they lacked good humanity; they were disrupting and interfering with the work of the church, failing to play a positive role. They were always muddling through in their duty, did not achieve any practical outcomes, and refused to repent even after being pruned, dealt with,

and fellowshiped with many times. But even for such people, if after a period of time, they really are able to reflect, to know themselves, and change, the church will still give them opportunities to perform a duty and prepare good deeds. These facts made me see that God's attitude toward us is just as parents treat their prodigal son who has returned—with unparalleled love and affection. They also made me see that the work God performs is to purify, change, and perfect people. It was only then that I realized that whether God treats people with mercy and love, or if He treats people with righteousness, majesty, and wrath, all of this is to save mankind to the greatest degree possible. Within all of this is God's limitless love and salvation for mankind and it is all determined by His essence. Pondering the will of God, I thought of those who were exposed, replaced, or sent back home; it was only within that kind of environment of being exposed and eliminated that they started to reflect on themselves, clearly see the truth of their corruption by Satan, prostrate themselves before God and truly repent. Without that kind of failure, they would probably continue to blindly wander down that path. It's clear that the work God does truly is that of saving mankind and it does contain His love and kind intentions for man. In the past, I didn't really understand His work of salvation; my understanding of God was so one-sided.

At that moment, I thought of a passage of God's words: "What is the substance of Christ? For humans, Christ's essence is love; for those who follow Him, it is boundless love. If He had no love or mercy, then people would not still be following Him. Some people say: 'Then is God not still righteous?' It is correct that He is still righteous, but from the perspective of His disposition, His righteousness is hatred toward the corruption and wickedness of mankind. What if He merely had righteousness without love? What if love could not overcome righteousness? Then it could be said that mankind is done for. Therefore, I am speaking frankly with you: In the work God does for humanity while He is incarnate, His most obvious and prominent essence is love; it is infinite tolerance. You imagine, 'If God intends to strike someone down, He will do so, and if He hates someone, He will punish, curse, judge, and chastise that person; He is so strict! If He is angry at people, people will tremble in fear and will not be able to stand before Him.' However, that is not true; this is only one way in which God's disposition is expressed. Ultimately, His goal is still salvation. His love runs through all revelations of His disposition. Reflect on this, while working in the flesh, what God reveals the most to people is love. What is

patience? Patience is having pity due to love within, and its purpose is still to save people. God is able to have pity on people because He has love. Just like if there is true love between a husband and wife, they don't look at each other's shortcomings and faults. If they were provoked to anger, they would still be able to be patient. Everything is established on the foundation of love. If they were hateful, then their attitude would not be the way it is, their expression would not be the way it is. If God had only hate and fury, and only passed judgment and chastisement, without any love in them, then the situation would not be what you see now and calamity would befall you people. Would He provide you with truth?" ("God's True Love for Mankind" in Records of Christ's Talks). When I had read this passage in the past, even though I acknowledged God's love for mankind with my words. I never really comprehended it and always harbored distrust and guardedness toward God. It is only now that I have a bit of actual understanding of these words and can appreciate how true they are. Reading between the lines, I feel this is filled with God's deep affection for mankind, with His earnest sustenance, support, and instruction for us, and they are particularly full of His most genuine, truest love for us.

At that moment, deep feelings of guilt toward God sprung up in my heart and I came before God to repent: "Oh God! I have followed You for so many years, and in spite of my faith in You I have not known You. I have been so blind and absurd, misunderstanding Your motherly heart, only repaying You with injuries. I really am unworthy of coming before You, and even more unworthy of Your salvation! Yet the way You have treated me has not been based on my disobedience. Rather, You have used the facts to guide me step by step to understand Your will, to know Your work of salvation, and to eliminate my misunderstandings. O God! I have seen Your beauty and kindness, and experience the practicality of Your word—You are righteous and You are love! From now on, I want to know more of Your loveliness through Your word and through real life, and strive to be a person who is honest to loyally fulfill my duty to repay Your great love!"

4. I Find the Path to Knowing God

By Xiaocao, Shanxi Province

One day, I saw the following passage of God's words in the piece "How Peter Came to Know Jesus": "During the time he followed Jesus, Peter observed and took to heart everything about His life: His actions, words, movements, and expressions. ... From his time in contact with Jesus, Peter also saw that His character was different from that of an ordinary man. He always acted steadily and never with haste, never exaggerated nor underplayed a subject, and He conducted His life in a way that revealed a character which was both normal and admirable. In conversation, Jesus spoke plainly and with grace, communicating always in a cheerful yet serene manner—and yet never did He lose His dignity while carrying out His work. Peter saw that Jesus was sometimes taciturn, while other times He spoke incessantly. Sometimes He was so happy that He appeared like a frisking and frolicking dove, and other times He was so sad that He did not talk at all, appearing laden with grief as though He were a worn and weary mother. At times He was filled with anger like a brave soldier charging off to kill an enemy or, on some occasions. He even resembled a roaring lion. Sometimes He laughed; other times He prayed and wept. No matter how Jesus acted, Peter grew to have boundless love and respect for Him. Jesus' laughter filled him with happiness, His sorrow plunged him into grief, His anger frightened him, while His mercy, forgiveness, and the strict demands He made of people made him come to truly love Jesus and develop a true reverence and longing for Him. Of course, it was not until after Peter had lived alongside Jesus for a number of years that he gradually came to realize all of this" (The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading this passage I thought: No wonder Peter could have knowledge of God! Turns out it was because he lived alongside the Lord Jesus day and night, he personally witnessed the Lord Jesus' every word and every move, and from that he discovered much of God's adorableness, and so he achieved knowledge of God. Now is also the era of when God becomes flesh to personally descend upon the world of man to work. If I could also have the fortune of being able to come into contact with God and spend time together like Peter had, then wouldn't I also know God better? Oh! It's a shame that now I can only read God's word but cannot see the face of Christ. Then how would I be able to gain true knowledge of God?

Just when I was disappointed over this, I thought of God's words through His enlightenment: "Knowing God must be done through reading and understanding God's word. Some say: 'I haven't seen God incarnate, so how could I know God?' In fact, God's word is an expression of God's disposition. From God's word you can see God's love and salvation for mankind, and His method for saving them.... This is because God's word is expressed by God Himself as opposed to using man to write it out. It is personally expressed by God—He is expressing His own words and His inner voice. Why is it said that they are heartfelt words? Because they are issued from deep down, expressing His disposition, His will, His thoughts, His love for mankind, His salvation of mankind, and His expectations of mankind.... Among God's words are harsh words, gentle and considerate words, and there are some revelatory words that are not in line with human wishes. If you look only at the revelatory words, you will feel that God is quite stern. If you look only at the gentle words, you will feel that God does not have much authority. Therefore, you must not take this out of context, but look at it from every angle. Sometimes God speaks from a gentle and compassionate perspective, and people see God's love for mankind; sometimes He speaks from a strict perspective, and people see God's disposition that will tolerate no offense. Man is deplorably filthy and is not worthy of seeing God's face or of coming before God. That people can now come before God is purely God's grace. God's wisdom can be seen from the way He works and the meaning of His work. People can still see these things in God's word even without directly contacting Him" ("How to Know God Incarnate" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words made me suddenly see the light. As it turns out, God's words represent God Himself! Because God's words are the life of God Himself, the expressions of His disposition, the revelations of what He has and is, and they completely represent God's life essence. God incarnate in the last days expresses all that is the life of God using words and utterances, allowing man to see through God's word His great power, His supremacy, His humility and hiddenness, and His adorableness, and moreover understand His joys and sorrows, and know what He has and is. Therefore, when people hear God's voice and read God's words, it's like seeing God, just as Job said in the Old Testament: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5). It seemed that as long as I read and experienced God's words in earnest, then I could truly come to know Him. If people depart from God's words and only

see God incarnate, can they know God completely? Thinking back to when the Lord Jesus appeared and performed His work, there were many thousands of people who saw the Lord Jesus, but how many truly knew Him? Didn't the Pharisees also see the Lord Jesus back then? So why did they nail Him to the cross? Wasn't it because they hated the truth and didn't listen to His words, and they stubbornly held on to their own conceptions and imaginations? On the other hand, Peter was able to have a real knowledge of the Lord Jesus because he could listen closely to His words and was good at contemplating every word and sentence uttered by Him. Through the Lord Jesus' utterances and work he got to know God's disposition and what He has and is, ultimately gaining true knowledge of God. These facts speak volumes, and if someone wants to know God, then it does not depend entirely on whether or not they can see Christ, but crucially it depends on whether or not they love the truth. If they truly love the truth, then even if they haven't laid eyes on the face of Christ, they can still come to know God by listening to His voice; if they do not love the truth, however, then even if they have seen Christ's face, it will still be impossible for them to know God, and they will even look upon Christ with contempt for being an ordinary person, and defy and betray Christ.

The more I thought about the preposterous logical reasoning I used to have, the more I felt my own wretchedness, foolishness, and childishness. Every day I held God's word in my hands, read God's word, and experienced God's word, but I let slip the perfect opportunity to know God and did not enter into it, and instead I lived in notions and imaginings, complaining about the situation, thinking that I could only know God by seeing the face of Christ. I really was living a blessed life without appreciating it! From this day on, I will read more of God's word, contemplate His word, seek to understand His joys and sorrows through His word, and discover more of His adorableness, so that my knowledge of God may be deepened.

5. God's Words Removed My Notions

By Xiao Rui, Sichuan Province

When my duty in The Church of Almighty God was preaching the gospel, while doing this I encountered religious leaders who bore false witness to frantically resist, disturb, and

block people's investigation and acceptance of God's work in the last days. They even called the police to have them arrest those of us sharing the gospel. As a result, those we were preaching to didn't dare come into contact with us, and those who had just accepted the gospel were subjected to disruptions and became uncertain about God's work. Our gospel work was greatly hindered. I felt really anxious when I saw so many brothers and sisters with genuine faith who were hoodwinked and disrupted by the pastors and elders. They were unable to return before God and accept His purification and salvation of the last days. I worked hard every day to share fellowship on God's words with them to resolve the notions they held regarding God's work, but after doing this for a period of time, our gospel work still hadn't taken a turn for the better. I thought: "Evangelical work is so difficult to carry out. It would be so wonderful if God just displayed some miracles and punished those who bear false witness as well as those who seriously resist Him to show to those who have been deceived. Then wouldn't the work of the gospel advance more quickly? It wouldn't be so difficult for us to preach the gospel." This is how this hope came up in my heart every time I encountered difficulties. Later, I read the book of Classic Examples of Punishment for Resisting Almighty God and during fellowship heard some testimonies on God's signs and wonders, and I felt very glad in my heart. I hoped even more that God would do some things in the areas that I worked in so that our gospel work there could be carried out smoothly. But no matter how I hoped, I still didn't see God perform any miracles there or do anything to punish evil people. The religious people were still fully resisting God, and the difficulties in our evangelical work were still great. I became negative, thinking: "Why doesn't God open up a way out for us? Could it be that our faith is inadequate?"

Faced with difficulties, I came before God many times to seek His will. Later, during my devotionals I saw these words of God: "Now, if God were to perform supernatural signs and wonders, then, without having to undertake any great work, He would simply curse a man to death with His own mouth, the man would die on the spot, and in this way every human being would be convinced; but this would not achieve the aim of God in becoming flesh. If God were truly to do this, humanity would never be able, with their conscious minds, to believe in His existence, would never be able truly to believe, and moreover would mistake the devil for God. Even more importantly, humanity would never know God's disposition: Is this not one aspect of the meaning of God's being in the flesh? If humanity is incapable of knowing God, then it will

always be a vague God, a supernatural God, who holds sway in the human realm: Would this not be a case of man's notions taking possession of man? Or, to restate this more plainly, would not Satan, the devil, be holding sway? 'Why do I say I take back My power? Why do I say that the incarnation has too many meanings?' The moment God becomes flesh, this is when He takes back His power; it is also when His divinity comes forth directly to do His work. Step by step, every human being comes to know the practical God, and because of this the place held by Satan in the human heart is completely suppressed while God's place is augmented" ("Chapter 6" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I ruminated over God's words and my heart suddenly brightened: It turns out that the purpose of God's work in the flesh isn't to use His authority to frighten people into obedience, but it is to fully make known His disposition to mankind through actual work and words, and through this dispel the image held in mankind's hearts of a vague God. It is to allow people to cast off the constraints of their notions, to truly know God's disposition and work, and to allow people to possess the truth and discernment, allowing them to be conquered and attained. God's work really is so practical, and His wisdom is unfathomable for humans! Give it some careful thought—this work God is doing would not bear fruit if it were done through signs and wonders. Just like in the Age of Law, God displayed so many miracles to the Israelites and punished so many of those who resisted Him, but the Israelites still did not know God and in the end went to die in the wilderness. In the Age of Grace, God again displayed countless signs and wonders among the Jews, but they still crucified Him alive because they did not know Him. All of this shows that God's signs and wonders can't make people truly know God and develop a heart of reverence for Him; they cannot become the foundation of their belief in God. However, even though I have followed God until now, I have not had a shred of understanding of God's essence, and I have understood even less of the goals and significance of God's work in the flesh. I have believed in His authority and that whoever resists God will be punished, so I have wholeheartedly sought to see God's signs and wonders. Isn't this type of faith exactly like the Pharisees, living awash in vagueness, believing in a supernatural God while resisting the practical God? If my pursuit of God were to continue this way, how could I be compatible with God? It truly was too dangerous!

After that, I saw more of God's words: "It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete. It is through people's suffering, through their caliber, and through all the satanic dispositions of the people of this filthy land that God does His work of purification and conquest, so that, from this, He may gain glory, and so that He may gain those who will bear witness to His deeds. Such is the entire significance of all the sacrifices that God has made for this group of people. That is, it is through those who oppose Him that God does the work of conquest, and only thus can the great power of God be made manifest. ... Jesus' stage of work was the same: He could only be glorified among those Pharisees who persecuted Him; if not for the persecution of the Pharisees and the betrayal of Judas, Jesus would not have been ridiculed or slandered, much less crucified, and thus could not have gained glory" ("Is the Work of God So Simple as Man Imagines?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). From these words I became even more aware that no matter what work God does, it all has meaning. If His work is to show some miracles or mete out some punishments, it has meaning, it has principles. If He does not do this work, then it contains even more of God's wisdom. God currently does not get rid of those evil ones who bear false witness or seriously resist Him; this contains even more of God's goodwill. He uses these difficulties to allow us to taste the hardships of His own work, to allow us to see with our own eyes His will to save mankind to the greatest extent possible, thus recognizing God's kindness and beauty. God also uses these difficulties to capture proof of people doing good or evil, and in the end provide them with a suitable destination so that we are fully convinced, so that we can see God's righteousness and holiness. Even more, God has used these difficulties to reveal that I lack the aspect of truth pertaining to vision, that my nature is too lazy, timid, foolish, and ignorant, and that through my suffering, efforts, and cooperation with God, He will bestow upon me discernment, confidence, love, wisdom, and courage. Even more, He will give me the truth of God's work, thus completing me and obtaining me. God's work truly is so wise, so wonderful! But I am too blind—I have no understanding of the significance of God's work or His good intentions. All I fear is physical suffering and I am unwilling to cooperate with God. I truly am a believer who does not properly attend to work and who revels in comforts!

Thanks be to the enlightenment of the words of God which gave me some knowledge of the purpose and wisdom in God's work in the flesh and also allowed me to see that my faith in God was in vagueness, that not knowing God is too dangerous! From this day forward, I am willing to equip myself more with the truth, to pursue being a person who knows God's work and disposition, to do my duty to the utmost in order to comfort God's heart.

6. Emerging From the Haze

By Zhenxi, Henan Province

Ten years ago, while I was serving as a church leader, I always worked as I wished and acted recklessly due to my arrogant nature, and this led me to a serious violation of the work arrangements, I interrupted and disturbed the church's work and aggravated God's disposition. I was therefore replaced and sent home to do spiritual devotions and reflect on myself. After some time spent in self-reflection, I came to have some true knowledge of my arrogant nature, but because I had no knowledge of God's work to save man and the essence of God's faithfulness, I was constantly constrained by my past transgressions, and I thought that God would not save or perfect such a person as me. This cast a shadow on me that I could not remove. Later, the church arranged for me to take responsibility for the gospel work. When I heard this news, misgivings arose in my heart about God, and I thought: "I am so corrupted and have also offended God's disposition, how can the church make me responsible for such important work? Is it that God wants to expose me using this duty, and then eliminate me?" But then I thought: "Since the church has made such an arrangement, it must be God giving me a chance to make up for my past transgressions. No matter what happens, I must cherish this opportunity, even if I have to become a service-doer." From then on, I fulfilled my duty with this negative and guarded mindset. Although I appeared to be fulfilling my duties earnestly and diligently, I didn't have the courage to seek the higher goal of being made perfect by God.

Once, when I was practicing spiritual devotion, I saw these words of God: "Today, you cannot only be content with how you are conquered, but must also consider the path that you will walk in the future. You must have aspirations and the courage to be made perfect,

and should not always think yourself incapable. Does the truth have favorites? Can the truth deliberately oppose people? If you pursue the truth, can it overwhelm you? If you stand firm for justice, will it knock you down? If it is truly your aspiration to pursue life, can life elude you? If you are without the truth, that is not because the truth ignores you, but because you stay away from the truth; if you cannot stand fast for justice, that is not because there is something wrong with justice, but because you believe it is out of line with the facts; if you have not gained life after pursuing it for many years, that is not because life has no conscience toward you, but because you have no conscience toward life, and have driven away life.... If you do not pursue, then it can only be said that you are worthless trash, and have no courage in your life, and do not have the spirit to resist the forces of darkness. You are too weak! You are unable to escape the forces of Satan that lay siege to you, and are only willing to lead this kind of safe and secure life and die in ignorance. What you should achieve is your pursuit of being conquered; this is your bounden duty. If you are content to be conquered, then you drive out the existence of the light" ("The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading this passage of God's words, I was very moved inside. I saw that God's intention is to allow people to seek being perfected and being fit for use by God. No matter what transgressions people had committed in the past, as long as they can sincerely repent to God, pursue the truth and put the truth into practice, then they have a chance to be perfected by God. I then made up my mind: I am going to put away my own apprehensions and doubt and no longer be negative and passive. I will believe in God's words and strive to be perfected by God.

But because I still revealed some corrupt dispositions while doing my duty due to deep corruption by Satan, and because I did not know the essence of God's faithfulness, gradually I began to not believe in God's words again. I kept remembering how I'd once offended God's disposition, and how I always couldn't help but reveal my corrupt disposition while fulfilling my duty. I thought that I could never be perfected no matter how much I pursued, and I should be content with just being a service-doer. I always thought that God's words were aimed at other people, and could merely provide a bit of comfort and encouragement for someone like me. Unwittingly, I started living in passiveness again. One day, I saw the following words of God: "The essence of God is faithful; He does what He says, and whatever He does is achieved" ("The Second Aspect of Significance of the Incarnation" in

Records of Christ's Talks). God's words were like a beam of light that illuminated my heart all at once: Yes! God's essence is faithful; God means what He says, and what He means shall be accomplished, and what He accomplishes shall last forever. In the beginning, all created things were established through God's words. Whatever God says, happens. But I thought that God's words were just for comforting and encouraging people, and that the facts would probably not be accomplished in the way God said. And I thought that God's words were aimed at other people, not at me. Wasn't I denying God's words and denying His faithfulness? I then again remembered that passage of God's words I used to read: "If it is truly your aspiration to pursue life, can life elude you? If you are without the truth, that is not because the truth ignores you, but because you stay away from the truth; if you cannot stand fast for justice, that is not because there is something wrong with justice, but because you believe it is out of line with the facts; if you have not gained life after pursuing it for many years, that is not because life has no conscience toward you, but because you have no conscience toward life, and have driven away life...." At that moment, I felt the sincerity and earnestness of God's words, and they were imbued with God's faithfulness and His boundless love for man. I saw that God is so noble and great. And I also saw my own lowliness and narrow-mindedness. God's intention is the limitless salvation of mankind. This is determined by God's disposition and substance and is unchangeable. As long as people pursue the truth and dispositional change in accordance with God's requirements, God shall make them complete, because what God says He shall do, and what He does shall be done! And what had my attitude toward God and toward His words been? When I had offended God's disposition and fallen into darkness, I didn't try to examine or know my own corrupt essence or seek the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition. Instead, I lived in a state of guarding against and misunderstanding God, believing that God would surely not save me, and I lost the motivation to pursue the truth. When the church arranged for me to take responsibility for the gospel work, I didn't think about how to seek the principles of the truth or how to perform my duty in order to achieve better results. On the contrary, I suspected God of using me, of using this situation to thoroughly expose me and eliminate me. This led me to become negative and slack off in my duty, and to treat God's commission lightly. I regarded God to be as evil as man and believed that God is as petty and mean as man is, and that He gets rid of people as soon as they've served their purpose, as man does. I believed that God will eliminate people as soon as they finish rendering service to Him. I

realized that I did not know God at all nor treat God's word as the truth, and moreover did not genuinely and positively believe in God. Instead, I lived in the imagination and notions, was full of suspicions and guardedness toward God, which led me to be negative and passive and cowardly yield to dark influences. I was unable to suffer and pay the price for gaining truths. It was then that I truly appreciated that pursuing knowledge of God's essence is just so important. If I had paid attention to pursuing knowledge of God's disposition and essence before, I wouldn't have spent so many years stagnating, delaying the progression of my own life.

I give thanks to God for untying the knot in my heart. Years of misunderstandings, misgivings and apprehension all disappeared in a flash under the guidance of God's words. I felt a huge sense of relief, and my heart felt light and free. I prostrated myself before God and offered up a prayer: Thank You, Almighty God! It is You who cared for me and enlightened and guided me to get rid of the shackles that had bound me for so many years. In the past, because I did not know You, I often lived in misunderstanding, and I even doubted Your word. I did not treat Your word as the truth, the way and the life, and moreover I did not treat You as God. But You still tolerated me, were patient toward me, and enlightened and illuminated me, so that I would have some knowledge of Your faithful essence and righteous disposition. O God! Your love is so real! From now on I will put an enormous effort into the truth, pursue knowledge of Your essence, and seek dispositional change soon so I can be perfected by You and repay Your love.

7. The Holy Spirit Works in a Principled Way

By Qin Shuting, Shandong Province

For some time, whenever I read the words of God, I never felt the light. I didn't reflect on the reason for that, but just continued to pray to God, asking Him to enlighten me. But when I read God's words after that, I still didn't have any enlightenment. So I thought, "There is a time for God to enlighten each man, so there is no use in trying to rush it." After that, I unhurriedly plodded along reading God's words, patiently awaiting God's enlightenment.

Until one day, I read these words of God: "Only if your heart is at peace before God will your pursuit of the truth and of changes in your disposition bear fruit. Because

you come before God bearing a burden, and because you always feel that you are lacking in so many ways, that there are many truths that you need to know, much reality that you need to experience, and that you should give every care to God's will—these things are always on your mind. It is as if they are pressing down on you with a force that leaves you unable to breathe, and thus you feel heavy of heart (though you are not in a negative state). Only people such as this are qualified to accept the enlightenment of God's words and to be moved by the Spirit of God. It is because of their burden, because they are heavy of heart, and, it can be said, because of the price they have paid and the torment they have suffered before God, that they receive His enlightenment and illumination. For God does not give anyone special treatment. He is always fair in His treatment of people, but He also does not give to people arbitrarily or unconditionally. This is one aspect of His righteous disposition" ("It Is Very Important to Establish a Proper Relationship With God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). In pondering God's words, I understood: God is a righteous God. He is never arbitrary in His provision to man, and does not give to man unconditionally. There is a principle behind God's work. For people to receive God's enlightenment and illumination when reading His words, they must guiet their hearts before God and have a heart that yearns for and seeks God's words. They must bear the burden for their own lives and search for their own shortcomings according to the words of God. Bearing their burden, they must purposefully read the words of God to go ever deeper into the truth and resolve their corrupt disposition and fulfill their duties. Only by practically paying such a price to work with God can one obtain the enlightenment of God. If someone does not thirst for God's words, but just aimlessly, mechanically reads His words, treating them lightly, they cannot possibly gain the work of the Holy Spirit. In retrospect, every time I picked up the book of the word of God, I would flick through and see that I had read this passage and read that passage, thinking that I had a rough idea about every passage. Then I would find any old one, give it a cursory read, and then I was done, perfunctorily reading the words of God in such an unconcerned way. At that time, I saw that I didn't remotely have a heart of longing when reading God's words. I was just going through the motions and upholding certain rules and conventions, content to just understand some literal doctrines. I placed no importance on seriously pondering God's words and seeking to understand the truth, nor did I place importance on integrating His words to reflect on myself and resolve my problems. I shouldered no burden

for my own life and I wasn't remotely concerned about my lack of entry into the reality of the truth or a change in disposition. With such a cavalier attitude to the words of God, how would I have obtained His enlightenment and illumination? I was not realistically reflecting on my own state or seeking the truth to resolve my problems. Instead, I was relying on my own notions and imaginings, believing "There is a time for God to enlighten each man." I continued to passively wait for God's enlightenment. I really was being so ignorant! Only then did I recognize that, although there is a time for God to enlighten each man, this much is true, there is a principle behind the Holy Spirit's work on man. The degree to which man cooperates is the degree to which God works; however much people work with God is however much He will bestow on them. God will not enlighten someone if they just passively wait for the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and do nothing else. The fruit of God's work on mankind is determined by how much they cooperate. As God said: "The Holy Spirit works by this principle: Through people's cooperation, through them actively praying, searching and coming closer to God, results can be achieved and they can be enlightened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. It is not the case that the Holy Spirit acts unilaterally, or that man acts unilaterally. Both are indispensable, and the more that people cooperate, and the more they pursue the attainment of the standards of God's requirements, the greater the work of the Holy Spirit. Only people's real cooperation, added to the work of the Holy Spirit, can produce real experiences and the substantive knowledge of God's words. Gradually, through experiencing in this way, a perfect person is ultimately produced. God does not do supernatural things; in people's conceptions, God is almighty, and everything is done by God-with the result that people wait passively, do not read the words of God or pray, and merely await the touch of the Holy Spirit. Those with a correct understanding, however, believe this: God's actions can only go as far as my cooperation, and the effect that God's work has in me depends on how I cooperate. When God speaks, I should do all I can to seek and strive toward God's words; this is what I should achieve" ("How to Know Reality" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

Thank God for His timely enlightenment. I found the reason why I was lacking any light from reading God's words, and found that there were problems in my experience because I did not understand the principle behind the Holy Spirit's work. I am now willing to turn my state around and proactively cooperate with God. I will read God's words to put the truth into

practice and perform my duty well, and in order to cast off my corrupt satanic disposition and be purified. This is the only way I can go deeper into the truth and I can gradually grow in my life.

8. My Practice of Exaltation and Testimony to God Was So Absurd

By Zhang Cheng, Shandong Province

Each time I saw some leaders and co-workers in the church become antichrists, and be eliminated by God, because they always testified to themselves and brought the brothers and sisters before themselves, I warned myself: I must be sure to exalt and testify to God in all matters; I must not, under any circumstances, show off or exalt myself, lest I set foot on the path of the losers. And so, every time I fellowshiped, I focused only on the revelation of my own corruption and never talked about practice or entry from the positive aspect. When others said there had been a little entry or change in me, I denied it outright. Practicing thus, I believed, was exalting and testifying to God.

One day, I heard these words from a fellowship: "Some people's knowledge of exalting and testifying to God is incomplete, so what they practice is not entirely correct. They think that talking about experiencing God's work chiefly means talking of knowing their own corruption, exposing their own corruption, and practicing opening up, and dissecting the revelation of their own corruption—that only this is exalting and testifying to God. To talk of such aspects of experience and testimony as changes in yourself and the process by which you change, or your entry into reality, is as if you're testifying to yourself, not God. Is such knowledge correct? Does talking about the process by which you experienced change amount to testifying to yourself? It does not. ... What we must understand is that to be most effective at bringing people before God, when you speak only of negative experiences, and say nothing of positive entry, the effect is limited, and not ideal, and people will still be without a path. During your fellowships, other people only see how you open yourself up, how you dissect yourself, and how you lay yourself bare. What about your positive entry, what about your practice? What path to practice do you offer people? You haven't told people how they should practice from now on. ... Some people don't understand what testifying to oneself is.

They think that talking about their positive aspects and about the aspect of their entry into reality, is testifying to themselves—but this is actually better testimony to God, more perfect testimony to God. That we are capable of a little reality, of some good deeds, of some faithfulness in performing our duties—is this not the love of God? Is this not the grace of God? Is this not the effect of the Holy Spirit's work? By fellowshiping about such things, you are more able to testify to the omnipotence of God, to how the work of God is the work of man's salvation, to how the words of God can change people, and make them perfect, and save them. Thus, testimony to the work of God also requires speaking of your own positive entry, of how you went from not being able to enter to ultimately being able to; of how you went from not being able to know yourself to ultimately being able to, and being able to know the essence of your nature; of how you went from resisting and rebelling against God to being able to obey Him, satisfy Him, and testify to Him. If you can fellowship such experiences and testimony in their entirety, then your testimony to God is whole and complete. Only this is exalting and testifying to God in the true sense. ... If all you go on about is your own corruption and ugliness, and if, after a decade or more, you can say nothing of changes in yourself, is this exalting and testifying to God? Is this glorifying God? Can it testify to the omnipotence of God's work? ... If your testimony causes people to become negative and stray from God, then it is not testimony. Your work opposes God, it is the work of Satan; it is the work that opposes God" ("Questions & Answers" in Sermons and Fellowship III). When I heard this I suddenly came to realize that doggedly exposing myself and talking about the revelation of my own corruption was not exalting and testifying to God; true testimony and exaltation of God doesn't just involve talking about coming to know your own corrupt substance whilst experiencing God's work of judgment and chastisement; what's more important is saying something about your positive practice and entry. For example: What truths you have come to know, what you have come to know about God, what effects God's work has had in you, what changes there have been in your old disposition, and so on. If you genuinely speak of these aspects of experience and knowledge, through the actual experiences that you fellowship you will allow the brothers and sisters to attain the knowledge of God, and to see that God's work really can save people and change them, thus producing in them true faith toward God, and, at the same time, giving them a path of practice and entry, and informing them of how to satisfy God, and how to enter the reality of God's words. Only this is truly exalting and testifying to God, and only such

testimony can bring shame upon Satan. My understanding of exalting and testifying to God, on the other hand, had been too one-sided, too absurd. I thought that saying more about my own corruption before the brothers and sisters, so that they thought little of me, was exalting and testifying to God. I thought that talking about my positive aspects of entry was exalting and testifying to myself. How stupid I was! At this point, I can't help but think about my practice and the effect of exalting and testifying to God.

One time, I remember how a sister who was hosting me said, "You leaders have given up your families and careers to perform your duty away from home, you have suffered much hardship, experienced many things, and come to understand many truths. In all of you, there has been some entry and change. But staying in home, I am too constrained by the flesh, the times when my heart is at peace before God are too few, I understand too few truths, and there has been no change in me. I'd love to be like you." Hearing this, I thought to myself, "I must exalt and testify to God, I must fellowship my own corruption, and not speak of my own changes, or else this sister will hold me in high regard." As a result, I made sure to speak of how, in the past, I was arrogant and disobedient of the church's arrangements when performing my duty, of how I was incapable of getting along with my brothers and sisters, of how much of what I said was tainted with untruth, of how I tried to deceive and harbor suspicion about people.... After hearing my fellowship, the sister said, "I thought you had all changed more or less completely—but it turns out that you, too, haven't changed. Huh! None of you have changed, which makes me even worse." After that, though the sister no longer held me in high regard and did not look up to me, she became negative as a result, and thought she had no hope of salvation. Once, during assembly, I talked to the brothers and sisters of one aspect of my corruption: how I had conceptions about God. I talked only about how I had conceptions about God, not about how I solved these conceptions, and it turned out that the brothers and sisters hadn't had such conceptions, yet they did after hearing my fellowship. And so on. Such was the effect of my supposed exaltation and testimony to God. The exaltation and testimony to God that I practiced not only didn't testify to the authority and majesty of God's words, but instead gave the brothers and sisters doubts and conceptions about God's work of saving, changing, and perfecting people; they lost faith in salvation, nor did they have the motivation to pursue the truth or the resolve to actively cooperate. The exaltation and testimony to God that I practiced did not testify to people of the kindness, loveliness, and righteousness of God, it did not testify of God's benevolent instead, there were produced in the brothers and sisters conceptions and misunderstandings about God, and they lived in the wrong state. How was I exalting and testifying to God? I was simply spreading negativity and releasing death. In essence, I was hurting people and bringing destruction upon them. Although, from the outside, it didn't seem as if I had done anything obviously evil, the essence of my actions was in opposition to God, it was sowing disaffection in people's relationship with God, it was an attack on the positivity of the brothers and sisters, and it caused them to stray from God. I was committing evil, pure and simple! This is truly despised and hated by God!

Thanks be to God for enlightening me as to what it is to truly exalt and testify to God, for allowing me to know just how absurd my own understanding of the exaltation and testimony to God was, for allowing me to see that in essence, my supposed exaltation and testimony to God were grievous resistance toward God. If I had carried on like that, ultimately all that would have happened to me is that I would have been eliminated and punished because I had served God but resisted Him. Starting from that day, I aspired to turn around my absurd means of practice; when I fellowshiped about knowing myself, I must speak more of the path to positive entry, and of testimony to experiencing and practicing God's words. I must testify to all that I have come to know—so that, with the help of my experiences and knowledge, the brothers and sisters could understand the will of God, be able to experience the work of God, and attain the knowledge of God, truly bringing them before God.

9. A Bit of Understanding of Being Saved

By Lin Qing, Shandong Province

After becoming a Christian I always believed that as long as I put everything aside and expended myself for God, did the work of the church well, I didn't give up my duty or betray God no matter what tribulations or pain I suffered, and could follow Him until the end, I would be someone God would be pleased with. I thought that I could gain God's salvation and I would be able to remain. So I gave up my family and fleshly enjoyments, and spent every day rushing around, busy in the church. This is how I came to believe that I had already walked the path of salvation by God, and all I had to do was follow Him to the very end.

A few days ago, I saw a passage from a sermon, "Only Those Who Gain the Truth and Enter Into Reality Are Truly Saved": "Being saved by God is not as simple as people imagine. We must experience the judgment and chastisement as well as the trials and refinement from God's word step by step. We must closely follow every step of God's work, and in the end gain the truth and achieve a change in disposition to become a new creation, and be able to rely on the truth to triumph over Satan and transcend sin. We must be able to consciously live relying on God's words, to completely obey God and be compatible with Him. Only this is truly triumphing over Satan, transcending sin, and being gained by God. If we can achieve this outcome from experiencing God's work, then only this is truly being saved by God." "On the path of pursuing the truth and achieving salvation by God, there are yet many difficulties and obstacles, such as the family breaking apart, natural and manmade disasters—every type of trial and tribulation that people must face. It certainly is not smooth sailing, and if people lack truth, they cannot stand firm, the chance that they will betray God is 100%" (The Fellowship From the Above). After reading this, I felt as if I were awakening from a dream. So, being saved by God wasn't as simple as I had thought after all. It doesn't refer to giving things up, expending yourself, working hard just on the outside, and then following God until the end. Rather, it's necessary to have practical experience of God's work and words, accept God's chastisement and judgment, dealing and pruning, as well as experience all kinds of trials and tribulations. And finally, through understanding the truth, people gain genuine understanding of their own corrupt dispositions, cast off their corrupt satanic dispositions, begin relying on God's words in their lives, and become people who truly fear and obey God. Only achieving this outcome can they be someone who truly gains God's salvation. But comparing my actual condition to this, I was far from achieving that outcome. There were so many times that even though I knew pursuing reputation and status was not commended by God, I was firmly clinging to these things and would not let go of them. I was happy when I gained fame and status and energized when performing my duty, but when I didn't gain them I was negative and resistant, even having no mind to work and falling into a darkness I couldn't extricate myself from. I knew believing in God meant I should pursue the truth and fulfill the duty of a created being to satisfy God, and that I shouldn't conduct transactions with God. But when I saw that God's work was long in concluding and my hopes of gaining blessings still had not been realized, I carried negativity within me. My energy of earlier times just disappeared without a trace, and I was careless

in fulfilling my duty. When I encountered difficulties in my work, although I knew that this was God training me through difficulties and perfecting my faith, inside I was still full of misunderstandings and complaints. I felt that believing in God was too painful, too difficult; I even wanted to give up my work and was unwilling to expend myself for God. There were so many times that I knew the environment and all people, matters, and things surrounding me were set up by God to perfect me, and that I should seek truth from these things, yet when faced with a person, matter or thing that was not in line with my notions, I would always resist it and was unwilling to accept it. Looking at all of these actual conditions and manifestations, how could that be an experience and a testimony of seeking the truth and putting it into practice? How could I have any bit of true stature? When faced just with some small trial or frustration, I was capable of betraying God at any moment and was in danger of stumbling, not to mention being able to stand firm in the midst of great tribulations and suffering and follow God to the end of the road. At that moment I saw that although I had followed God for several years and had never dropped out, I had only emphasized the superficial actions of running around and expending myself for God. I had not really pursued the truth or put God's word into practice, nor had I truly accepted God's judgment and chastisement, and my life disposition had not changed one bit. I was still living under Satan's dark influence and was subject to its trickery and manipulation. This was very far off from the standard for truly being saved by God, but I actually believed that I had entered the path of salvation by God long ago and I was nearly adequate. This was simply self-deception.

After realizing these things, I prayed to God: "Oh God, thank You! It was Your enlightenment and guidance that allowed me to see my true condition clearly and made me understand what genuine salvation is, transforming my erroneous viewpoint from the past. It also made me understand that no matter how many years I had believed in God, without pursuing the truth my life disposition could not change. So no matter how much I was out and about working, no matter how much I suffered, I would not gain God's approval. From today forward, I am willing to cherish this treasure of time to pursue the truth, and through experiencing Your work, I will try to rid myself of my corrupt disposition. I will strive to live according to Your words and completely obey You, and step onto the path to salvation."

10. Shaking Off the Shackles of the Spirit

By Wu Wen, Henan Province

I was a weak person with a sensitive character. Before I believed in God, I would frequently feel down and distressed from things that came up in life. There were many of these times, and I always felt that my life was difficult; there was no joy, no happiness in my heart to speak of. This pain was just like shackles that always kept me tightly bound, making me utterly miserable. It was only after I believed in Almighty God that I found the root of the problem within God's words and gradually gained freedom from this.

I read this in Almighty God's words: "Because people love themselves too much, their whole lives are anguished and empty..." ("Chapter 46" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). At that time, I realized the reason for my sorrow; it was because I was too enamored with myself, that I was always living just for myself. I would frequently feel distressed and in pain from a few unpleasant words or from a sidelong glance from another person. When I was dealt with and pruned, I felt sad and upset, because my dignity was injured and I felt I had lost face. I was worried about my future path in life. It was only after really delving into these manifestations of mine that I realized—all of this was because I cared too much about my own reputation, status, and vanity, and because I placed too much importance on my own personal benefit. Later, I read "Escape From the Influence of Darkness and You Will Be Gained by God" and saw these words from God: "Those who have not been released, who are always controlled by certain things, and who are unable to give their hearts to God are people under Satan's bondage who live within an aura of death" (The Word Appears in the Flesh). This really hit the nail on the head. Isn't this exactly my condition? I was often constrained by some trivial matters and I could not release myself from it. It turns out, all of that was the result of being controlled and bound by Satan; it was all an affliction of Satan. I read on, and God said: "To escape from the influence of darkness, you must first be loyal to God and eager at heart to pursue the truth; only then can you have a correct state. Living in a correct state is the prerequisite for escaping from the influence of darkness. Not having a correct state is not being loyal to God, and not being eager at heart to seek the truth; and escaping from the influence of darkness is out of the question. My words are the basis of man's escape from dark influences, and people who cannot practice in accordance with My

words will not be able to escape from the bonds of the influence of darkness. To live in a correct state is to live under the guidance of the words of God, to live in a state of loyalty to God, to live in a state of seeking the truth, to live in the reality of sincerely expending oneself for God's sake, and to live in a state of genuinely loving God. Those who live in these states and within this reality will slowly transform as they enter into the depth of the truth, and they will transform as the work goes deeper; and in the end, they will certainly become people who are gained by God and who love God genuinely" (The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading this, I felt my heart brightened. I was so frequently subjected to the constraints of fame, status, and fleshly benefit because I was distant from God, lacked God's words and didn't understand the truth, instead living under the domain of Satan. Satan was using all of these things, these satanic poisons, to afflict me so that I became mired in fleshly benefit and was entangled in all sorts of selfish desires. In spite of my faith, I was still struggling and running around for the sake of the flesh. I did not have the resolve to pursue, to seek the truth. I was not devoted to God. If I did not change course, I would continue to live under the domain of Satan and grow farther and farther from God. In the end, Satan would swallow me whole. I gave thanks for the enlightenment from God's words; I saw my own dangerous state and I also found a path to throwing off the influence of darkness—having a heart of seeking the truth, truly relying on and looking up to God when encountering issues, reading God's words more, seeking the principles of practice in the words of God, and always being loyal to God. When obtaining the work of the Holy Spirit the corruption within mankind can undergo a transformation alongside their entry into the truth. This is the way of the work of the Holy Spirit. But I had ignored this aspect, only passively trying to deal with my corrupt disposition with my own perseverance, and by relying on human methods, not proactively relying on the words of God and the work of the Holy Spirit to cleanse and change myself. No wonder I had not resolved this condition from its root. Just as it says in God's words: "The more that people are in the presence of God, the easier they are to be perfected by God. This is the path by which the Holy Spirit does His work. If you do not understand this, it will be impossible for you to enter onto the right track, and being perfected by God will be out of the question. ... you will have only your own hard work and none of God's work. Is this not a mistake in your experiencing?" ("On Experience" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After understanding this, I began to consciously practice according to this path.

When reading God's words, I also focus on dealing with the satanic poisons of fame, status, and fleshly benefit. When I encounter an issue I consciously put the truth into practice and forsake my own incorrect motives and perspectives. When some incorrect ideas come to the fore, I quickly pray to God and seek the truth so that I am able to live in the right condition. Although my actions have not reached the requirements and standards of God's words, I have felt the release and freedom of living in the light and I have enjoyed the work of the Holy Spirit. Not only have I been able to see my own corruption and deficiencies, but I have had the determination of longing to change soon and the motivation to practice the truth. My outlook has changed as well; I'm no longer gloomy, depressed, and lifeless, but there is vitality and vigor in my heart. I have also become more cheerful, and I feel very happy to be living in the church!

I know this aspect of corruption in me is too deep and it is not possible to entirely throw off Satan's influence from putting these things into practice a few times. However, God has allowed me to have a taste of the sweetness of throwing off the influence of darkness, living in the light, which has given me motivation and hope in my pursuit. I believe that as long as I continue to persevere in cooperating with God and walk the path God has pointed out, seek the truth in all things, and live by God's words, I will throw off the shackles of the spirit, throw off the influence of darkness, and be gained by God.

11. You Can't Discern a Person by Their Appearance

By Yang Rui, Shanxi Province

In my heart, I always believed my father to be a good man. But one day, I unexpectedly heard that my father was expelled from the church. I was totally stunned at the time and couldn't figure it out: Although he has a bad temper, he took great care of us sisters and never beat or scolded us. Despite our family's struggles, he would not let us suffer no matter how much suffering he had to endure. After our whole family accepted God's work in the last days, my father was proactive in fulfilling his duty, and often encouraged us to diligently fulfill our own duties. Though my father was sometimes a little arrogant, as long as there was a duty to fulfill, regardless of the wind and rain or the extent of the difficulty, he would find a way to complete it. How could such a good person get expelled? The situation filled my heart

with resentment and conflict, and I felt the church was not treating my father fairly. Although I did not say it, I found it difficult to calm my heart, and I agonized in torment.

One day, I read the following in God's words: "It may be that in all your years of faith in God, you have never cursed anyone or committed a bad deed, yet in your association with Christ, you cannot speak the truth, act honestly, or obey the word of Christ; in that case, I say that you are the most sinister and malicious person in the world. You may be exceptionally amiable and devoted toward your relatives, friends, wife (or husband), sons and daughters, and parents, and never take advantage of others, but if you are incapable of compatibility with Christ, if you are unable to interact in harmony with Him, then even if you expend your all in relief to your neighbors or take meticulous care of your father, mother, and members of your household, I would say that you are still wicked, and moreover one full of cunning tricks. Do not think yourself compatible with Christ simply because you get along with others or do a few good deeds. Do you think that your charitable intent can finagle the blessings of Heaven? Do you think that doing a few good deeds is a substitute for your obedience?" ("Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reflecting on God's words, I gradually understood: To see if a person is good or wicked, look at not whether their outward behavior is good or bad or how their relationships are with other people. Rather, look at their relationship with God, and whether they have true obedience to and fear of God, and whether they are compatible with God. Someone may have a good relationship with others, frequently help others and treat them with love, but if they can't be compatible with God, if they don't pursue the truth in their faith, if they adulterate their duty with their own personal motives, and if they judge and resist God when His work isn't in line with their notions, then that person is a hypocrite. They are a crafty, two-faced evil person. With this understanding, I began to recall some expressions my father had made: While he was in his former church, my father had been a leader. After accepting God's work in the last days, because the brothers and sisters of the church did not elect him to be a leader he was deeply dissatisfied. In order to regain the "throne" of being a leader, he started to actively present himself well to others. He did whatever the church arranged for him to do. Later, when his wish was not realized, he showed his true colors, always acting extremely conceited in the church, never listening to anyone, and always forcing people to listen to him no matter what. If he saw a

worker who did not fit his liking, he would judge, belittle, and undermine them. He'd also sow disaffection among the brothers and sisters, grievously interrupting and upsetting the life of the church. Multiple times, the leaders and workers fellowshiped the truth with him, pruned and dealt with him, and gave him warnings—but he remained totally oblivious, much less did he show any regret. Isn't this the behavior of the wicked? Just as God said: "The standard by which man judges man is based on his behavior; one whose conduct is good is a righteous person, and one whose conduct is abominable is wicked. The standard by which God judges man is based on whether one's essence obeys Him; one who obeys God is a righteous person, and one who does not obey God is an enemy and a wicked person, regardless of whether this person's behavior is good or bad, and regardless of whether this person's speech is correct or incorrect" ("God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). When compared against God's words, my father's behavior was not obeying God's orchestrations and arrangements, and he was also causing disruption to the church for the sake of vying for power and status and was committing all manner of wickedness. Such an essence is one that resists God and belongs to an evil person. I used to think my father was a good person, but this was all because my outlook had not been based on God's words and I had always been deceived and fooled by how he appeared to be on the outside; I hadn't thoroughly understood my father's nature and essence. From God's words, I came to understand that my father caring about me and looking after me in all things, and being able to fulfill his duty, were all external behavior and were external good deeds. However, his external good deeds did not equate to obeying God, and moreover could not be called righteous. Only someone who truly believes in God and pursues the truth, who can be obedient no matter what kind of environment they encounter, and who is happy to accept God's judgment and chastisement is someone who is truly obedient to God. Only that is a good person who can be saved by God. My father only had himself to blame for being expelled from the church. It was because of his terrible nature and he had no one else to blame. Moreover, this was a manifestation of God's righteous disposition.

After going through this I understood some truths related to discernment and learned how to have discernment on people. I also saw that God's disposition is holy and righteous, and will tolerate no offense. I particularly realized that without the truth it's impossible to really see through the people, events, and things around me. From now on, no matter what

befalls me, I will seek the truth more in God's words and look at things according to God's words. Even if I cannot thoroughly understand the things God does, I believe all that He does is right. I will no longer analyze and scrutinize them from their outward appearances. I will stand on the side of the truth, constantly cautioning myself to stand witness for God.

12. Beating Satan in Battle

By Chang Moyang, Henan Province

The words of Almighty God say: "When you rebel against the flesh, there will inevitably be a battle within you. Satan will try and make people follow it, will try and make them follow the notions of the flesh and uphold the interests of the flesh—but God's words will enlighten and illuminate people within, and at this time it is up to you whether you follow God or follow Satan. God asks people to put the truth into practice primarily to deal with the things inside them, to deal with their thoughts and notions that are not after God's heart. The Holy Spirit touches people in their hearts and enlightens and illuminates them. So behind everything that happens is a battle: Every time people put the truth into practice, or put the love of God into practice, there is a great battle, and though all may seem well with their flesh, in the depths of their hearts a life-and-death battle will, in fact, be going on—and only after this intense battle, after a tremendous amount of reflection, can victory or defeat be decided. One does not know whether to laugh or cry" ("Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Every time I read this passage from God's words, I ponder the following: Is practicing the truth really that difficult? When people don't understand the truth, they cannot practice it. Once they have understood it, wouldn't they just act according to God's will? Could it really be as serious as "in the depths of their hearts a life-anddeath battle will, in fact, be going on"? It wasn't until later, through my actual experience, that I had a taste that practicing the truth truly is not easy. What God said is the truth and is entirely in line with the facts; it is not even a little exaggerated.

Some time ago, a gulf developed between me and the sister I was partnered with due to some disagreements over our duties. I felt that she was arrogant and looked down on me; so I sank into an incorrect condition. I began to subject myself to constraints because of her.

I could not let go of it in my duty; I was submissive in my words and cautious in my actions to the point that, after a while, I would watch her expression when I was speaking or doing something, and I was not shouldering the burden of my work. I was living entirely in the darkness. I couldn't extricate myself even though I knew that my condition was dangerous. In the midst of suffering, I prayed to God over and over again, and then I thought: "It can't go on like this. I should have a heart-to-heart talk with this sister and find a path of light." When I began to think like this, my heart brightened, and I knew it to be the guidance of God. I felt that I had a path to take and decided to open my heart to her in fellowship. But when I got to my sister's door, I had a different thought: "What will my sister think when I talk about it? Will she say that there are too many little things on my mind, I'm too much of a hassle, too difficult to deal with?" As soon as I had this thought, it was as if I had seen that funny look in her eyes, that contemptuous expression. Suddenly, my courage just disappeared and I went limp, as if my whole body were cramping. Once again, God's word was guiding me from inside: "If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness" ("Three Admonitions" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). So I plucked up some courage again, and silently encouraged myself: "Be brave, be simple and open. Practicing the truth is nothing to be ashamed of!" But at the same time, a contrary feeling tugged at me: "Don't say anything—she will probably think you're okay. If you talk about it she'll see through and look down upon you, thinking you have too many little things on your mind and she won't like you anymore." "Ugh! It's better not to say anything, then!" As I once again wavered, a thought came to my mind: "Being an honest person means you can't be shy and fearful to lose your face!" However, as soon as I gained a little bit of courage, Satan's ideas once again welled up: "If you talk about it other people will know your true colors, and you'll be miserable!" My heart suddenly clenched. It was in this way that my heart was pulled to and fro in a battle between positive and negative, black and white. I knew clearly: My not wanting to speak was a desire to protect my own face out of vanity and defend my dignity. If I carried on this way, my condition would not be resolved and it would have no benefit for the church's work. Only seeking truth to resolve this issue would be beneficial for the work and be in line with God's will. But the moment the thought occurred to me that as soon as she knew, she might see through me

and think even less of me, I lost my courage to practice the truth. I felt that if I spoke out about my own ugliness, it's as if I wouldn't be able to go on living! For a moment I became terribly upset, and my heart was in great pain as if being burned by a fire. I unwittingly burst into tears, and all there was to do was helplessly cry out to God in my heart.

At this moment, God's words flickered in my mind: "Young people should not be without the truth, nor should they harbor hypocrisy and unrighteousness.... Young people should have the bravery to not succumb to the oppression of the forces of darkness and to transform the significance of their existence" ("Words for the Young and the Old" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words allowed me to finally calm my restless heart. I came to understand God's will through His words. God hoped that I would turn toward righteousness, have the faith and courage to pursue the truth and put it into practice, to break through the strictures of face, status, and vanity, to be an honest person, and to live in an open and aboveboard way. God's words gave me the faith and courage to put the truth into practice. Who cares about face, anyway? I can no longer be subject to Satan's mocking! I can no longer rebel against God; I must forsake myself and practice the truth. Once I summoned up the resolve to find my sister and have a heart-to-heart fellowship with her, the results far exceeded my expectations. Not only did my sister not look down on me, but she confessed her own corruption, reflected on and recognized her own deficiencies and apologized to me, saying that in the future when encountering an issue, we should have fellowship on the truth with each other to achieve mutual understanding, see obeying the truth as our principle, learn from each other's strengths to make up for our own deficiencies, do the work of the church well together. This is how that battle without weapons came to an end. My issue had been resolved, and I felt free and bright in my heart. Thinking back to the intense battle in my heart just now, I started to realize how serious my vain concern for saving face and status was. It was a part of my life to the point that I was living in darkness, unable to break free. I understood the truth but could not practice it; I truly was too deeply corrupted by Satan! I also really experienced that practicing the truth and being an honest person is not easy. When faced with trials, only by relying on God, seeking the truth, and having the faith and courage to put the truth into practice can I triumph over the control of a satanic corrupt disposition, stand witness, and live in the light!

It was only after undergoing this experience that I had some understanding of God's words: "Every time people put the truth into practice, or put the love of God into

practice, there is a great battle, and though all may seem well with their flesh, in the depths of their hearts a life-and-death battle will, in fact, be going on...." And I understood that God's words were said about mankind's corrupt nature because people's satanic nature is too deeply rooted in the flesh. These corrupt satanic natures have become their lives and keep people firmly under their control. Without the truth, there is no way to escape from them. When we practice the truth is when we forsake our own fleshly lives; this process is the same as being reborn. It really is a contest and a fight for life and death, and it is a quite painful process. When we do not truly know our own corrupt nature and we don't have the will to suffer or pay a price, we absolutely cannot practice the truth. In the past I thought that practicing the truth was easy—this was because I had no understanding of my own corrupt nature and I didn't know how deep my corruption was. In the future, I am willing to more deeply know myself through experience, to seek to practice the truth in all things, to forsake myself, and live out the likeness of a true human being!

13. There Is a Way to Resolve Arrogance

By Xiaochen, Henan Province

I was a person with an arrogant nature—I had often revealed my arrogant, corrupt disposition, always thinking that I was better than others. Particularly when revising articles or communicating on our work with the brothers and sisters that I was partnered with, I was always opinionated and would not listen to other opinions with an open mind. My inability to coordinate harmoniously with my partners often led to problems in our work. Brothers and sisters raised this issue with me many times, and I also regularly read about God's words exposing people's arrogant natures, but since I had not achieved a true understanding of my own nature and essence and could not truly hate it, whenever I encountered an environment conducive to that, I would lose control. After the fact I would feel quite disgusted, but since what's done is done, all I could do was to keep trying to gain an understanding of it. And so this happened again and again, and I never experienced any transformation in my life disposition. I felt really embarrassed, really helpless over this.

During my devotionals one time, I saw the following words of God: "How should you resolve your human nature? Firstly, you must know this nature, and you must understand

both the word and the will of God. How, then, can you ensure, to the greatest extent, that you avoid committing wrongful acts and only do that which conforms to the truth? If you wish to make a change, then you must deliberate on this. With regard to your flawed nature, what sorts of corrupt dispositions you possess and which manner of acts you are capable of, what approach can then be adopted and how it may be practiced in order to control it—these are crucial questions. ... Lin Zexu was quick to anger. Based on his own weakness, he wrote down a motto in his room: Bridle Your Temper. This is a human approach, but it truly does work. Each individual has his or her own principles to follow, so you, too, should set principles with respect to your own nature. These principles are necessary, and not having them is out of the question. This should also be your motto for your code of conduct in your belief in God" ("Practicing Truth and Resolving Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words provided me with a path I could take right away. I understood that to change a rebellious disposition, you must often eat and drink God's words about Him exposing man's corrupt essence. You also need to establish mottos based on your particular nature so that you can consciously control how your nature is exposed in order to forsake yourself and put the truth into practice. Hence, based on aspects of my corruption such as my arrogant nature, self-righteousness, and unwillingness to listen to the opinions of the brothers and sisters that I was partnered with, I came up with the following motto: "How can a pile of dung be proud of its stench?" After that, whenever I was having fellowship on an issue with the brothers and sisters that I was partnered with, I would first warn myself with this motto so that I could keep firmly in mind that my essence is that of dung and that my entire self emits a terrible stench. I would also think of the fact that I had caused so many problems for the church's work due to my arrogance and ego, and that I had nothing to be arrogant about. That way I wouldn't insist that my own opinions were correct and could have a bit of a heart of seeking, making me willing to humble myself and listen to the opinions of others. I sometimes still wanted to refute others' views, but as soon as I thought of my motto, I would make a conscious effort to forsake myself and practice the truth of harmonious coordination.

After a while, I was pleased to discover that when I humbled myself, I would receive some of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and illumination from my brothers' and sisters' fellowship, and I would see some of the absurd aspects in my understanding of the truth. At the same time, I also discovered some of the strengths of others and I was willing to draw on them to make up for my own deficiencies. I did not think that I was better at everything

than others and I lowered my nose from up in the air. Forsaking myself did not feel as painful as it did before, and I felt from the heart that humbling myself and modestly listening to the opinions of the brothers and sisters that I was partnered with was really beneficial. This not only benefited my own growth in life, but through mutual help and making up for each other's shortcomings as well as cooperating with one heart and mind, my effectiveness in work also improved.

Through this experience, I tasted the sweetness of practicing the truth and saw that through creating a motto, I could make myself consciously rein in revelations of my corrupt disposition, not only reducing my transgressions but also gaining more opportunities to understand the truth. At the same time, I also realized how ugly, how disgusting the past revelations of my arrogant nature had been. I give thanks to God for guiding me to understand these things. From this day forward, I will come up with mottos corresponding to the aspects of my corruption and I will constrain my nature and forsake my flesh so that I can practice the truth. I will also read more of God's words, accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words, know more of the truth in order to know the essence of my own nature so that I can truly hate myself and cast off my corrupt disposition as soon as possible to meet God's will.

14. The Importance of Coordination in Service

By Mei Jie, Shandong Province

The church recently issued a work arrangement requiring church leaders at all levels to set up a partner (a co-worker to work alongside them). At the time I thought this was a good arrangement. I was of a low caliber and I really did need a partner to help me complete all types of work in the church.

So, I and the sister who became my partner began carrying out the pastoral work in the church together. I gradually realized that she wasn't doing things as I would have liked, and resistance began in my heart: "Although I was a little busier when I worked on my own, I was able to handle all aspects of the church's work well. Arranging for a partner at this point really would be a hassle. If I let her do some work and it's not ideal, then I'd rather do it on my own. If I don't let her do the work, well, she is my partner. I should let her participate in

some things...." So, more and more resistance came up in my heart. One time when she did something that wasn't how I wanted it done, I really couldn't hold back any longer and I lost my temper with her: "What happened to you? You've been a leader for many years, so how can you not do such a small amount of work well? How is it that these last few times I haven't been able to get through to you, that you're just not taking it in?" After I was done, I felt awful, really guilty. I thought to myself: "How could I lose my temper so badly? Is there something wrong with my condition?" So I came in front of God in seeking, and saw God's words which said: "Today the requirement of you to work together harmoniously is similar to how Jehovah required the Israelites to serve Him. Otherwise, your service will come to an end. Because you are people who serve God directly, at the very minimum you must be able to be loyal and obedient in your service, and must be able to learn the lessons in a practical way. ... You do not even study or enter into such a practical lesson, and you still talk of serving God! ... If you people who coordinate to work in the churches do not learn from each other, and communicate, making up for each other's shortcomings, from where can you learn lessons? When you encounter anything, you should fellowship with each other, so that your life can benefit" ("Serve As the Israelites Did" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Then I saw this in a sermon: "There are some people who are unable to coordinate with anyone else while fulfilling their duty. No one can get close to them; this reveals their arrogance and conceit, that they don't have any humanity and sense, are not aware of themselves, and they look down on others. Isn't this pitiful? The disposition of this type of human does not change at all, and it's not easy to say if they can be saved by God. People who truly know themselves can treat other people correctly without being too critical. They can also patiently help and support others, make people feel that they are dear and beloved; they can have proper relationships with others. They are people with humanity, and only people with humanity have devotion for God, can live harmoniously with others, and adequately fulfill their duty" (The Fellowship From the Above). From those words of God and this from the sermon, I finally saw that I hadn't understood God's will in the work arrangement requiring church leaders at all levels to set up a partner. Only then did I quiet my heart and carefully ponder this. It turned out that this requirement from the work arrangement was because our caliber and experience are limited, as is our understanding of all aspects of the truth. We cannot take on all aspects of the church's work on our own, so with the help of a partner, we can learn from each other's

strengths to make up for our own deficiencies to better carry out all aspects of the church's work. Another part of it is that because our natures are so arrogant, with a position we want to have power and have the final say in things. With the oversight and restraint of a partner, that kind of autocratic, indiscriminate, reckless service that could damage the church's work can be avoided. We can also better exercise our entry into the truth on proper humanity, learn to stand on an equal footing, learn how to have fellowship on the truth to achieve mutual understanding, and be able to submit to the truth. Only then did I see that harmonious coordination in our service is so critical for the work of the church and our personal life entry. But I had not sought God's will at all in this. I had not paid attention to what practical lessons I could learn through coordination in service. I just reluctantly worked with her because of the church's arrangement, and as soon as this sister didn't handle a few things well, I scolded her and lost my temper. I always compared my strengths with her weaknesses and felt that she wasn't as capable as I was, and I didn't see her strengths and advantages. I even resisted the arrangement of the church. I really was too arrogant, so unaware of myself, and I didn't have even a little bit of normal humanity or reason, and even more I absolutely didn't have a heart of reverence for God, and was not worthy of this kind of grace and exaltation from God.

After realizing these things, I prayed to God: "Oh God! I give thanks for Your revelation that made me recognize my inability to coordinate with others harmoniously, my arrogance and my pitiful side in my service to You. From this day forward, I am willing to maintain a heart of reverence for You, to no longer uphold myself, and in all things to focus on the interests of the church. In coordination in service with my sister, I will support her and learn from her. I will focus on my own life entry, seek to soon become a person with truth and humanity, and perform my duty well to comfort Your heart."

15. Only This Is a Truly Good Person

By Moran, Shandong Province

Since I was a child, I always attached a great deal of importance to how other people saw me and their assessment of me. Whenever things cropped up, I never offended anyone or argued with others so that others would have a positive impression of me. For that reason

people praised me, saying I was a good person; I also believed myself to be a good person. The people around me therefore praised me as a good person, and I also believed that I was a good person. After I'd accepted God's work in the last days, I continued in this way, carefully and scrupulously maintaining the good image that my brothers and sisters had of me. Some time ago, my leader said that my performance was like a "nice person," and not the performance of someone who puts the truth into practice. I never took it to heart, instead feeling gratified that others saw me as a nice person.

One day, I read this paragraph: "If in your belief of God you do not pursue the truth, then even if you do not appear to be transgressing, you are still not a truly good person. Those who do not pursue the truth certainly have no sense of righteousness, nor can they love what God loves or hate what God hates. They absolutely cannot stand at God's side, much less be compatible with God. How then can those without a sense of righteousness be called good people? Not only do those that are described by worldly people as 'nice people' have no sense of righteousness, they have no goals in life either. They are merely people who never want to offend anyone, so what are they worth? A truly good person indicates someone who loves positive things, someone who pursues the truth and yearns for the light, someone who can discern good from evil and who has the correct goals in life; only this kind of person does God love" ("To Serve God One Must Learn How to Discern All Kinds of People" in Work Arrangements). After reading these words, I suddenly saw the light. Now I saw that a truely good person is not someone who never offends others, who has friendly exchanges with others and doesn't argue or quarrel with them, or someone who is able to give others a good impression and get a good assessment from them. Rather, a good person is someone who loves the truth, who loves positive things, who differentiates between love and hate, who has a sense of righteousness, who can love what God loves and hate what God hates, and who can truly love God and be loyal to God. As for my own actions, whenever I saw a brother or sister talk about how difficult spreading the gospel was, I couldn't help feeling conflicted and starting to complain, feeling that spreading the gospel was not easy, that it really was too hard. Unknowingly I took the side of the flesh of man and no longer wanted to fellowship about the truth and remedy the wrong states of my brothers and sisters. When I saw someone spreading certain notions around, or saw things happen that were disruptive in the church, if they were serious, I would fellowship using tactful words to resolve the issue; if they were not serious, I would pass by the issue by turning a blind

eye, fearing that the other person would have an opinion of me if I seriously exposed the essence of the issue. When I saw the sister I worked with doing some things that had nothing to do with the truth, I wanted to raise the issue with her, but then I thought that she might not accept it and it would harm our relationship. So I just thought I'd wait until next time and raise it then. I kept putting it off and putting it off, and the matter remained unsettled.

It was only then that I saw that my thoughts and actions were for the sake of protecting a personal relationship, and were based on the principle of avoiding hurting others' feelings or damaging others' interests. But I didn't take to heart God's requirements, my own responsibilities and my duty, or the work of the church. Even being clearly aware of the truth I still didn't put it into practice. I was really so selfish and crafty! I saw others' assessment and praise of me as more important than the truth. Could their praise of me be regarded as God's approval of me? Could their positive assessment of me show that I had the truth and life? Those whom God saves and perfects are those truly good people who pursue the truth and righteousness. They are not those unreasonable people who cannot tell good from evil, or who are unclear about what to love or hate and who have no sense of righteousness. If I continued to take what worldly people think of as a good person as the criteria for my own conduct, I would be doomed to be an object for God's elimination and punishment.

I give thanks for God's guidance and enlightenment that allowed me some knowledge of what it is to be a truly good person, and that furthermore allowed me to recognize my mistaken presumptions and ignorance and my rebellion and resistance. From today, I wish to take the phrase "pursue the truth and have a sense of righteousness" as the criterion for my conduct, to seek to enter deeper into the truth, to seek a change in my disposition and to strive to soon be a truly good person who is clear about what to love or hate and who has a sense of righteousness.

16. The Secret Held Deep Within My Heart

By Wuzhi, Shandong Province

In the spring of 2006, I was stripped of my position as leader and sent back home because I was considered a "yes-man" and had been disturbing and disrupting the work of the church. For the first few days after I got back, I languished in a constant state of pain,

thinking: "I never imagined that after years of serving as a leader I would be replaced on account of being a 'yes-man.' This is the end for me; I will be held up as a bad example in the church. How will those who know me think of me? How can I face them?" The more I thought about it, the more negative I became, until I finally lost all faith to continue pursuing the truth. However, when I thought of all the sacrifices I had made in these past few years and of how much I'd expended myself, I couldn't bring myself to quit, and I thought: "If I completely write myself off and abandon myself to vice, won't all my suffering be for nothing? Won't people then think even less of me? I can't let that happen! I've got to stand up for myself and not let others look down their noses at me. Now, no matter how much I suffer, or how wronged I feel, I've got to buck up—I can't quit halfway! As long as I remember the lessons of failure and focus on pursuing the truth, then maybe one day I can become a leader again." With these thoughts in mind, suddenly all the negativity and sadness faded and I felt a renewed energy in my pursuit of the truth.

From that moment onward, I put in long hours every day, actively reading God's word to equip myself with the truth, while examining and gaining insight into my past transgressions. I also wrote many articles. A while later, when I saw that two of my articles had been selected, I felt even more faith in my pursuit. I thought to myself: "I'll just keep working and soon enough my dream will become a reality." In that way, I worked hard in my pursuit and was satisfied that my condition had more or less returned to "normal."

One day during spiritual devotion, I was drawn to a certain passage of God's words: "If people are to understand themselves, they must understand their true states. The most important aspect of understanding one's own state is to have a grasp on one's own thoughts and ideas. In every time period, people's thoughts have been controlled by one major thing. If you can gain control over your thoughts, you can gain control over the things that are behind them" ("People Who Always Have Requirements for God Are the Least Reasonable" in Records of Christ's Talks). Thinking over God's words, I couldn't help but ask myself: What dominates my thoughts now? What lies hidden behind all my thoughts? I began to carefully reflect on my own state and, with God's guidance, came to realize that ever since I had been replaced, my thoughts had been dominated and controlled by the desire that "I must wrest back my former reputation and status and stand up for myself. I can't keep being looked down upon by others." This was the reason why I hadn't fallen or degenerated in this painful trial, and this thought had been like a spiritual

pillar that had given me the drive to pursue the truth, and that had become a goal to fight for, thus I had strived "strongly" under the heavy burden of my disgrace. At this moment, I realized that my pursuit was completely tainted, full of desire and not in the least bit positive.

God had me replaced and exposed me to allow me to reflect on myself and understand my own satanic nature, so that I could be grounded and forthright in my pursuit of truth, cast off sin and attain the salvation of God. However, I certainly did not thank God for His salvation, nor did I hate myself for all the transgressions I committed, much less reproach myself or feel repentant for failing to live up to God's high hopes. Rather, driven by my arrogant nature that "I must prevail at any cost and not accept failure," I poured myself into the scheming of this plot, thinking only of the day when I would rise again, be reappointed as a leader, and regain the reputation that I had so thoroughly damaged. Effectively, I was hoping to rebuild my image for others to admire and worship. I had such ambitions; had I not disobeyed God's orchestrations and arrangements? Had I not been setting myself up in opposition to God? Right then, I couldn't help but feel afraid for how I'd been. I never would have imagined that such wild ambition lay behind my thoughts and ideas. No wonder God said, "If you can gain control over your thoughts, you can gain control over the things that are behind them." This is true indeed. In the past, I viewed my thoughts and ideas as fleeting notions and never took the time to analyze and understand them. Only now do I understand that grasping one's thoughts and ideas and focusing on analyzing the things held deep within one's heart is so important to understanding one's own nature and essence!

Thank God for His enlightenment, which has awakened me. If not, I would still be hoodwinked by my own falseness—careening down the wrong road with blind ambition and heading step by step toward an abyss of death. How incredibly scary! In the process, I also realized that in replacing me, God was protecting me and granting me salvation. For someone with such arrogance, conceitedness and ambition, if I had not gone through God's chastisement and judgment, hardships and trials, I would invariably have become an antichrist in opposition to God and would have brought on my own demise. With this realization, I prostrated before God and prayed: "O God, I vow to abandon this wrongful pursuit, forsake my arrogant nature and ambition and obey Your every arrangement. I will pursue the truth in earnest and with my feet planted firmly on the ground, fulfill my duty well and live out a genuine human likeness to comfort Your heart."

17. What Lies Behind Lies

By Xiaojing, Shandong Province

Each time I saw God's words calling on us to be honest people and to speak accurately, I thought, "It's easy to speak accurately. Isn't it just calling a spade a spade and telling things objectively as they are? Isn't that easy? What had always most annoyed me in this world were people who embellished when they spoke." Because of this, I felt super confident, and I believed that I could easily practice the truth of being an honest person and speaking accurately. But as the facts revealed themselves, I discovered that, without entering into the truth or changing one's disposition, one can in no way speak accurately.

One time, I saw Sister Wang who had not done her duty well being dealt with by the leader, and so I spoke privately to the leader and told her that dealing with people in that way was hard for others to accept, as it made her appear to lack compassion. Afterward, only through fellowship did I understand that our true love for one another is primarily embodied in the mutual support and help that we bring into our life entry, and helping each other with compassion also involves pruning, dealing, criticizing and censure. Another time, when I saw Sister Li overspending a few yuan in the course of her duty, I said that she was squandering church money, and that this was tantamount to stealing offerings. Only later did I recognize that there is a difference between people displaying a little corrupt disposition and being of that kind of nature and essence. Then there was another time when my leader asked me about Sister Zhou's situation. Because I had some preconceptions about her, even though I knew then that I should make an impartial report, I still couldn't help but severely talk up the corruption she had displayed, and did not say one word about her good points. When there occurred deviations or flaws in my own work, I would always report the situation to the leaders secretively, hiding the truth of the facts in order to protect my own face and status.

Facing such circumstances, I felt completely puzzled: Why was it that my heart was willing to speak the truth, to speak accurately, but when I opened my mouth I could never speak objectively or accurately? With this question, I went before God to pray and to seek guidance. Afterward, I read this in a sermon: "Why can people never speak accurately? There are three primary reasons: One reason is because of people's mistaken

presumptions. The way they look at things is wrong, so they also speak inaccurately. The second reason is that their caliber is too lacking. They do things carelessly without any practical investigation and they like to listen to hearsay, with the result that they end up adding many embellishments. There is another reason, which is that people have bad dispositions. They use a mix of personal intentions when they speak and, in order to achieve their own objectives, they make up lies to cheat others and deliberately distort the truth to deceive people. This situation is man-made, and must be resolved by the pursuit of truth and by knowing one's own nature" (The Fellowship From the Above). Once I saw these words I suddenly saw the light. Now I saw that to be an honest person and speak accurately was not as easy as I had thought. It is not that one can achieve it merely by clinging to rules, or by relying on one's own willpower and self-restraint. The key is to understand the truth, transform one's views on things, and change one's life disposition, for only then can one resolve the problems at the root. When someone doesn't understand the truth, they will then base their outlook on satanic knowledge and logic, and because they won't thoroughly understand the true state and essence of things, there will naturally be a disparity between what they say and the facts, and it will be impossible for them to speak accurately. When someone is without the truth, they will be unable to resolve any of their various satanic dispositions and their speech will be constrained by concerns about profit, prestige and status. In this way, the things people say will naturally be greatly tainted, and the essence of their words will be lies. As for what I myself had shown, whenever I saw others doing things which did not conform to the way of the world, I would willfully judge them as being without compassion. When I saw others expressing a little corrupt disposition, I would judge them based on the surface of the problem without understanding thoroughly its essence. When I had an opinion on another person and reported their situation, I would exaggerate the facts and add embellishments. When there occurred deviations or flaws in my duty, for the sake of my own reputation and status, I would cheat others and trick God. Weren't these circumstances and expressions all brought about because I hadn't entered into the truth, because my point of view was mistakenly presumptuous, because there had been no change in my disposition? At that time I understood: Only when one understands the truth, changes one's perspective of looking at things, and achieves changes in one's disposition can one speak accurately and treat everything that they encounter fairly and impartially.

Thank God for His enlightenment and guidance. Now I understand that I was being so

naive and preposterous to hold the view that I could speak accurately by relying on my own naturalness and depending on my own perseverance. That I could boast in such an arrogant, ignorant way exposes that I didn't have the reality of the truth and didn't recognize how deeply I was corrupted by Satan. From today, I wish to put much more effort into pursuing the truth, to spare no effort in pursuing a change in my disposition, to practice seeing people and things in accordance with God's words, and to strive to soon be an honest person who both speaks accurately and works in earnest.

18. It's Not Easy to Truly Know Yourself

By Zhang Rui, Zhejiang Province

After I saw in God's words that God likes honest people and hates deceitful people, and that only honest people will be saved by God, I began to focus on seeking to be an honest person, to consciously practice speaking accurately, to be objective, practical, and realistic when reporting on issues. In my work, whether it was an error or an omission, I related it in detail to the leader. I also consciously dissected and exposed the corruption I revealed. Every time I put this into practice, I felt that I had undergone some changes and I had gained a bit of the likeness of an honest person. I couldn't help but live within a state of smugness.

In fellowship in a meeting of co-workers, speaking of how we must learn to differentiate between different types of people in our service to God, the leader asked me: "What type of person do you think you are?" I thought to myself: I've recently had some entry into the truths regarding being an honest person, so I count myself as a relatively simple, open person. As for having poor humanity, I feel I'm not that bad. As for having good humanity, I don't possess every expression of goodness, but at the very least I feel I'm simple, honest, and I don't have a malicious heart. So, I responded with: "Relatively speaking, I count myself as being a simple, honest person with good humanity." The leader said: "You think you have good humanity, that you are relatively simple and honest. So you would really dare to open up about yourself in all things? You are really 100% free of doubts toward God? You really dare to say that in your words and actions there are no ulterior motives or intentions?" Hearing this, I felt defiant and explained defensively: "Good people also have corrupt dispositions,

and they can display all sorts of corruption—isn't it all relative?" I was unwilling to accept what the leader had said in my heart, and was unwilling to let go of my own opinion.

After this happened, I carefully reflected on what the leader had said. I couldn't help but ask myself: Would I really dare to open up about myself in all things? Giving it careful thought, I absolutely wouldn't. The things that I opened up about were just insignificant issues that didn't impact my reputation or self-interest, and were expressions of corruption that everyone has, but I had never dared to open up and expose the ugly, filthy things deep inside my heart. Furthermore, was I really 100% free of doubts toward God? I was not. When my work didn't bear fruit, I misunderstood God, thinking He was using it to expose and eliminate me. When I found that I was of poor caliber, I believed that I just rendered service, and no matter how hard I pursued, it was useless. I did not believe 100% in God's words or in God's righteous disposition, always thinking of God as merciful and loving, so I just did things to accommodate myself. Giving it more thought, would I really dare to say that in my words and actions there were no ulterior motives or intentions? In fact, my running around and working was just conducting a transaction with God so that in the future I could receive the destination and the blessing of the kingdom of heaven; it was not to fulfill the duty that every creature should fulfill. Although there was the external presentation of good behavior, that was for others to see, to give them a good impression. Giving some thought to what I revealed, wasn't it all a deceitful presentation? However, I still thought that I was a relatively simple and honest person—isn't that truly not knowing myself? I thought of what God said: "There is always a huge discrepancy between the way people understand their own natures and the way God has revealed human nature. This is not a mistake in what God reveals, but rather is humans' lack of profound understanding of their own nature. People do not have a fundamental or substantial understanding of themselves; instead, they focus on and devote their energy to their actions and outward expressions. Even if someone occasionally said something about understanding himself, it would not be very profound. No one has ever thought that he is this type of person or has this type of nature due to having done this type of thing or having revealed something. God has revealed the nature and substance of humanity, but humans understand that their way of doing things and their way of speaking are flawed and defective; therefore, it is a strenuous task for people to put truth into practice. People think that their mistakes are merely momentary

manifestations that are revealed carelessly rather than being revelations of their nature. ... therefore, when putting truth into practice, they only perfunctorily follow the rules. People do not view their own nature as being too corrupt, and believe that they are not so bad...; in fact, however, according to the standards, there is a big difference in this, because people only have some actions that do not outwardly violate truth, when they are not actually putting truth into practice" ("Understanding Nature and Putting Truth Into Practice" in Records of Christ's Talks). Through God's words of revelation, I saw how shallow my knowledge of myself was. I had known myself just based on my external behaviors, from my superficial presentation, instead of knowing myself from my motives, nature, and essence based on God's words. There was no way I could truly know myself. I believed that I was simple, honest, and had good humanity; wasn't that just because I could speak some true words and get a few things done, that I didn't reveal anything on the outside that was a serious offense to God's disposition? In fact, God saying that people are deceitful doesn't merely refer to the overt behaviors of lying and cheating, but it also refers to people's motives and their internal satanic dispositions. That is the crux of the problem. I didn't have any understanding of people's satanic disposition of being capable of lying and cheating and being deceitful. I hadn't really seen people's satanic nature of being able to lie; without God's words to expose and judge these corrupt dispositions and satanic natures, how would people be able to know them? I then thought of Peter knowing himself within God's words. He always rigorously compared himself to God's words in which He exposed people, so Peter was very well aware of his own corruption, and he was one of the most successful in his experiences. On the other hand, the reason I still didn't know how to understand myself after following God for several years was that I hadn't reflected on and understood myself based on God's words, so even until now I still felt that I was pretty good. I was so far off from what God requires!

I give thanks to God's enlightenment and guidance which have made me see my own need and pitifulness, and have also made me understand that truly knowing myself is not an easy thing. Only through God's words can I truly know myself. From this day forward, I am willing to read God's words in earnest, and whatever God exposes about the corrupt nature of humans, I am willing to rigorously measure myself against that. I will no longer measure myself according to my notions and imaginings, but will pursue the truth with both

feet planted firmly on the ground, pursue a change in disposition, and seek to be a truly honest person to comfort God's heart.

19. There Is No Special Treatment in the Church

By Liu Xin, Shandong Province

After following God over these years, I came to think of myself as someone who has converted some people through preaching the gospel, who works dawn till dusk for the church, has suffered from giving things up and expending myself and has paid a certain price. So, I felt I was some sort of contributor of the church, and over time I regarded myself as having seniority in the church. I started living off my past gains and flaunting my seniority. When I saw people in the church who were removed from their positions, and sent home to do their spiritual devotions and reflect on themselves, because they were perfunctory in performing their duty, and interrupted and upset the work of the church, I thought: "I left home so many years ago and I've always performed my duty in the church. Given my circumstances, the church will surely take care of me. Even if I don't do my work properly, they definitely won't send me home. At worse, they'll remove me from my position and give me some other work to do." Due to that kind of thinking, I lived in a state of self-satisfaction without any thought of progress. In my duty, I gradually stopped taking up a burden and I did everything half-heartedly. Just so-so was fine, and I didn't have the same kind of faith in preaching the gospel that I had at first. I was always living within difficulties. Facing that state of mine, even though I felt my heart accused and my conscience felt reproach because I was owing God too much through my perfunctory duty, and I felt that I would be eliminated sooner or later, I still just drifted along with the mentality of hoping to luck out, thinking that if I didn't achieve good results in my work, at the very most I'd just be transferred to perform another duty.

God is righteous and holy. In the end, because I'd been slipshod in my duty for a long time and my work was all in a mess, I was replaced and sent home by the church for self-reflection. When I heard that this was to happen, I was dumbfounded, and I thought: "I left home and have performed my duty in the church for so many years, and even if my work has not been meritorious, I have at least put in hard work. How can they send me home

without any thought to my feelings? How on earth will I face my family? What prospects will I have in the future?" My heart grew extremely chaotic and I became full of misunderstanding and blame toward God. I fell into darkness, struggling in pain.

Amid extreme suffering, I came before God and called out to Him: "Oh God, now I live in darkness, my heart full of misunderstanding and blame toward You. Please have mercy on me and enlighten me to understand Your will." After repeatedly praying like this several times, I was able to quiet my heart. I saw these words of God: "I will have no sense of pity for those of you who suffer for many years and work hard with nothing to show for it. On the contrary, I treat those who have not met My demands with punishment, not rewards, still less any sympathy. Perhaps you imagine that for being a follower for many years you put in hard work no matter what, so in any case you can get a bowl of rice in God's house for being a service-doer. I would say the majority of you think this way because you have always up to now pursued the principle of how to take advantage of something and not be taken advantage of. So I am telling you now in all seriousness: I do not care how meritorious your hard work is, how impressive your qualifications, how closely you follow Me, how renowned you are, or how improved your attitude; so long as you have not done what I have demanded, you will never be able to win My praise. ... for I cannot bring My enemies and people reeking of evil on the model of Satan into My kingdom, into the next age" ("Transgressions Will Lead Man to Hell" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Each word of God revealed His righteousness, majesty and wrath, hitting home and stabbing into me like a double-edged sword, and thoroughly shattering my dream of "being able to at least make a living in the church no matter what because of the work I put in, even if it's not meritorious." At this time, I had no choice but to self-reflect: Even though I left home and have been fulfilling my duty in other places over these last few years, appearing on the surface to have paid a bit of a price and suffered a little, I hadn't had any real progress in my entry into life and I hadn't had any dispositional change at all. I was arrogant, capitalized on my seniority, and trotted out my old achievements. Not only was I not considerate of God's will, but I acted perfunctorily in dealing with my duty. Particularly during this period, I did not have any burden at all in my gospel work, and even though I didn't have any results in that aspect of my work, I didn't think it mattered and didn't feel that I owed God anything. I even treated gospel work as an encumbrance, thinking that there were many new believers but not so many to water them,

and that the more new believers who were converted, the more of a pain it would be when people to water them couldn't be found. Consequently, I was indifferent in the gospel work, causing it to suffer great losses. As I didn't pay attention to the work of watering new people, it resulted in some new believers leaving because they had not been watered in time. The church arranged for me to find host families and people who could attend to general affairs, but I always lived within difficulties with the excuse that "there aren't any suitable people or homes"; I wasn't willing to carry anything out. Moreover, I bore no burden for my life entry; I was content with my situation at the time and did not seek any progress. I degenerated to a certain degree, became loathed by God, and lost the work of the Holy Spirit, resulting in various aspects of the church's work becoming a mess. I thought about my behavior: How was this fulfilling my duty? It was simply doing evil! But I actually felt that, even had my work not been meritorious, I had at least put in hard work, and that no matter what, I should at least be able to earn a living in the church. When the church arranged for me to return home to self-reflect, I even felt I had been wronged. I even regarded myself as a contributor of the church, shamelessly making demands of God and flaunting my seniority. I really was too unreasonable, too lacking in sense! This disposition of mine was too detestable and abhorrent to God! The church is different to society in that the truth and God are in power within the church, and God's righteous disposition has no mercy for anyone. It doesn't matter how qualified you are, how much suffering you have endured, or how long you have followed Him. If you do not take God's commission seriously and therefore offend God's disposition, all that will descend upon you is the wrath and judgment of God. How could a parasite like me who didn't do his actual job and only lived off the church possibly be the exception before the righteous God? It was only then that I realized that the church arranging for me to return home and reflect on myself was precisely God's righteous judgment of me. It was also the greatest love and salvation God could give to this rebellious son of His. Otherwise, I would be still holding on to the wrong view of "being able to at least make a living in the church no matter what because of the work I put in, even if it's not meritorious," asleep in the beautiful dream I weaved for myself, and ultimately being destroyed by my own conceptions and imagination.

God's judgment and chastisement made me recognize God's holiness and righteousness, and understand God's earnest intention to save me. I could not but fall down before God and offer up a prayer of gratitude: "Oh God! Thank You! Praise You! Even if the

way You save me does not match my conceptions, I now understand Your will and see Your earnest intention. I am willing to accept Your chastisement and judgment, and through it properly self-reflect and know myself, know Your righteous disposition, and moreover I'm willing to repent and start afresh to become a new person!"

20. Service of This Kind Is Truly Contemptible

By Ding Ning, Shandong Province

A few days ago, the church leader arranged a change in my duty. I felt a little puzzled: I worked hard here at my duty, so why suddenly change me onto another duty? But then I thought: "Seeing as the church has made this arrangement, I should submit to it." When it came time to hand over my old duty, I thought, "I need to take this final opportunity to call a meeting with my brothers and sisters, fellowship about the truth, and leave them with a good impression." Therefore, I met with several deacons, and at the close of our time together, I said, "I have been given a different duty to perform. I hope you will do the church work properly together with the new leader with one heart and one mind." As soon as the sisters heard me say this, their smiles fell from their faces. Some of them grasped my hands, some of them embraced me, and weeping they said, "You cannot leave us! You cannot abandon us." The host family sister was especially unwilling to let me go. She said, "It is so good that you are here with us. You are someone who can endure hardship, and you are good at fellowshiping about the truth. No matter when we needed you, you were always there to patiently help us. What will we do when you're gone?" Seeing their reluctance to part from me, my heart was full of joy and satisfaction, and I comforted them with these words: "Depend more on God. When I can, I will come back and visit you."

But after that, every time I remembered that scene of parting from my brothers and sisters that day, I became uneasy in my heart. I wondered, "Was it normal for them to make such expressions? Why did they act as if my departure were such a terrible thing? Why did the church want me to change positions anyway?" I just couldn't understand it, and so I often came before God seeking the answers while carrying this burden. One day I was reading a sermon and came across this passage: "Those who would serve God must in all matters exalt God and bear witness to God. Only thus can they attain the fruit of leading others to

know God, and only by exalting God and bearing witness to Him can they bring others into the presence of God. This is one of the principles of service to God. The ultimate fruit of God's work that must be achieved is to make people come before God by means of knowing the work of God. If those who serve as leaders do not exalt God and bear witness to Him, but instead are constantly putting themselves on display..., then they are actually setting themselves up in opposition to God. They sit in God's place and have people treat them as God. Their work becomes a work that vies with God over people. Isn't this exactly how Satan resists God? Now, there are many leaders who each have an entourage of followers under them, and they are promoting and training people as they themselves wish. In the end, God has not gained anyone who knows His heart. For whom do people do all their work? How many people have they trained that are of one mind with God? How many people have they led into truly knowing and loving God? Therefore, if people's service does not exalt God and bear witness to God, then they are certainly showing themselves off. Even though they purport to serve God, they are really working for their own status and are really working for the enjoyment of their flesh. They are in no way working to exalt God or bear witness to God. If anyone violates this principle of service to God, then it proves they are defying God" ("The Principles That Must Be Understood for Serving God" in Work Arrangements). The more I read, the more my heart was troubled, and the more frightened I became. I doubly reproached myself, and couldn't help but think of many scenes during the time I spent with my brothers and sisters. I had often said to the host family sister, "See how fortunate you all are. Your whole family are believers. When I am at home, my husband oppresses me all day long. If he's not hitting me, he's cursing me." As a result, my brothers and sisters thought my stature was great, thinking that I had suffered a lot for my belief in God and for my duty. When my brothers and sisters encountered hardships, I didn't fellowship God's will with them, and I didn't bear witness to God's work and God's love, and I didn't lead my brothers and sisters to be loyal to God and fulfill their duties well in times of hardship. Instead, I constantly showed consideration to their flesh, indulged them and tried to make them think I was so kind and considerate. Whenever I saw a brother or sister doing something that ran counter to the principles of the truth, I would not fellowship on the truth to help them and give them direction, or deal with them and prune them, instead always focusing on protecting my relationships with them, and making them keep a place for me in their hearts. I saw that nothing I did was performing my duty and satisfying God, and it became clear that I had

worked and spoken for the sake of status, pursuing reputation and status. In my duty, I didn't bring my brothers and sisters before God and I didn't enable them to know God. On the contrary, I had made them sympathize with me and look to me, and I had made them give me a place in their hearts. Even more serious was that when my brothers and sisters heard that I was leaving, some of them wept unconsolably and wouldn't let me leave. God had expressed the truth to supply people and had worked for so long and hadn't gained their hearts, and yet I had only been leading them for a few days and had become their confidant, their support. Hadn't I become a highway robber, stealthily stealing people from God and leading them before me? I thought of God's words, which say, "I am working among you now but you are still this way. If one day there is no one there to care about and watch over you, won't you all become kings of the hill?[a] By then, who will clean up the mess after you when you cause a huge catastrophe?" ("A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (1)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The words of God again allowed me to see the serious consequences of serving God yet really bearing witness to myself and exalting myself. The words of God helped me see that my own nature, like that of the archangel, could lead me to be a tyrannical bandit, to set up my own independent kingdom and offend God's disposition, and ultimately be detested and rejected by God. I thought of how God had given me this commission so that I may lead my brothers and sisters before Him and enable them to know Him, but instead I served God without exalting God and without bearing witness to God. My days were spent showing myself off, bearing witness to myself, and leading my brothers and sisters into my presence. Is this kind of service not so contemptible? Is this not simply the service of the antichrist? Thinking about it now, the church giving me a new duty was indeed the protection of God, and it was a timely salvation! Otherwise, if I'd carried on serving in that way, I would only have offended God's disposition and been punished by Him!

At that time, a sense of fear and shame and the enormous debt I owed overflowed my heart, I prostrated myself upon the ground, weeping bitterly and pleading to God: "Oh, God! If it were not for Your judgment and revelation, I do not know to what depths I would fall.

Footnotes:

a. A Chinese saying, the literal meaning of which is "bandits that occupy the mountains and declare themselves as kings."

Thank You for Your salvation, for making me see the ugliness and meanness in the depths of my soul, and that my service to You was in truth defiance of You. According to my actions, I deserve nothing but to be cursed by You, but You still have mercy on me, enlighten me, guide me, and give me a chance to repent and start afresh. I truly owe You more than I can ever repay. Oh, God! I am willing to take this experience as a warning to carry with me for my entire life. I wish only that Your chastisement and judgment always accompany me, and enable me to discard my corrupt satanic disposition as soon as may be, and help me become a truly reverent servant of God so that I may repay the great debt I owe."

21. The Essence of Abusing Power for Personal Revenge

By Zhou Li, Shandong Province

Recently, some new people joined our church, so we split into two churches so it would be easier to manage. New church leaders were also needed to be elected. Based on the principles for the selection of leaders, there was one brother who I felt was relatively suited to performing this duty. So I prepared to select him as a leader. One day when I was chatting with this brother, he mentioned that I was really nitpicky in how I handled and inquired after work, and that there wasn't much enjoyment in gatherings with me. Hearing this, I felt he had belittled me. I felt terrible. I immediately developed a certain opinion of this brother, and no longer planned to select him as a leader.

When I returned to my home, I was still stewing and I could not calm down. At that time, I thought of something from a fellowship: "How those who serve as leaders treat brothers and sisters who they find disagreeable, who oppose them, and who hold completely different views than them, is a very serious issue and should be handled with caution. If they do not enter into the truth of this issue, they will certainly discriminate and censure people like this when met with this kind of issue. This type of action is precisely an expression of the nature of the great red dragon that resists and betrays God. If those who serve as leaders pursue the truth, and possess conscience and reason, they will seek the truth and handle this matter correctly. ... As people, we need to be just and fair. As leaders, we must handle things according to God's words in order to stand witness. If we do things according to our own will, giving free rein to our own corrupt disposition, then that will be a terrible failure" (The

Fellowship From the Above). Mulling over that fellowship, I couldn't help but reflect on my two entirely different attitudes before and after my chat with that brother. I was originally prepared to select him as a church leader, but when he said some things that caused me to lose face, I immediately changed my opinion of him and no longer planned to select him for this position. Wasn't this exploiting my power for personal revenge? What's the difference between this and the devilish CCP discriminating against and striking out at those who dissent? Isn't doing that kind of thing despicable? The church is not the same as society. The church needs every level of its leaders to be people who have a sense of justice, who possess humanity, who love the truth, and can accept the truth. Only with that kind of person at the helm can positive things and good people gain protection, while negative things and evil people will be restricted and sanctioned. That's the only way God's will can be carried out within the church. But what I was doing was entirely contrary to God's will. When selecting a leader I only thought of my own interest and whether that person would support me and listen to me, instead of upholding the work of the church; as soon as that person didn't support me, when he said something disagreeable to me, I discriminated against and resented him. Wasn't my acting like this precisely the revealing of a satanic disposition, "Those who submit will prosper; those who resist shall perish"? The church was about to select someone for a position. That brother didn't tremble in the face of authority, but upheld the principles of the truth, simply and openly making suggestions to me. That was a manifestation of putting the truth into practice and having a sense of justice and being a suitable candidate for taking on a leadership position in the church. I should have been considerate of God's will; I should have upheld the church's work and selected him as a leader in accordance with the principles. I was not pleased with his assessment of me; it made me lose face, but he had no ill intent. If I were someone who accepts the truth, I should have sought out the truth on this matter, examined myself and known myself, and made up for the deficiencies in my work. However, I did not look for the reason within myself, and even wanted to give free rein to the satanic nature within me to discriminate against him and take revenge on him. I am so arrogant, so lacking in humanity! If I continued giving free rein to this kind of corrupt nature, I would eventually bring about my own destruction as an arrogant servant of evil who has no regard for God. I truly was in peril.

At that time I couldn't help but shudder at my thoughts and actions, seeing myself full of the poisons of Satan, that what was exposed was all resistance against God. God truly

hates this, and is disgusted by it. Reflecting on all of this, I could not help but offer a prayer of gratitude to God: "Oh God, thank You for Your quick enlightenment, for preventing my discriminatory behavior, for allowing me to see my satanic face. From this day forward, I am willing to pursue a change in disposition, and when I encounter people or things that are disagreeable to me, I will learn to put myself aside, to forsake the flesh, and in all things safeguard the interests of the church, to do my utmost to fulfill my duties."

22. Realizing That I Walked the Path of the Pharisees

By Wuxin, Shanxi Province

Something we have always discussed in previous gatherings is the paths walked by Peter and Paul. It is said that Peter focused on pursuing the truth, knowing himself and God, and his pursuit was approved by God, while Paul only focused on his work, sought reputation and status, he set foot upon the path of the antichrists of the Pharisees, and he was someone God despised. I have always been afraid of walking Paul's path, which is why I normally often read God's words, as well as sermons on entering into life, that concern Peter's experiences, in order to see how he pursued the truth and experienced God's work. Then I consciously imitate Peter in my practice and entering. After practicing like this for a while, I felt I had become more obedient than before, my desire for reputation and status had dimmed, and that I had gotten to know myself a little. I believed that even though I was not completely on Peter's path, it could be said that I had come pretty close to following it, and at least it meant I was not heading down Paul's path.

One morning, while I was practicing my spiritual devotions, I saw the following words of God: "Peter's work was the performance of the duty of a creature of God. He did not work in the role of an apostle, but during the course of his pursuit of a love of God. The course of Paul's work also contained his personal pursuit.... There were no personal experiences in his work—it was all for its own sake, and not carried out amid the pursuit of change. Everything in his work was a transaction, it contained none of the duty or submission of a creature of God. During the course of his work, there occurred no change in Paul's old disposition. His work was merely of service to others, and was incapable of bringing about changes in his disposition. ... Peter was

different: He was someone who had undergone pruning and dealing, and had undergone refinement. The aim and motivation of the work of Peter were fundamentally different to those of Paul. Although Peter did not do a large amount of work, his disposition underwent many changes, and what he sought was the truth, and real change. His work was not carried out simply for the sake of the work itself" ("Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words stirred my heart and I fell silent. I couldn't help but examine my conscience and ask myself: "Peter worked to fulfill his duty as a created being and worked through the process of seeking to love God; he did not work using his position as an apostle. Do I work to fulfill my duty as a created being or just to do my job as a leader?" At this time, I thought back to my various expressions when I'd performed my duty: When the church had a lot of work to take care of, and some brothers and sisters saw that my partner sister and I had visited the church to solve people's problems from dawn till dusk, they would say: "You truly shoulder the burden of the church's work." I would then blurt out: "We leaders have no choice but to deal with it." Sometimes, in front of my brothers and sisters or co-workers, I would want to be considerate to my physical body and relax myself, but then I would think: "No, I'm a leader, I must set a good example and not be dissolute." When I was in a bad state and didn't feel like reading the words of God, I would think: As a leader, if I don't equip myself with God's words, then how will I be able to resolve other people's problems? So I had to forsake myself and read God's words. Sometimes I would go with a co-worker to the host family she was staying with, and when I saw that the way the host sister treated me was not as warmly as she treated her, I would get upset and couldn't help revealing my thought: "You might not know who I am, but I am her leader." Sometimes, for whatever reason, I would not feel like fellowshiping with host brothers and sisters, but then I would think: I'm a leader, so what will people think of me if I come to visit but don't fellowship with them? Since I am a leader I have to fellowship with others. And so on. These various behaviors made me see: Whether it was doing my own spiritual devotions, fellowshiping with people, attending meetings, or handling general affairs, it was all because I was a leader that I felt obligated to do some duty and do a bit of work—I was working only because of my position. It was not because I had understood the truth and seen clearly the meaning behind performing my duty, or because I had recognized the responsibility and obligation of a created being that I worked actively and positively, and moreover I was not working through

my process of seeking to love God like Peter had. If the day ever came that I would be dismissed from my duty and replaced, and would lose my position as leader, I perhaps would not expend myself for God the way I do now. It was only then that I realized that I was not a person who practiced the truth or was considerate to God's will. Instead, I was a profitobsessed, hypocritical and despicable villain who only worked for reputation and status. It was impossible to be devoted to God working the way I had because I was not willingly practicing the truth and being considerate to God's will, but instead, like the revealing words of God, "There were no personal experiences in his work—it was all for its own sake, and not carried out amid the pursuit of change." How could such service possibly conform to God's will? Paul was working in his position as an apostle; he testified to the great suffering he underwent and the compassion he had for others, and he even belittled Peter and exalted himself as the leader of all the apostles, saying also that he was living as Christ, and he always led people before him. And I was also working and expending in my position as a leader, and everything I did was done to protect the position and image I kept in the hearts of my brothers and sisters. How are such intentions and purposes any different to Paul's?

At this point, I couldn't help but feel extremely ashamed for my actions and behavior, and I fell down before God, praying: "Oh God! Thank You for the judgment and chastisement of Your word that have awoken me from my stupor, made me realize my real state, and see that my work and the performing of my duty have been exactly the same as Paul. The path I'm walking is precisely the path of Paul resisting God, which indeed disgust You. Oh, Almighty God! I am willing to turn around my wrong intentions and viewpoints under the guidance of Your word. I am willing to take my position as a created being and fulfill my duty to satisfy You, and do my utmost to seek and move forward toward Peter's path!"

23. Don't Find New Tricks When Serving God

By Heyi, Liaoning Province

Not long ago, I was elected as a church leader by my brothers and sisters. I was very grateful, and thought: I must do my duty well to repay God's grace. I saw that the evangelical work of the church wasn't yielding good results, so my brothers and sisters and I put our

heads together to resolve the issue. But after a period of hard work, the church's evangelical work remained lackluster, and my brothers and sisters in the evangelical group were living within trials. Faced with this situation, I could no longer contain my feelings. How on earth could I revitalize the evangelical work? After racking my brains, I finally thought of a good solution: If I held a monthly awards ceremony for the evangelical group and selected outstanding individuals and model preachers, whoever won more souls for God would be rewarded, and whoever won fewer souls would be admonished. This would not only excite their enthusiasm, but it would lift up the negative and weak brothers and sisters. When I thought of this, I was very excited for this clever move of mine. I thought: "This time I'll really amaze everyone."

I went to the evangelical group and explained my idea. Everyone was very happy and willing to cooperate. I was thrilled, and waited to see it bear fruit. But a few days later, some brothers and sisters were even more downcast and had some opinions on my methods because they had not won any souls in their evangelism. They even wanted to leave the evangelical group. Seeing all of this, I was stunned. I didn't know what I should do. After hearing about it, my leader quickly came to fellowship with me, and addressed my state by reading God's words and the work arrangement: "What's the greatest taboo in man's service of God? Do you know? Those who serve as leaders always want to have greater ingenuity, to be head and shoulders above the rest, to find new tricks so that God can see how capable they really are. However, they don't focus on understanding the truth and entering into the reality of God's word. They always want to show off; isn't this precisely the revelation of an arrogant nature? Some even say: 'By doing this I'm sure that God will be very happy; He'll really like it. This time I'll let God see, give Him a nice surprise.' As a result of this showing off, they lose the work of the Holy Spirit and are eliminated by God. Don't just rashly do whatever comes into your mind. How can it be okay if you don't consider the consequences of your actions? ... If you aren't upright, godly or prudent in serving God, sooner or later you will offend God's administrative decrees" ("Without the Truth It Is Easy to Offend God" in Records of Christ's Talks). "A person who is serving God must grasp His will in all things. When encountering any problem, they should seek the truth, and all work must be done on the basis of God's word. Only this way can they ensure that their actions conform to God's will" ("The Principles That Must Be Understood for Serving God" in Work Arrangements). These

words gave me a rude awakening and a deep feeling of fear and trembling. I realized that the "awards ceremony" I had racked my brains for was just finding a new ingenious trick. It was something that aroused the most disgust and hate in God. Serving God is primarily leading others to know God's work, learn how to practice and experience God's words, achieve understanding of the truth and of God, and finally bringing people before God. So no matter what work a person does, they must have a heart of reverence for God and do things strictly according to the work arrangements and the principles of service. When encountering a confounding issue, they must seek the truth and find someone who understands the truth for fellowship, and learn to follow God's leadership and guidance. Only this way can they ensure that their actions conform to God's will. Now, God lifted me up to fulfill my duty as a leader. When the evangelical work was not bearing fruit and my brothers and sisters were in trials, I should have come in front of God to seek His will, to find the root of the problem, and then found the corresponding truth in the words of God to resolve the states and problems of my brothers and sisters. Then they could develop faith and motivation because of their entry into the truth. Instead, when faced with difficulties I didn't seek the principles of the truth at all; I just took action for its own sake and made a fuss on the superficial methods. I relied on my own little cleverness; I took something from worldly factory management techniques, planning to hold an awards ceremony to select outstanding people. As a result, not only did the evangelical work not bear fruit, but my brothers' and sisters' states were not resolved, and because of my methods they became even more negative to the point of wanting to leave the evangelical group. How could that be me fulfilling my duty? How could that be leading people to understand the truth and bringing them before God? It was nothing but going my own way and holding up the normal operations of the church's work, disrupting God's work of saving mankind. How was I worthy of being a leader? If I had continued to lead my brothers and sisters this way, they would have been led astray by me, and in the end, through my enthusiastic service, I would have offended God's administrative decrees and suffered His punishment.

Only through God's judging me and exposing me did I understand that serving God is doing the work of His commission and that it must be done according to His requirements and the principles of the truth in order to meet His will. If you just do things according to your own whims you'll be very likely to do something that offends His disposition. I saw that my nature is arrogant and reckless, and that I lack the slightest heart of reverence for God. I

rely on my own thinking and imaginings when serving God which can only disturb and disrupt God's work and lead to His disgust and hate. From this day forward, I am willing to bear this lesson in mind and do my utmost to pursue the truth to change my own arrogant satanic nature. In all things I will seek the truth, seek the principles of all actions, and hold a heart of reverence for God. I will fulfill my duty to the best of my ability and satisfy God's will with the utmost in honesty and obedience.

24. God's Words Have Awakened Me

By Miao Xiao, Shandong Province

In the past, I used to always think that God's words "a puppet and a traitor who flees from the great white throne" were referring to those who accept God's work in the last days but who then retreat; to me, they were all people who weren't willing to endure the pain of being judged and chastised. Therefore, whenever I saw brothers and sisters retreat for whatever reason, my heart would be filled with contempt toward them, thinking: "There goes another puppet and traitor fleeing from the great white throne who shall receive God's punishment!" Each time this happened, I felt I was behaving properly in accepting God's judgment and was not far from receiving God's salvation.

One day, when I was practicing spiritual devotion, I saw the following words of God in the text "Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth": "... for the substance of this work is actually the work of opening up the truth, the way, and the life of God to all those who have faith in Him. This work is the work of judgment done by God. If you do not regard these truths as important, if you think of nothing but how to avoid them, or how to find a new way out that does not involve them, then I say you are a grievous sinner. If you have faith in God, yet seek not the truth or the will of God, nor love the way that brings you closer to God, then I say that you are one who is trying to evade judgment, and that you are a puppet and a traitor who flees from the great white throne. God will not spare any of the rebellious who escape from under His eyes. Such men shall receive even more severe punishment. Those who come before God to be judged, and have moreover been purified, shall forever live in the kingdom of God" (The Word Appears in the Flesh). After contemplating these words, I finally realized:

It turns out that the puppets and traitors who flee from the great white throne don't just refer to those who have accepted God's work of the last days but later retreat. These words mainly refer to those who follow God but don't love the truth and get sick of the truth; they refer to those who don't focus on seeking the truth within God's words and practicing the truth when they encounter issues. All those who have believed in God for years but have continued to live outside of God's words, and who never accept God's judgment, chastisement, dealing with, or pruning, are puppets who flee from the great white throne.

Under God's enlightenment and guidance, I started to reflect: God is now expressing His words to judge man, and He is purifying the satanic poisons within people, by means of tribulations and refinement. But every time God's chastisement, judgment, tribulations and refinement come upon me, I am not willing to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, to seek the truth, reflect on myself and learn the lessons. Instead, I am always trying to escape, hoping that God will quickly move these situations away. Is this not evading the truth and rejecting God's judgment and chastisement? When the people or things brought on by God don't match my personal conceptions or cause me a little fleshly suffering, I fall into a negative state. Even if the fellowships of brothers and sisters can clear up my misunderstandings of God, and resolve my problems, I still resist and refuse to listen. Isn't this not seeking the truth and not loving the way that brings one closer to God that God's words talk about? When I am dealt with and pruned for the perfunctory way I carry out my duty, I am always looking for excuses to explain myself and shirk my responsibility. Is this not an essence that refuses to accept the truth? I often safeguard my fleshly interests and indulge myself in sinful pleasures. When I read God's words, at the time I would hate myself a bit and feel self-reproach within my heart. After that, I kept on doing things my own way and just indulged myself. Is this not merely accepting judgment but not seeking to be purified? Now that I think about it, I can't help but feel fear and tremble when I think of my own expressions. Even though I had not left the church and I still read God's words and performed my duty as usual, whenever I encountered an issue I always refused to accept the truth and I evaded God's judgment; I had never experienced God's words or put them into practice. Am I not precisely the puppet and traitor who flees from the seat of God's judgment? Yet I had believed that I was very close to receiving God's salvation. I see that my understanding of God's word was too one-sided and shallow, and that my knowledge of God's work was too lacking. Now, only those who obediently accept God's chastisement

and judgment and whose dispositions have achieved change will truly receive God's salvation. Instead, I was living in my own conceptions and imaginings, not hungering after the truth, not taking responsibility for my own life, and having no sense of danger or urgency at all. If I continued like this, would I not precisely be the object of God's punishment?

I give thanks to the enlightenment of God's words for awakening me from my own conceptions and imaginings, realizing that I was not a person who was willing to accept God's chastisement and judgment. It has also made me see that I am on the brink of danger. From now on, I will give my heart entirely to God, submit to His chastisement and judgment, and do my utmost to pursue the truth and dispositional change, so that I can soon be purified and made complete by God.

25. I Have Seen My True Colors

By Xiaoxiao, Jiangsu Province

Due to the needs of the church's work, I was transferred to another church, which was in a frail state, to fulfill my duty. At the time, the gospel work at that place was at a low ebb, and the states of brothers and sisters were generally not very good. But because I was touched by the Holy Spirit, I still took on everything that I was entrusted with, full of confidence. I would get up early and stay up late every day, busying myself in the church so that I could do my work well. After a period of time, the church's work was taking a turn for the better. Seeing this, I couldn't help but become quite self-satisfied. I felt that I was all right, that I really took on a burden in fulfilling my duty, and that I was full of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. I felt that I was full of courage and resolve in my work. I believed myself able to perform the job well. I was living mired in self-satisfaction and self-admiration.

Right when I was brimming with smugness and was preparing to really set to more work, I met a brother who was in charge of the work. He asked me about the situation regarding my work, and I answered his questions one by one while thinking: "He will surely admire my abilities in my work and my unique insights." But never did I expect that after listening to my responses, not only did he not even nod in appreciation, but he said that my work was inadequate, that personnel had not really been mobilized properly, that I hadn't achieved any results, and so forth. Seeing his dissatisfied expression and listening to his assessment

of my work, my heart suddenly felt cold. I thought: "He says my work is inadequate? If this isn't achieving any results, then what extent will I have to go to for it to count as achieving results? It should be good enough that I haven't resented coming to this frail church and worked enthusiastically, and yet he says I haven't done a good job." I was very defiant in my heart and felt so wronged that tears nearly started falling. Those defiant, dissatisfied and rebellious things inside me shot straight to the surface: This is all I can achieve with my caliber; I've done my best anyway, so if I'm inadequate then they might as well find someone else. I was extremely upset, and so I was unable to hear a word the brother said after that. Over the next few days, my state plummeted and I even felt depressed and disheartened. I was full of grievances. Amid the darkness, I remembered God's words: "Peter sought to live out the image of one who loves God, to be someone who obeyed God, to be someone who accepted dealing and pruning ..." ("Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). It's true. Peter sought to love and satisfy God, and he could obey God's orchestrations and arrangements. He accepted being pruned and dealt with. And me? All someone did was say that my work was not good enough, and I felt upset and wanted to throw in the towel. How could that be a person who is willing to accept being dealt with and pruned? Is this seeking to love God like Peter? The disposition I had expressed was nauseating and disgusting to God, but I didn't realize that at all. I was continually living within my own notions and imaginings, seeing myself as really great, really lofty. When someone else said that I hadn't done something well I couldn't accept it. I was internally resistant, and I argued and reasoned with him in my heart. I saw that I am really too arrogant and superficial!

In that moment, my heart brightened a bit, so I opened up the book of God's words and saw this passage: "It would be best for you to dedicate more effort to the truth of knowing the self. Why have you not found favor with God? Why is your disposition abominable to Him? Why does your speech arouse His loathing? As soon as you have demonstrated a bit of loyalty, you sing your own praises, and you demand a reward for a small contribution; you look down upon others when you have shown a modicum of obedience, and become contemptuous of God upon accomplishing some petty task. ... A humanity such as yours is positively offensive to speak or hear of. Is there anything praiseworthy in your words and actions? ... Do you not find this laughable? Knowing full well that you believe in God, you nevertheless cannot be

compatible with God. Knowing full well that you are utterly without merit, you persist in boasting all the same. Do you not feel your sense has deteriorated to the point that you no longer have self-control? With sense like this, how are you fit to associate with God? Are you not afraid for yourselves at this juncture? Your disposition has already deteriorated to the point where you are incapable of compatibility with God. This being so, is your faith not laughable? Is your faith not preposterous? How are you going to approach your future? How are you going to choose which path to take?" ("Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words really got to the heart of my own essence and left me speechless. I really felt ashamed, that I had nowhere to hide. I thought back on what I had revealed about myself while performing my duty: As soon as I had achieved some results in my work I didn't think of how I could refine my work to achieve the best possible outcome and satisfy God. Instead, I was complacent with things as they were and full of myself, thinking that I was very capable in my work, and I took credit for the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work. I saw that I really did not know myself. God's words say: "Knowing full well that you are utterly without merit, you persist in boasting all the same. Do you not feel your sense has deteriorated to the point that you no longer have self-control? With sense like this, how are you fit to associate with God?" That is true. All work is done by God Himself; I am just cooperating with it. If the Holy Spirit weren't working I wouldn't be able to achieve anything on my own. Bearing fruit in my work is entirely the result of the Holy Spirit's work, and there is nothing for me to brag about. However, not only did I fail to know the Holy Spirit's work, but I failed to know myself. I showed off because of some little thing I had accomplished in my work, shamelessly trying to wrest away God's glory and gain people's praise and admiration. When I was dealt with I still didn't reflect on myself, but instead felt wronged and was not convinced. I even threw a fit and wouldn't work. I'm really lacking all humanity and reason! At that moment I finally clearly saw my true colors, and that my disposition was as arrogant as the archangel's. After doing a bit of work I didn't even know who I was anymore and tried to rob God of His glory, to hold a high-ranking position and have others look up to me and adore me. Having this kind of disposition and pursuit, wasn't I walking on the path of an enemy to God? Then I couldn't help but tremble with fear. Apparently my conditions had already gotten to a dangerous point, but I had no awareness of that. I was still charging ahead struggling and reasoning for my own purposes and

brooding when others didn't praise me. I really was so superficial and foolish. If I had continued on like that, I certainly would have resisted God and been punished by Him.

Thank God for His revelation and salvation for me. If not for His wonderful orchestrations and arrangements, if not for the brother He sent to deal with me, I would have already forgotten who I was and stepped onto the wrong path, lacking all awareness, trying to rob God of His glory while being self-righteous. That's so shameful! All thanks to God exposing me, I finally saw my true colors, and the pitiful fact that I lacked the reality of the truth. God's deeds are so wonderful! At that moment I couldn't help but pray out to God in my heart: "Oh God! I no longer want to be negative, and I no longer want to live for those lowly things. My only wish is, through Your chastisement and judgment, Your strikes and discipline, to know You, to seek to satisfy You, and moreover to fulfill my duty amidst being dealt with and pruned by You so I can repay You!"

26. Why Engage in Trickery When Serving God?

By Hu Qing, Anhui Province

I remembered the first time I saw God's words saying: "Those who serve as leaders always want to have greater ingenuity, to be head and shoulders above the rest, to find new tricks so that God can see how capable they really are. ... They always want to show off; isn't this precisely the revelation of an arrogant nature?" ("Without the Truth It Is Easy to Offend God" in Records of Christ's Talks), I thought to myself: "Who has such nerve to try to find ingenious new tricks? Who doesn't know that God's disposition does not tolerate man's offense? I certainly wouldn't dare!" The church later arranged for me to perform the duty as a mid-level leader, and through actual experience and revelations of the facts, I realized that trying to find new tricks wasn't what someone dares or doesn't dare to do—it is entirely determined by man's arrogant satanic nature.

Not long ago, I discovered that there was a church leader who was not adequate. She often dozed off during gatherings, did not assume a burden for the work of the church, and didn't possess good humanity, while the sister who was her aide was quite responsible. I discussed it with my co-worker and wanted to replace this church leader and allow her aide to be the church leader. However, I was concerned that this would make the church leader

negative, weak, and stop her faith, or that she would disrupt things in the church, so I didn't dare to take that course of action at that time. After much pondering, I thought of a "clever plan." I would secretly get her aide to take on the full scope of work; everything in the church would be taken care of by her aide, and the church leader would be nothing but a figurehead. So I had neither sought God nor looked at the work arrangements and principles of the work. I had carried this out only after notifying my co-worker. After that, I was very selfcongratulatory, believing that I was very clever and really had wisdom. I thought: "If my senior leaders knew about this, they would certainly say that I am capable in my work, and maybe they'd even end up promoting me." But I had not imagined that when I told them about this, they would deal with me and say: "This is you trying to find new tricks. Where in the work arrangements did it say that you could do this? We can adjust and replace inadequate leaders according to the principles, but we cannot put aside the principles of the church and carry out work according to our own will. This is serious resistance against God." After hearing the dealing and pruning from the leaders, I was shocked. I absolutely had never imagined that I would unwittingly try to find new tricks. What I had believed to be a clever plan was actually serious resistance against God, and I was truly ashamed when faced with the facts. At that time, I couldn't help but think of God's words: "For example, if you had arrogance and conceit, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account ..." ("Only by Pursuing the Truth Can You Obtain Changes in Your Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). It was true. When faced with this issue I had not sought God, nor had I considered it through the principles of the church. I had just acted according to my own will. I saw my arrogant and conceited nature, that I did not have a heart of reverence for God, and that God did not hold a place in my heart. Only at that time did I realize that finding new tricks wasn't something I dared or did not dare to do, but it was something determined by my own arrogant nature. If I did not recognize and resolve my own arrogant nature, I would never seize hold of myself. I might one day even do something to resist God that would make Him feel disgust and hatred. Only at that time did I understand why the brother from the above has time and time again required us to perform our duties according to the work arrangements and the principles of the truth. It is because our nature is arrogant and we all seek to show off, to bring to light our own abilities for others to see. We all want to be in power and have the final say, but that brings about losses in the church's work and the life entry of God's chosen people. In serious cases it can bring about calamity. These work arrangements and principles of the truth not only can ensure that all aspects of the church's work can be carried out smoothly but also play the role of keeping our arrogant nature in check and restrained. They are so beneficial for the church's work and our entry into life! That is why in our desire to perform our duties well and serve God so His will is fulfilled, we must conscientiously work according to the arrangements and must also address our own arrogant satanic nature. This is the only way to have God's leadership and blessings.

I give thanks to God for His judgment, chastisement, and revelations, allowing me to have some recognition of my arrogant satanic nature. From this day forward, I will certainly take this as a warning and put more effort into knowing my own satanic nature. I will work strictly according to the work arrangements and seek to be a person who truly possesses reason, adheres to the principles, and has reverence for God.

27. I Saw My True Stature Clearly

By Ding Xiang, Shandong Province

At a meeting of church co-workers, a newly elected leader said: "I don't have enough stature. I feel I'm not suited to fulfilling this duty. I feel pressured by so much work in the church, to the extent that I haven't been able to sleep for several days." Seeing the sister living in a state of negativity and weakness, I took this burden upon myself and prayed and sought God, and then I had fellowship with her: "All work is performed by God; man simply cooperates a little. If we feel burdened, as long as we come before God more often and pray to and rely on God, we will surely see God's omnipotence and wisdom. Furthermore, when we encounter practical problems, we must seek the relevant principles of the truth and ponder more and fellowship more on these principles. We should put into practice only as much as we understand, and our practical cooperation will allow us to increasingly see our way forward." Under God's guidance, I felt that my fellowship was very clear. The sister also recognized that God did not have a place in her heart, and that when difficulties arose, she did not rely on God or seek God, but rather she acted relying on herself, and thus she found

the path to entry. I was very happy at the time because I thought I could resolve the sister's problem, proving that I possessed the reality of this aspect of the truth.

Two months later, the church reallocated me to compile some documents. When I first became involved with this work, because I hadn't mastered the relevant principles, I couldn't help but fall into a state of negativity and conflict when faced with all the documents that needed compiling: "I don't understand anything, and yet I have to not only fulfill this duty but am even tasked with locating the flaws in the documents. It's asking too much of me!" I simply felt a lot of pressure and could not calm down, and I also didn't know how to rely on God. I was so anxious I couldn't sleep for three days in a row. Facing this state, I became very bewildered. When I helped that new church leader resolve her problem recently, I felt like I fully understood this aspect of the truth. But how come when I ran into such a problem now, I didn't know how to handle such an experience? So I came before God with my confusion and puzzlement and I sought and prayed to God.

Later, I saw God's words in "Work and Entry (2)": "When people work and speak, or when they are praying and making their spiritual devotions, a truth will suddenly become clear to them. In reality, however, what man sees is only enlightenment by the Holy Spirit (naturally, this enlightenment is connected to man's cooperation) and does not represent man's true stature. After a period of experience in which man encounters numerous practical difficulties, the true stature of man becomes apparent under such circumstances. ... Only after several cycles of experiences like this will many of those who are awakened within their spirits realize that what they had experienced in the past was not their own individual reality, but a momentary illumination from the Holy Spirit, and that man had but received this light. When the Holy Spirit enlightens man to understand the truth, it is often in a clear and distinct manner, without explaining how things came about or where they are going. That is, rather than incorporating the difficulties of man into this revelation, He directly reveals the truth. When man encounters difficulties in the process of entering, and then incorporates the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, this becomes the actual experience of man" (The Word Appears in the Flesh). As I contemplated God's words, I understood: The truth I understood when I helped the sister resolve her problem had come from God's illumination. It was because of my cooperation at the time that I received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. But that was not my true stature and also did not demonstrate that I had gained that aspect of the truth. The Holy Spirit enlightened me to understand the truth at the time because it was necessary for my work, and through my cooperation He helped me resolve the problems and difficulties in my work. But before I had actual experience in this regard, my stature was still only this small. Only by incorporating the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and practicing and experiencing in reality when I encountered difficulties with this aspect, could I enter into the reality of this aspect of the truth.

Under the enlightenment and guidance of God's word, I practiced in accordance with the truths I understood, I calmed down and looked to God and relied on God, and I attentively pondered and sought the principles concerning compiling documents. Unknowingly, I obtained God's enlightenment and guidance, and gradually I became able to understand somewhat the issues within the documents, and my train of thought while I amended the documents became much clearer. I also managed to gradually leave my negativity and misunderstandings behind. Thanks be to God! Through this experience I was able to see my true stature clearly and turn the deviations in my understanding around. From now on, I am willing to bring the Holy Spirit's enlightenment into real life to practice and enter into even more, so that these truths can truly become the reality of my life.

28. A Haughty Spirit Before a Fall

By Baixue, Liaoning Province

I was recently transferred to another church to perform my duty. I had heard that all the work at this church had achieved good results, and so I felt especially grateful to God that I had been asked to come to such a good church to do my duty. So I silently made a resolution to God: I will definitely do my very best in my duty to repay God's love.

However, after I arrived, I discovered many loopholes in the work being done. As a result, I took it upon myself to begin inspecting each item of work. As I was performing my inspections, I also thought to myself: "How on earth have they done their work like this? I thought the work done here would be excellent. I never imagined it would be like this, and that it would be worse than that of the church I was in charge of before! Now that I'm here, it must be properly managed, and each item of work carried out according to the work arrangement. I will lead all the brothers and sisters to enter into life and get the results from

each item of our work up to scratch." Later, I got together with the co-workers and began learning about each item of work, and then communicating, planning, and making arrangements. When we fellowshiped, I frequently revealed my true feelings: The work quality here is so low. My work before wasn't like how yours is now. At my old workplace, we always managed work in such-and-such a way, we always did such-and-such to do our jobs well, and the brothers and sisters there were obedient to God in such-and-such a way. After these meetings, some of the co-workers would say: "Exactly right! We haven't done any practical work. This time, we need to start over and do our work according to the principles." Others would say: "Thank you for your fellowship today. Otherwise we really wouldn't know how to do our work properly." Upon hearing these words, I was very happy. I felt that I was indeed better than their former leader. But while I was feeling proud of myself, I also couldn't shake a faint feeling of guilt: "Was it really appropriate for me to talk like that? Why did I always say that my former workplace was better?" But on the other hand, I thought: "What's wrong with saying that? I was just trying to teach them how to do a better job." In this way, I didn't follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to examine myself. In the Bible, there is a proverb which says, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro 16:18). Just as I was about to dive head-first into my work with very high hopes, I suddenly felt that I was losing touch with God; I was not seeing any signs of improvement in our work, and also the effectiveness of our gospel work went from soaring high to taking a nosedive. I sank into a state of extreme pain, but wasn't sure where I'd gone wrong. So, I went before God to pray and seek guidance in earnest, and just then, I remembered a passage from a sermon: "To be a leader serving God you must have principles. ... no matter what, you still need to testify and exalt God. Say as much as you understand, exalt and testify God to the greatest extent that you can, and under no circumstances exalt yourself or allow others to worship you. This is the first and the most fundamental rule to follow" (The Fellowship From the Above). Right then, tears streamed down my face. Remorse, self-reproach, and gratitude all filled my heart at the same time. I recalled all that I had said to the co-workers in fellowship and I felt that I was really indebted to God, and that I hadn't lived up to His exaltation of me. The church arranged for me to come here to do my duty so that I could exalt and bear witness to God, lead brothers and sisters before God, and help them to know Him. Yet, I shamelessly showed off, and had the audacity to exalt myself, bear witness to myself, and build myself up, so that others would look up to me and worship me. I was so arrogant and

conceited, and how could such a despicable person as me, who was engaged in my own business in the name of loving and satisfying God, ever deserve to serve God? How could the work of such a person be blessed by God? All I was doing was striving for fame and position; I was walking the path of an antichrist, I was acting purely in defiance of God, and was truly detested by God. The more I thought about it, the more I detested myself. I couldn't help but remorsefully prostrate myself before God, and pray to Him, "O God! Thank You for Your chastisement and judgment that have awakened me and enabled me to recognize my satanic nature. Your chastisement and judgment have also revealed the direction in which my service must go, and have made me understand that only if I exalt You and bear witness to You can my service be after Your heart. That is my duty as a created being. O God! From now on, in the performance of my duty, I wish to examine my intentions and motives when I speak or act, to consciously exalt You and bear witness to You, and to lead the brothers and sisters to know You. I'm willing to be someone who possesses truth and humanity and perform my duty properly to comfort Your heart."

29. After Losing My Status

By Huimin, Henan Province

Every time I saw someone who had been replaced as a leader and them feeling down, weak or sulky, then I looked down on them. I thought: "It was nothing more than different people doing different work within the church, that there was no distinction between high or low, that we were all God's creations and there was nothing to feel down about." So whether I was watering new believers or serving as a leader, I never thought I focused much on my status, that I was that sort of person. I never would have thought in a million years that I would display such shameful behavior when I myself was replaced as a leader.

Some time ago, because I had not been performing any real work and was always preaching doctrine, my leader replaced me. At that time, I thought to myself: "Even if my caliber wasn't made out to be a mid-level leader, I was still competent to fellowship about the truth and do the work of watering and supporting the church." I never expected for my leader to task me with taking care of the general affairs of the church. I was surprised then, and I thought, "Such a mid-level leader as myself, am I now to be made to run errands?

Anyone in the church who could run or who had a little intelligence could do this job. Wasn't getting me to do this job an obvious waste of my talents?" But I was afraid that my leader would say I was disobedient and that I cared about my status, so I forced a smile and agreed. But as soon as I got home, I fell flat on the bed and felt awful. "Since I have no status, what will my brothers and sisters think of me? Now I am only running some errands, how will I ever be able to have my day again?" These thoughts filled my head. The more I thought about it, the more awful I felt.

A few days later, I saw the sister in charge of the work of general affairs. As soon as I saw her, she gave me fellowship, saying, "Doing this job looks easy, but it must still be done with devotion," then went on to talk about the truth of such aspects as wisdom and obedience. I voiced my agreement, but my heart was like a seething fire, thinking, "You're giving me fellowship like I know nothing. Wasn't it I who gave you this very fellowship before? Now you're giving me fellowship in turn!" Not one word of what my sister was fellowshiping sank in; instead I just resented her verbosity. In the end I said impatiently, "Anything else? If not, then I'm off!" Once I got back, I kept wondering: "Why did I have such an attitude toward the sister? If her status had always been higher than mine or equal to it, would I have treated her this way? No, I wouldn't have. Absolutely not! Wasn't it because I had always led her, and now she in her turn was pointing things out to me that it left me unconvinced? Didn't this show that I was dominated by my desire for status?" I suddenly felt awful about my own shameful behavior and God's words of judgment came to me: "The more you seek this way the less you will reap. The greater a person's desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they must undergo great refinement. That kind of person is too worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of that. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed; those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You don't focus on pursuing personal transformation and entering in; you always focus on those extravagant desires, and things that constrain your love for God and restrain you from getting close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom? If the object of your pursuit isn't to seek the truth, then you may as well take advantage of this opportunity and return to the world to make a go of it. Wasting your time this way is really not worth it—why torture yourself?" ("Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" in The

Word Appears in the Flesh). Pondering God's words and looking at myself, I started to realize that what I was pursuing was not truth and life at all, nor was I seeking to perform my duty to satisfy God, but instead I was pursuing empty things like fame, gain and status. When I had status, I was always on the ball with an energy that was inexhaustible. But when I lost my status, I felt limp and feeble, to the point where I even bore a constant grudge and became passive and slacked off my work, as though I had become a different person. I got really carried away with my status, bustling around concerning myself all day with these insignificant and worthless things and wasting so much time; and what did it get me in the end? Is it the shameful behavior I showed today? Thinking of all that God had done for me, not only had I been unable to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements, nor pursue the truth or be devoted in my duty, but on the contrary I had resented the duty that was given to me as being beneath me and as having no development prospects, and I hadn't wanted to do it. In behaving this way, I had shown myself to be entirely without the conscience or reason of a created being. I thanked God for His disclosure that allowed me to see the shame of my pursuit of my own fame, gain and status, and to recognize that I was arrogant and conceited and was placing far too much importance on status.

Then there came to mind a song: "Oh God! Whether I have status or not, I now understand myself. If my status is high it is because of Your elevation, and if it is low it is because of Your ordination. Everything is in Your hands. I don't have any choices or complaints. ... I should only be completely obedient under Your dominion because everything is within what You have ordained. ... If You use me, I am a creature. If You perfect me, I am yet a creature. If You do not perfect me, I will still love You because I am no more than a creation" ("I'm Just a Tiny Created Being" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). I sang this song over and over, tears pouring from my eyes, and I couldn't help but kneel before God and pray: Oh God! Through Your words I have come to understand Your intentions. Regardless of whether my status is high or low, I am Your creation and must completely obey the arrangements You make, must do my utmost to perform the duty expected of one of Your creations and not be choosy with the duty You arrange for me. Oh God! I wish to obey Your arrangements, to be before You working like an ox and be at Your disposal, never again to do things that hurt You for the sake of status. Oh God! I only wish for You to judge and chastise me all the more, to make me able to lay down my pursuit of

status, to do my utmost to perform my duty in all honesty and to live out the likeness of a true person.

30. The Work of God Is So Wise

By Shiji, Anhui Province

Normally, when attending co-workers' meetings, my leader would often preach about the experiences of people who failed in their service to God, and would ask us to learn lessons from their experiences and to take them as a warning. For example, some leaders always preached letters and doctrines when they gave sermons or fellowshiped. They were unable to preach real knowledge of the truth and they were unable to perform practical work, with the result that they served as leaders for years without moving the work of the church forward; the church work almost came to a complete standstill, and they became false leaders and were sifted out by God. When performing their duties, some leaders always showed themselves off, exalted themselves and testified to themselves, and worked to protect their status, and in the end, such leaders led people before themselves, and became antichrists to be expelled. Some leaders showed too great a consideration for their own flesh, coveting comforts and never doing any real work. Such leaders were like parasites in the church who coveted the blessings of status, and in the end, they were exposed and weeded out. Hearing these examples of failure, I couldn't help but question: "Is God not almighty? Given that these leaders were perpetrating evil and resisting God as they worked and were causing loss to the church's work, why didn't God step in sooner to expose and weed them out? In this way, would not the life of the brothers and sisters and the church's work suffer less loss?" I was beset with this question.

One day, I read in a sermon: "Some people are always hurling criticism at leaders of every level and making irresponsible remarks. What does this behavior expose in these people? It exposes them to be arrogant and conceited and irrational, and that they have no understanding of the work of God at all, and so they are incapable of possessing a correct understanding. If you can discern that this person lacks the work of the Holy Spirit and is not leading God's chosen into the truth with his work, does this not prove that you have entered into the truth? If one sees this kind of thing happen—if false workers or false apostles

appear—what is the duty of God's chosen? How should God's chosen handle this situation? How should they approach this kind of issue? You can report the issue to your superiors and expose the person in question. Go through the proper channels so that even more of God's chosen have discernment, and take the appropriate measures to report, expose, and propose suggestions—is the problem not in this way resolved? Thus, God's chosen also must bear responsibility and must know the right way to resolve such matters. If God's chosen people are without truth, they will certainly not act appropriately in resolving these issues. Some people have a sense of justice—they just won't allow disturbers and destroyers of God's work within their church. As soon as they find such a person, they immediately report and expose them. Some people will resist the disturbers or destroyers, while some will blindly obey. Some people blindly worship and follow the leader no matter who he is, others act without discernment, heeding and accepting whatever anyone says. So you see, in this way all different kinds of people are exposed. When things like this happen, they really expose people, and behind them there is God's good intention. If God's chosen people have a strong grasp of the truth, then the majority of them will be able to discern, resist and reject false apostles and false workers when they appear. What does this show? This shows that the lives of God's chosen have matured and grown up, that they have completely attained salvation and that they have been gained and made complete by God. Therefore, God's good intentions are behind all that occurs" ("How to Know Man's Conceptions and Judgments" in Sermons and Fellowship III). This fellowship thoroughly resolved the confusion in my heart. As it turned out, God allows false leaders and false workers to emerge within our church, in order to expose all different kinds of people. More so, it allows Him to instill the truth within people so that they may develop their discernment and insight, and so that they may understand the truth and enter into the reality of God's word. All those who pursue the truth and have a sense of justice will stand up and report, expose, resist and reject the false leaders and false workers when they see them committing acts of evil in the church and disturbing the church's work, so as to safeguard the church's interests and stand testimony for God. But because those who do not pursue the truth and who indiscriminately follow others lack discernment, they can only go along with the masses, and blindly follow and acquiesce to others, and they will end up conspiring with evil-doers; because those deplorable flunkies who advocate and fawn on the influential do not love truth, but only love to worship, pursue and admire others, they will end up being deceived by false

leaders and false workers; because those who are arrogant, conceited and without a shred of reason have no knowledge of the work of God, they can only opine and develop notions regarding the church's work and even call into doubt and pass judgment on God's work, and for this, they are exposed. As is clear, God is so very wise! Through His work which is at odds with people's notions, He exposes, perfects and eliminates man. Those who truly believe in God and pursue the truth are capable of seeking the truth, understanding God's will, practicing the truth, and standing testimony to satisfy God when they encounter antichrists, false leaders, and false workers, and thus God makes them complete and perfects them. Those who do not pursue the truth can only follow the crowd, blindly worship others, or pass judgment on God living within their own notions and imaginings, and for this, they are exposed and weeded out. I thought of the following passage of God's words: "It is through many negative things, many adversities that God perfects you. It is through many of Satan's actions, accusations, and its expression in many people that God allows you to acquire knowledge, thus perfecting you" ("Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Indeed, this is true. People might regard an event as adverse or negative, but God is working through this situation to allow people to develop their discernment and insight, to make people understand the truth, know God's wisdom, omnipotence, wondrous acts, and righteous disposition, and see through Satan's plots so that they may forsake Satan and turn to God. This is the meaning behind God perfecting people through His work which is at odds with people's notions. If God had exposed and weeded out the false leaders and false workers in the church as soon as they emerged, then in a situation whereby people do not understand the truth, given their inability to thoroughly understand people's essence and having no discernment, as well as being deluded by the superficial sacrifices and expending of those leaders and workers, they would, as a result, develop notions and judgments of God's work, and they would even voice grievances and come to the defense of the supposed injured parties. In this way, people would have no discernment of the evil and corruption of Satan, and no understanding of what God has and is, such as His almightiness, His wisdom, His holiness and righteousness, and they would be incapable of life entry; God would therefore be unable to achieve His goal of saving man and perfecting man. God didn't neglect to expose these false leaders and false workers because He is not omnipotent or because He didn't know they were there. Rather, He wanted to use these people as a foil, so that people could then tell the difference

between those who have the work of the Holy Spirit and those who do not, between true and false leaders and workers, and between those who preach letters and doctrines and those who possess the reality of the truth. He wanted us to see to the heart of every individual in the church who pursues the truth and has a sense of justice, and everyone who does not pursue the truth, who is muddled and lacks discernment, and those arrogant, conceited people who constantly hold notions with regard to the work of God. Once all people have understood the truth, have entered into the reality of God's word, and been gained by God, those antichrists, false leaders and false workers will have served their purpose. At that time, God will thoroughly eliminate these people, and in this way, not only will people not misunderstand God, but they will praise His righteousness and omnipotence. As is clear, God works through these adverse and negative events to allow people to seek the truth and equip themselves with the truth, so that they can understand the truth, recognize different kinds of people and have a true understanding of the work of God.

Thank God for His enlightenment and guidance which has allowed me to understand that, behind these things which are at odds with people's notions, there is God's good intention and even more so His wisdom. It is all done to expose and perfect man in the most meaningful way. Just as God's word says, "My wisdom is exercised based on Satan's schemes," and "God maneuvers all things so that they serve Him." From this day on, I no longer wish to weigh situations good or bad with my own human eyes. But in all the things which I will encounter, I wish only to seek the truth, seek to know God's wisdom and almightiness, and know God's disposition and what He has and is, so that I may truly understand the truth and gain the truth.

31. What Is the Nature of God's Love?

By Siqiu, Heilongjiang Province

God's words say: "If you've always been very loyal and loving toward Me, yet you suffer the torment of illness, the impoverishment of life, and the abandonment of your friends and relatives or endure any other misfortunes in life, then will your loyalty and love for Me still continue?" ("A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (2)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Whenever I read this demand that God has of man, I feel an inexpressible

sadness, and think: "O God, how can You allow those that are loyal to You and love You to meet with such misfortune? The brother from the above previously gave a fellowship that said, 'God's last demand of man is loving and sincere.' How should we understand this?" These words had always puzzled me.

Recently, the sister with whom I was performing my duty developed hyperthyroidism. Gradually, her condition got to the point where she had to eat six meals a day. Due to the stress of illness, her strength gradually diminished, and she lived every day in depression, weakness and fatigue. Her body simply couldn't comply with her desire to fulfill her duties, and her illness became more and more advanced. I couldn't understand why this was happening. This sister had left her family and a high-paying job with good benefits to devote herself to the fulfillment of her duties and she was very loyal. How could it be that, for all that she had given, she would be saddled with the torment of this illness in return? I didn't reveal my feelings outwardly, but my heart was in tumult—whenever anyone raised this issue I would lose my calm.

Not long after, that sister and I parted ways, but I never forgot about her. One day, I asked my leader how the sister was doing. The leader said: "At first she was in a very negative state and failed to understand the work of God. Later, she consciously adjusted her condition, and sought out God's intention within the torment of her illness. Through God's words, she began to know herself and realize that she had not had true belief. Within her belief there was still a view of trade with God, still a desire to gain blessings through her belief in God. She also identified many other elements of rebelliousness within herself. Once she had realized these things about herself, her health improved dramatically. She's recovering day by day. She's back down to three meals a day and her condition is much better. She's even able to give frequent fellowship about the truth to help and sustain the brothers and sisters." When I heard this good news, I felt happy for her. But at the same time, I more so felt shocked. I had thought that the torment of illness would wear down the sister's willpower and cause her great suffering physically and mentally. Wracked by sickness, I believed she would end up groping in the darkness more and more on the road of believing in God. I even suspected that she might be unable to go on. Today, faced with the reality of her situation, I was left standing agape. Not only had she not lost faith in God, but, through the refinement of her illness, she had actually come to understand God's work and recognize her corruption. She had learned from her experience and had made

improvements to her life. Was this illness not a manifestation of God's true love and real salvation of man?

Later, I read the following passage from a sermon: "Fifth, God says, 'If you've always been very loyal and loving toward Me, yet you suffer the torment of illness, the impoverishment of life, and the abandonment of your friends and relatives or endure any other misfortunes in life, then will your loyalty and love for Me still continue?' This requirement is not a small trial for humanity. ... What foundation are one's loyalty to and love for God built on? How can it be proven that one truly has loyalty to God? How can it be shown that one truly possesses love for God? These need to be proven through trials and refinements. ... When you encounter this kind of trial, God's first purpose is to expose you to see whether or not your loyalty and love are really true. His second purpose is to purify you, because there exist impurities in your loyalty and love. If you are aware of these impurities, which are revealed when you encounter a variety of trials, then you will be cleansed of them. If people possess true loyalty to and true love for God, then no matter what befalls them and no matter what kinds of trials they encounter, they will not fall down, but instead will continue to be loyal and loving toward God without wavering. For those whose loyalty and love contain impurities and a desire to get something in return, it will not be easy to stand firm when trials come upon them, and they will be liable to topple. Such people will easily be revealed, will they not?" ("Only by Satisfying God's Final Requirements Can One Be Saved" in Sermons and Fellowship II). Only after reading this passage of fellowship did I realize that I have always judged God's work in terms of my flesh-bound thinking. I mistakenly believed that God's love consists of bounteous gifts of grace and assurance of fleshly joy and peace. I never thought that suffering is a form of God's blessing and love. Only after learning of my sister's experience did I realize that the refinement of suffering is a true manifestation of God's love. God creates certain situations of suffering upon people—be it through physical ailment, financial hardship, or any other misfortune in life—not to deliberately make things difficult for people, but out of His love. To address the satanic disposition and inadequacies of man, God tries and refines him. Through these reallife situations, He purifies, transforms and puts truths into man so that man may live according to God's words. Only in this way can man's life gradually develop. Though man's flesh must undergo incredible hardship in the process of refinement, which may be perceived as misfortune or bad things, this reveals many impurities, wrong intents and

viewpoints, extravagant desires, and incorrect goals of pursuit that man has in his belief in God so that he can know himself. When man has some understanding of the truth and substance of his corruption, he sees God's holiness and righteousness, understands God's dearness and loveliness, and realizes God's earnest intention to save mankind. He develops fear and obedience toward God, has a more and more normal relationship with Him and slowly cultivates love for Him in his heart. Such benefits cannot be obtained through a life of leisure. When man absorbs the lessons obtained from the torment of his trials and reflects back on the road he has taken, he deeply understands that God's judgments and chastisements, His smiting and discipline are all full of His infinite love. God's love is not just kind and compassionate. It is not only about bestowing material benefits, but is also harrowing refinement, smiting and discipline.

I prostrated myself before God and offered a prayer: O God, thank You for working through all aspects of my surroundings to remedy my absurd and misguided viewpoints on things and to allow me to see that, even if Your love is not in line with human notions, it is always there to transform and save us. Your love is always imbued with Your earnest intentions and Your ineffable wisdom. O God, in honor of the love that You share with mankind, I offer You praise and gratitude! I also hope that one day I too will receive this kind of love. I vow to accept any degree of suffering so that I may experience and testify to Your love.

32. Persecution and Adversity Helped Me to Grow Up

By Baituo, Shandong Province

I'm an ordinary Christian in The Church of Almighty God, and I've followed my mother in her belief in God since I was small. But belief in God in China always goes hand-in-hand with persecution and hardship. Before, I only knew in theory that God's sovereignty and arrangements are behind this, that God's wisdom is exercised based on Satan's plots, that the great red dragon serves as a foil to God's work and is a tool that renders service to God as He perfects His chosen people, but I had no actual experience or understanding of this aspect of the truth. Later, only within an environment arranged by God did I experience the CCP's persecution and gain some true knowledge of this aspect of the truth.

I was at a meeting one afternoon, when suddenly the leader hurriedly ran over and said, "Your mother has been taken by the police for preaching the gospel. Just to be safe, don't go home for a while. The church will arrange a host family for you." This news was like a bolt from the blue and I was suddenly stupefied: What? My mother has been taken by the police? How will they torture her? Will she be able to endure it? I may never see my mother again. What should I do? Thinking these things, my heart was in torment and I couldn't stop my tears. After the meeting finished, I was taken to my arranged host family and, after I was settled, my thoughts returned again to my mother. At home, I was closest to my mother. Although my non-believing father tried to force me to give up God, my elder sister ignored me because of my belief in God and all my other relatives abandoned me, I never felt lonely, because I still had my mother who also believed in God. Whether spiritually or physically, my mother always cared for me, doted on me, and helped me often. Whenever I had some problem I could always talk to her about it; you could say that she was my rock. Yet now she had been taken away by the great red dragon. For the next few days, I cried all day long, lived in constant pain and felt very down. As I was living in this state, unable to free myself, there was a guidance within: "Are you really willing to live always in darkness, allowing Satan to make a fool of you? And are you really not willing to understand God in His work and live in the light?" These words woke me up at once. I thought: That's right. Am I really going to always live like this in darkness, allowing Satan to make a fool of me? No, I can't! This situation that has befallen me must surely hold the good intention of God. I must seek God's will and satisfy Him. Afterward, I often went before God to pray and to seek for God, asking God to enlighten me so that I could understand His will.

Leaving home and living away somewhere seemed like such a challenge to me, because I used to be spoiled at home and paid much attention to food, clothing and having fun. My flesh could suffer no wrong and could not endure the slightest hardship. In those days after I left home and was living with the host family, I could no longer do anything I wanted, could no longer do as I pleased like I had done at home, and when the brothers and sisters saw that I had some shortcomings, they would fellowship the truth with me. Gradually, my pampered nature and bad habits lessened, and I came to know that I should be content with having food and clothing. I also gained an insight into the essence of the flesh, never again to continue to pursue satisfaction of the flesh, and I came to know that seeking to satisfy God is the most important thing a created being should do, and I began to gain some

entry into some truths which I had either not previously understood or not been able to put into practice. Before, when my mother was at home, no matter whether I had physical issues or problems in my life, I always depended on her and asked her to help me resolve them. I rarely prayed to God, didn't seek the truth, nor did I have a normal relationship with God. After my mother was taken away, I had no one I could depend on when I came across difficulties. I could only go before God more often to pray to Him and read more of God's words to seek His will. Gradually, the place my mother had held in my heart grew smaller, while God's place in my heart grew bigger. I came to appreciate that God could help me any time I needed, that I could not leave God. Moreover, I also learned to resolve my problems by relying on prayer and on my seeking of the truth, and I tasted the feeling of peace, sureness and dependability that comes from having God with me. When I lived at home, although I knew that believers and non-believers were two kinds of people that were incompatible with each other, I still felt as though only my parents and my elder sister were my family, and I always saw my brothers and sisters in the church as outsiders, always feeling some distance between us. After God had used the environment to "drive" me out of my home, I was together with my brothers and sisters in my host family from morning till night, and felt their concern and care for me, their tolerance and understanding. We spoke the same language, shared the same aspirations and helped each other through life; from my heart, I felt that this was my only true family, that only my brothers and sisters in the church were my father, mother and siblings. There was no longer any estrangement or distance between me and my brothers and sisters in the church, and I experienced the warmth that comes from having a large family. Through this environment with my brothers and sisters, I also learned how we could love each other, pardon each other and support each other through life, so that I gained some entry into normal humanity. These truths were what I could not put into practice before by attending meetings and listening to sermons at home. After my mother was taken by the police and I was forced to leave home, in these exceptional circumstances and unbeknown to me, God wrought these truths within me and gradually deepened my understanding of them. In the wake of my entering into these truths, my heart that sought to love and satisfy God became ever stronger and my will to expend my entire life for God became ever more resolute. The person I had been—who believed in God but had no purpose, who weakened whenever some problem came along—was undergoing a gradual change. What God bestowed on me really was more than I ever could have thought, and my heart became full of gratitude and praise for Him.

One day, during my spiritual devotions, I read God's words that say: "In doing all this work, He has not only allowed humanity, who has been corrupted by Satan, to receive His great salvation, but also allowed them to see His wisdom, almightiness and authority, and in the end He will let humanity see His righteous disposition punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. He has battled Satan to this very day and has never been defeated, for He is a wise God, and His wisdom is exercised based on Satan's plots. ... He still carries out His work in this same realistic manner today; in addition, as He carries out His work He also reveals His wisdom and almightiness ..." ("You Should Know How the Whole of Humanity Has Developed to the Present Day" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words suddenly lit up my heart, and I couldn't help but release a sigh from deep within: God really is a wise God! God's deeds really are wonderful and unforeseen! This situation has today befallen me: Externally, it appears that the CCP police have taken my mother, taken away my only rock, made it hard for me to return home, tried to use this to obstruct my belief in God and to make me feel negative and down, or grow weak and give up by scaring me with their influence. But God's wisdom is exercised based on the plots of Satan, and God used it to great effect. He sprung me out of my comfy nest and, through this environment, tempered my will, perfected my will to undergo suffering, trained me to have the ability to live independently, taught me how to live out normal humanity and how to be a real person; these truths were something that I had no way to understand, no way to obtain in an environment of ease and comfort. Through this environment, God wrought His truth and what He is in life inside me, so that not only did I not give up because of the CCP government's persecution but, on the contrary, I obtained the truth that God had bestowed on me and I was brought under God's salvation. Furthermore, through the persecution of the CCP government, I saw its savage, cruel face and its reactionary nature that resists God even more clearly. From my heart, I loathed it even more, and my heart that sought to love God became even stronger.

I give thanks to God! From this experience, I gained some practical understanding of God's almightiness and sovereignty, and gained some practical experience of the fact that God's wisdom is exercised based on the plots of Satan. I understood that everything that befalls that does not conform to man's conceptions contains God's good intention. No matter

how Satan enforces its plots, God will ever be a wise God, and Satan will ever be God's defeated foe and a chess piece in God's hand. Understanding this, my will to follow God is now more resolute, and I am filled with faith for the road ahead!

33. A Turn for the Better on the Road of Believing in God

By Zhuanbian, Shanghai City

Although I had believed in God and followed God for many years, I had made almost no progress with my entering into life, and I felt very anxious. Especially when I heard the brother from the above talking with brothers and sisters in recordings of sermons, I felt filled with anxiety hearing him say this kind of thing, "You now believe in God and have tasted the sweetness of the pursuit of truth. You have started to enter onto the right track and are full of faith in your pursuit of salvation." I thought, "These people have not believed in God for very long and yet have already had entry and are so full of faith about being saved. Yet here I am having so far believed in God and I still haven't obtained the truth and my disposition in life has undergone no change whatsoever. Never mind attaining salvation, I haven't even started to enter onto the right track!" I thought of how the brother from the above fellowshiped that the truth can resolve all of man's corruptions, but I had never experienced this at all. I even felt that the truth could resolve other people's corruptions but not my own, and the more I thought like this the more dispirited I felt, and I felt that pursuing a change in my disposition was just too hard, and so I lost faith in my pursuit of the truth and of salvation. Although I was aware that my own condition was not right, there was no way I could escape it, so I could only cry to God for help.

One day, I saw these words of God: "Growth in man's life and changes in his disposition are all achieved by entering into reality and, moreover, through entering into detailed experiences" ("The Difference Between the Ministry of the Incarnate God and the Duty of Man" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "If you only focus on the theoretical knowledge and only live among religious ceremonies without going deep into reality, without entering into real life, then you will never enter into reality, you will never know yourself, the truth, or God, and you will forever be blind and ignorant" ("Discussing Church Life and Real Life" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Only through

the enlightenment of God's words did I realize that my disposition had not undergone much change, despite the many years I had believed in Him, and that this was mainly because when I read God's words I focused only on understanding the literal, theoretical meaning, and had only a thinking understanding. I was not focusing on putting the truth into practice or entering into reality, nor was I focusing on experiencing God's words through practical experience. Thinking back on these years of my belief in God, no matter what aspect of the truth, I always stopped at having a literal understanding, and I never sought to have a deeper understanding of the essence of the truth, much less did I plan to practice and enter into it. Instead, I thought it was enough just to have a theoretical knowledge and understanding. For example, in real life I always struggled for fame and gain, always wanted to make others listen to me. After revealing corruptions, I just thought for a while, and prayed before God, acknowledging my own corruption and knowing that it was an expression of an arrogant and self-right nature, and nothing more. I did not seek for the relevant truths to resolve this problem. The result was that, no matter how many times I "felt remorse or confessed my sins" before God, I still did not change. Within each environment God arranged, through praying and seeking I came to know that God was using it to deal with my corruption. After I came to this understanding, I just acknowledged that all of God's trials and refinements, all of God's dealing with me and pruning me was His salvation, was His love, that God's heart is always good, period. But afterward, I never paid any attention to practicing the truth or resolving my own corruption. The outcome was that, although I underwent some hardship, I had not undergone any change. In addition, each time I finished listening to the sermons, I felt that they were indeed what I needed in my life entry, and that they had allowed me to understand the truth that I had not previously understood. But all I did was just store the content of the sermons in my head, and I never applied it to real life, which resulted in the little bit of understanding I'd obtained disappearing after a while.

The facts had revealed me as someone who simply did not pursue the truth. I had believed in God for many years but had never put any effort into practicing the truth or entering reality, to the extent that I had so far still not obtained the truth, nor had my disposition undergone any change. This was entirely the revelation of God's righteous disposition, as God has said: "You must put effort into living out the words of God so that they may come to fruition in your practice. If you have only doctrinal knowledge, then your faith in God will come to naught. Only if you then also practice and live out

His word can your faith be considered complete and in accord with God's will" ("You Ought to Live for the Truth Since You Believe in God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God is righteous. God has never treated anyone unfairly, and has never wantonly given to man, much less given to man unconditionally. I do not practice the truth, have not made any effort to live out His words, with the result that today, I must reap as I have sown. At this time I couldn't help but feel extreme remorse, regretting bitterly that, although I had believed in God for years, today I still had nothing to show for my belief and I really hadn't lived up to God's salvation. And yet I did not wish to continue degenerating in such a way, but instead I wished to start again, to make effort in my practice of the truth and to implement God's words on myself.

Afterward, I began to train in practicing the truth and in entering reality. When I revealed the corruption of vying with others for status in my work, I was then no longer as I had been before, when I had just prayed and confessed to God, and nothing more. Instead, I looked for the relevant words of God to read and I accepted the judgment and chastisement of God's words. From His words I came to realize that my pursuit of fame, gain and status was my satanic disposition at work. In the beginning, because the archangel vied with God for His position, it was cast into the air. This also happened to mankind after it was corrupted by Satan; people want to be the leader in any group and make others listen to them. In particular, the CCP, the king of devils, vies with earth and with heaven in the vain hope of having mastery over all the world. People, as created beings, cannot keep to their own place and always want to become exceptional and great, to be equal to God—this really is too wicked. After I realized that, disgust and loathing for my own nature spontaneously arose. Afterward, I equipped myself with the truth about raising God up, about bearing witness to God, and in real life I trained for entry. Through this practice, I saw even more clearly the ugliness and contemptibility of myself standing on high and telling people what was what. I loathed and cursed myself even more, and made up my mind to forsake the flesh and practice the truth in order to satisfy God. After training in this way for a while, I discovered that the expressions of my own arrogant disposition reduced a great deal.

In normal interpersonal relationships, in the past I knew I had to practice tolerance, patience, to use wisdom, have principles, and be an honest person. But in reality I never entered these five aspects. Now, when I took unkindly to others due to their expressions of corruption, I prayed to God and practiced according to these five aspects. Under God's

guidance, it occurred to me that my brothers and sisters are now in the process of seeking change, so expressions of corruption are inevitable, and that maybe so-and-so isn't aware of the corruption he reveals, or maybe he is dominated involuntarily by his own nature and is not acting this way toward me on purpose. It was just the same as when my usually arrogant and conceited disposition had been disgusting to others, yet I myself had remained unaware before I really understood the truth and came to know myself. This is all harm that is done to man by Satan. It is Satan that I should hate, and I should not form opinions about my brothers and sisters. Sometimes my brothers and sisters would be constrained by their corrupt dispositions in their actions toward me, and yet brothers and sisters they remain they are sincere believers in God, not wicked people or antichrists. So I should imitate what God is, and however God forgives me, that is how I should forgive other people, and I should treat people with the heart and the love of God. When I thought like this, the resentment and grudges I had held inside me disappeared in a flash, and were replaced by hatred for Satan and sympathy and forgiveness for my brothers and sisters; I even wanted to find suitable opportunities to help them. When I tried voluntarily to help them, I found that my relationship with them became a lot friendlier and I got a taste of the happiness that comes from helping others.

When I practiced applying the words of God I understood into real life, not only did I gain some practical experience of and entry into various aspects of the truth, and I was able to perform my duty and handle matters with some principles according to God's words, I also came to have some true knowledge of the various states I possess from being corrupted by Satan, how one's satanic nature can bind one, and the extent to which people have been corrupted by Satan. I felt God's leadership and guidance and tasted the sureness, peace and joy that practicing the truth had given to my heart. I felt that my life was enriched, that there was a lesson to be learned every day, feeling that pursuing the truth was so meaningful, that the truth really could save and change people!

Once I had this bit of personal experience and understanding, I felt that my own road of believing in God has taken a turn for the better, never again to feel that salvation was beyond my grasp. I believe that, so long as I work with God, continually equip myself with truth and practice and enter the truth, I will certainly reach a change in my corrupt disposition. I believe that God's work is able to save man and God's words are able to change man: I have this faith because I have tasted it already. From this day on, I wish to pursue the truth with my

feet planted firmly on the ground, and to bring God's words into real life to practice and enter, so that I may soon achieve a change in my disposition, and live out the manner of a true person in order to bear witness for God, to bear witness to God's work to save me, to bear witness to God's power to save man, and to bear witness to God's wonderful deeds!

34. Why Haven't I Changed After So Many Years of Faith?

By Jinru, Henan Province

Not long ago, whenever a brother or sister pointed out my failings or did not heed my opinion I was either quietly unconvinced or directly refuted it. I regretted my actions later, but when faced with these things, I couldn't help but reveal my corrupt disposition. I was deeply troubled by this, and thought: "Why is it that others' words can shame me into anger? And why has my corrupt disposition not changed a bit despite eight years of following God?" I became awash in anxiety, so I brought my confusion in front of God; I prayed to God and sought from Him many times, asking Him to enlighten me to be able to know the root of why my corrupt disposition had not changed.

One day during my devotions, I saw a passage of a sermon: "Everyone loathes their own arrogance and conceit, their crookedness and deceitfulness. Most people change to some extent; certain people, who are arrogant and conceited and lack reason, and who are crooked and deceitful by nature, change only very slightly and so their expressions and behavior remain almost unchanged: Their arrogance, conceit, crookedness and deceitfulness remain plain to see. This is related to their experiences. From start to finish, they do not pursue a change in their disposition, but only observe how others enter into life. And as a result, they hinder themselves. For they only see the arrogance and conceit of others, and believe only others should be judged and chastised by God. They think they themselves have not resisted God, and God's judgment and chastisement is only for others. Reading God's word from this peculiar perspective, it is no wonder they do not change" (The Fellowship From the Above). At this point I had an awakening. I realized the reason I had not cast off my corrupt disposition despite following God for many years was that I had believed in God, but not sought to change my disposition. This came about because I had only paid attention to how others entered into life, but I had not pursued the truth and had

not focused on my own entry into life. At that point I could not help but think of scenes from the past of me rushing around working in the church: When reading the words of God, I never linked them to my own state. I always taught others and measured them against God's words. In gatherings, when I shared fellowship on the truth it was only to solve the problems and difficulties of others, and I never looked for the truth I myself should enter into. Particularly when I fellowshiped on the words of God's revelation of man's corrupt essence, my examples were of other brothers and sisters, using their failures as warnings while I very rarely used God's words to understand my own state and find my own entry. ... And so year after year passed, yet my own entry into life remained almost a blank. Yet I, so foolish, still thought that I was a man of compassion, that I was bearing a burden for the lives of my brothers and sisters. This has been particularly true over the last year since the church arranged for me to partner with a young sister to fulfill our duties together, and I continued to bear my "burden," focusing on observing her entry into life. When that sister revealed herself to be arrogant and self-righteous I would rush to use God's word to fellowship with her, but inside, I was actually thinking to myself: "You're just so arrogant." When that sister could not free herself from negativity because she was constrained by her concerns over her future and fate, I found the appropriate words of God to read with her and communicated that God wishes to save us, but inside I held her in contempt: There is little time left and yet you still seek blessings so fervently?" When that sister opened up and told me how she was often suspicious of people, I spoke of the truth of being an honest person, but inside she annoyed me. I thought: "You are such a pain." When that sister was in a bad state but could not figure out why, I told her to examine herself, to dissect her nature, but when it came to myself I did not pay attention to using God's word to understand and analyze myself based on what I revealed. Was it not that I thought only others were too corrupt and should be judged and chastised by God, while placing myself beyond God's word? Was I not only paying attention to the entry of others and hinder myself? God's words reveal that all of mankind has been corrupted by Satan, that our natures and essences are all the same, but I did not pay any mind to using God's words to reflect on and know myself or to focus on my own entry into life. Instead, I stayed laser-focused on others. Wasn't that so arrogant of me? Wasn't that neglecting what I should have been doing? Only at that moment did I come to realize I was as poor and pitiful as a penniless street beggar, and my heart was filled with regret.

Later, I saw that God's word says: "People say things like this: Put aside your prospects, be more realistic. You ask that people dispense with thoughts of being blessed—but what about yourself? Do you negate people's ideas of being blessed and yourself seek blessings? You don't allow others to receive blessings but secretly think of them yourself—what does that make you? A con artist! When you act thus, does your conscience not stand accused? In your heart, do you not feel indebted? Are you not a fraudster? You dig out the words in the hearts of others, but say nothing of those in your own—what a worthless piece of trash you are!" ("Chapter 42" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's word, as sharp as a sword, pierced my heart and left me deeply ashamed. I thought of all I had done. Was I not a swindler, as God revealed? On the surface I was doing my duty, but in actuality I was using my enthusiasm to dishonestly gain God's trust so that I could survive. On the surface I was fellowshiping about the truth and helping my brothers and sisters solve their problems, but I was actually using words and doctrines to defraud them of their esteem and admiration, with the aim of gaining status in their hearts. I told others not to lust after the blessings of status, not to be arrogant, yet I often looked down on others from the position of my status and was unable to treat my brothers and sisters correctly. When they pointed out my deficiencies, I was even full of defiance inside. I asked others to give up their intentions of obtaining blessings, and not to be controlled by their future and fate, while I often made plans for my future and fretted over my own gains and losses. I was annoyed by the deceitfulness and suspicion of others, while I often observed their expressions and worried about what they thought of me. I told others to understand themselves, to grasp their innermost thoughts to dissect their nature, while I didn't utter a peep about my own malicious intentions, and my words and actions went unobserved by God. ... Only after thinking back on my actions and behaviors did I see clearly that for so many years I had often talked big and was content spouting literal doctrines, but I had not been focused on entering into reality and living out God's words. As a result, I still didn't have any understanding of myself, nor had my life disposition changed much. Rather, it had become more and more arrogant. Just as God brought to light: "... the more they understand of the doctrines, the more arrogant their dispositions become" ("People Make Too Many Demands of God" in Records of Christ's Talks). I had always regarded the doctrines I held as my own capital, but did not pay any mind to understanding myself and seeking entry into life. And so how could I have any change in my life disposition by

experiencing things that way? Today God's practical work and words provide us with all the truth we need. He wishes us to use the opportunity of fulfilling our duty to bring the truth into our day-to-day lives to inform our experiences and our entering in, as well as to provide that to our brothers and sisters. But I focused only on arming myself with letters and doctrines, and regarded expounding upon doctrines as my duty. I had others practice the truth while I myself did not practice it or enter in. As a result, after many years of having faith in God I hadn't had any change at all in my disposition. Wasn't that harming both others and myself? I thought of Paul, who just equipped himself with literal doctrines to tell other people about so as to elevate and bear witness to himself. However, he did not practice or experience the Lord Jesus' words, and he did not bring the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and illumination into his own entry. This led to him working for many years without any kind of dispositional change. On the contrary, he became more and more arrogant to the point that he said that he was Christ. He seriously offended God's disposition and in the end suffered God's punishment. How was the path I was taking any different from Paul's? If I still did not repent and change, I would certainly end up just as Paul did.

Realizing all of this, I was full of regret and self-recrimination, and was full of gratitude for God. I prostrated myself before God and prayed: "Oh God, thank You for Your enlightenment and illumination, which allowed me to see my failing to change my disposition despite many years of faith was due to only paying attention to work and arming myself with letters and doctrines rather than paying attention to my entry into life. I hate that I am too arrogant and ignorant, that I don't love the truth, and so have missed many opportunities to enter into the truth and to gain a transformation in my disposition. Going forward, I am willing to seek and understand the truth better through Your words, to seek for a deeper understanding of myself, to earnestly and pragmatically practice God's word and enter into the truth, and to live out the likeness of a true human being."

35. Only Now Do I Understand What Life Entry Is

By Yulu, Portugal

Early in 2017, I was fulfilling a leadership duty in the church. After training for a period of time, some brothers and sisters gave me a recommendation: They said I had very little

understanding with regard to their situations and difficulties, and had not done any real work. To turn this deviation around, I prepared to do a round of follow-ups so that I could understand the situations of all of the brothers and sisters of the church. To this end, I shuttled back and forth through the church every day, busying myself with fellowshiping with brothers and sisters and offering support and assistance. When they had made a bit of a turnaround in their situations and resolution to their difficulties, I concluded that I was indeed capable of doing a bit of real work, and felt quite satisfied. To my great surprise, one day the watering group leader said to me, "During today's meeting, after getting an understanding of our situation, the upper-level leadership said that we have recently been keeping busy only with work and not with life entry. ..." Hearing this, I felt very shocked, and thought, "I thought the brothers and sisters had communicated their states during the meeting and gained some knowledge about themselves, so how can it be said that they have no life entry? If none of them has attained life entry, and I am responsible for their work, then doesn't this say that I haven't attained life entry either?" I felt conflicted, and was unable to accept my superiors' pointers.

A few days later, Sister Li approached me after a meeting and said to me in a somber tone, "After listening to your fellowship today, I felt no enjoyment. While you were communicating you mentioned that the upper-level leaders had said the sisters and brothers of the watering group had not attained life entry—so how do you know about this? Have you paid any attention to your own life entry recently? You should spend some time in selfreflection." The sister's words were like a basin of ice-cold water poured all over my body. Feeling too overwhelmed to accept them, I thought to myself, "I hold meetings and fellowship with my brothers and sisters every day, and whatever their situations, I am able to give my assistance and support. When communicating God's words, I integrate and talk about my personal experiences, too, so how can you say I haven't attained life entry? Can you actually discern whether I have or not? You ask too much of me. In my opinion, when you fellowship, you don't even have the depth of understanding that I do; if I go by your demands, I have no idea how I'll fellowship." The sister's words lingered in my mind, and the more I thought about them, the angrier I felt. I did not even want to lay eyes on Sister Li anymore. The next morning, my partner, Sister Wang, said to me, "Yesterday evening, Sister Zhang also asked me whether or not we had merely focused on doing work recently and not on attaining life entry." Hearing this, I felt especially upset. I thought to myself, "How could Sister Zhang also

say that? I often hold meetings with her, and I always integrate my own experiences into my fellowship, and she has heard me do it—so how can she say I haven't had any life entry? Now two sisters have said the same thing; could it be that I really haven't attained any life entry? If so, how could I water brothers and sisters? Is it that I am incapable of performing this duty?" By then I was like a deflated rubber ball; I felt completely dispirited. Amid my suffering, I prayed to God: "Almighty God! I feel so much anguish in my heart right now. I do not know how to experience this environment, nor do I know what lesson I should learn. God! I implore You to guide; make me understand Your will. ..."

After prayer, I thought of a passage in the fellowship, "God's will is very simple. It is to use all sorts of environments, all sorts of brothers and sisters, and all sorts of issues to test you, have you run into a wall, have you undergo refinement and then have you understand yourself. Finally, you will truly know yourself and see that you are nothing at all, happily accepting the truth, accepting being dealt with and pruned, and obeying God's work to enter into the right track in your faith. This is God's will. God's will is absolutely not to use environments to have you fall down and be unable to get up, then allow you to die. That's not what it is. It is to have you fully understand yourself and then quickly pull yourself back up and pursue the truth. This is because people only lean on God and pursue the truth when they are desperate. ... Is the reason for tempering you and pruning you to make you lie down or to make you more fit for use? Is exposing your lack of truth and reality done to judge and condemn you, or to make you stand up and equip yourself with the truth and pursue the truth? If you mull this over and over, will you not understand God's will?" ("Questions & Answers" in Sermons and Fellowship VII). After contemplating this sermon, I had the sudden realization that these disagreeable people, events, and things that I had encountered one after another recently had actually come out of God's pruning and dealing with me; they were His righteous disposition, manifested upon me, and in them were God's good intentions. His will was not to make me retreat in negativity, nor was it to make me exist in a state of arguing over right and wrong; rather, it was to bring me before Him in self-reflection so that I might know myself, focus on pursuing the truth, and strive to achieve a transformation in my disposition. However, upon being pruned and dealt with, I had instead refused to reflect upon myself or seek the truth. My heart had been filled with conflict and disobedience, and I had even thought that the purpose of my having been thrust into such an environment had been to expose me for being unsuitable for fulfilling this sort of duty, and so I had lived in a

state of negative passivity. I truly had been impervious to reason! I thought about how, over the past few days, a few sisters had told me I had not achieved any life entry, and realized that God had been using them to remind me that I must calm down and diligently reflect upon myself to figure out just what my problems were, why the sisters had said I had not attained entry into life, and exactly what life entry meant in the first place.

Later, I read the following from the fellowship "What Is Entry Into Life and the Path for Entry Into Life": "Entry into life refers to entry into the truth and to God's words. It refers to understanding of the truth of people's corruption, and the essence of their corruption, and then being able to accept the truth, accept God's words, and have them become their life. Only anything relevant to this kind of experience is entry into life." "Entry into life refers to entry into the truth. Entry into the truth is based on people experiencing the word of God and reaching an understanding of the truth." "When we have a true knowledge of God, it proves that we have true entry into His words. When we have true knowledge of our own corrupt essence and the truth of our own corruption, that also proves that we have true entry into God's words. When we are truly obedient to God's work, His reality, and His essence, when we truly satisfy all of His requirements, that proves as well that we have true entry into His words. As long as there is true entry that is based on His words, which is true entry into the truth, and the results that should be achieved have been achieved, this means we possess the reality of entry into life" (Sermons and Fellowship II). These words gave me a sudden flash of insight: As it turned out, life entry referred to people's experiencing God's words and gaining an understanding of the truth, and entering into the reality of the truth. In other words, it meant that when experiencing God's work, they could put His words into practice and gradually comprehend the truth until they had gained knowledge of God's disposition and His work, as well as a real knowledge of their own corrupt nature and essence and the true face of their corruption. It meant they could despise themselves, turn their backs on their own erroneous intentions and satanic nature, and implement the truth, submit to God, and satisfy Him in accordance with His will and requirements. Only in this way could they be counted as truly having attained life entry. Comparing myself to these conditions and displays, I could not help but reflect upon my recent situation: Ever since my brothers and sisters made the recommendation that I had not borne the burden of my duty and had not paid attention to resolving their problems, in order to keep them from saying such things about me, I had busied myself with following up on my brothers' and sisters' situations and

even used time set aside for spiritual devotions to search for passages of God's words that could resolve their problems. Very seldom had I calmed down and contemplated God's words myself, though, or sought the truth and God's will in those utterances. In my fulfilling of my duty, I had not paid any attention at all to my own thoughts and ideas, nor had I selfreflected to discover which corrupt dispositions I had revealed and which truths I needed to enter into, much less whether the path I'd been on had been right or wrong. Every time I had fellowshiped in meetings with them, I had merely taken God's words and communicated them to my brothers and sisters so that they could go and practice the truth, yet I myself had not taken these opportunities to reflect upon myself or enter into God's words along with them. Sometimes, after some of my corrupt disposition had been revealed, I had merely matched it up with God's words or looked for some encouraging or comforting passages to read. This had satisfied the discomfort I felt in my heart, but I had very seldom reflected upon or analyzed myself in accordance with God's utterances to get to know my corrupt essence. As a result, I had not loathed myself, and subsequently had not focused on practicing the truth. When encountering further such environments, I had again shown the same corruption. Given all these indications apparent in me, how could I say I had attained life entry? For the sake of reputation and status, I had done my utmost to devote myself to the work, yet had not placed importance upon pondering them when eating and drinking of God's words. I had simply satisfied myself with doctrinal knowledge, but had not genuinely understood His will and demands as well as what results He meant to achieve with these words He uttered. I had not truly understood the truth, much less had the testimony of practicing God's words. I really had no actual experience, and had not attained any life entry at all! After thinking further about how I had been pruned and dealt with recently by the upper-level leaders and my brothers and sisters, I saw that I had been revealed to be contradictory, disobedient, and argumentative. If I had truly attained life entry, then upon being pruned and dealt with I would have been able to seek the truth and reflect upon myself, and would not have found myself living in negativity and contrariness. Only now was I thoroughly convinced that I really had not attained life entry, and that in my fellowship with my brothers and sisters, I had just talked a lot of big talk about words and doctrines. As the saying goes, "The actions of generals affect the actions of their soldiers." Since I myself had not attained life entry, how could I bring my brothers and sisters into the reality of God's words? Was this way in which I worked not liable to entrap and ruin my brothers and sisters? This realization made me feel rather

frightened. Luckily, God had used those sisters to give me a timely reminder to self-reflect so that I could know myself; otherwise, I would have continued to only focus on external work and errands, yet would not have entered life myself, and finally there would not have been the tiniest transformation to my life disposition—and I could only have been exposed and eliminated by God. I thank God for His guidance! God's arrangement of such people, events, and things had been so wonderful, and was exactly what I had needed. Only by way of being pruned and dealt with like that had I come to understand what real life entry was, and gained some knowledge of my own actual situation. I saw that in neither pursuing the truth nor paying attention to attaining life entry, I would have kept on in my faith until, finally, I ended in failure.

After that, I consciously focused on my own entry. Every day during my spiritual devotions, I trained myself in earnest to try to ponder God's words and paid attention to seeking the truth in them, as well as implementing them in real life. Among the people, events, and things I encountered, I focused on grasping my own thoughts and ideas, reflecting upon my intentions and impurities in my fulfilling of my duty, dissecting my nature and essence, and seeking out a path from God's words to practice and enter life. When solving my brothers' and sisters' problems, I no longer merely fellowshiped to resolve their situations; I focused on self-reflecting and knowing myself to figure out whether or not I had the same issues, that I might attain entry along with my brothers and sisters. After a while of doing this, I felt my relationship with God was a lot closer, and I gained a bit of experience and knowledge of His words. I also achieved some results in my work for the church. Later on, I saw from the fellowship of my brothers and sisters that when encountering problems, they had all begun to reflect upon their own intentions and impurities, and were analyzing their own natures and essences. They, too, were able to enter into some of God's words. Thank God!

After this instance of being pruned and dealt with, I had gained some real knowledge of what life entry is, and had come to see my own shortcomings a bit more clearly. In the fulfilling of my duty, I started to pay attention to my own entry and got a taste for how sweet it was to pursue the truth and put it into practice. All of these were effects of God's work on me. Thank God! In everything I experience from now on, I hope to be steadfast and realistic in my pursuit of the truth, and strive to achieve a transformation in my disposition one day soon.

36. A Guileless Person Is Not an Honest Person

By Cheng Mingjie, Shaanxi Province

I am an outgoing and forthright kind of person. I speak with people in a very straightforward manner; whatever I want to say, I say it—I'm not the type to beat around the bush. In my interactions with others I tend to be a pretty straight shooter. I'm often cheated or ridiculed for placing trust in others too easily. This is often very distressing for me. After believing in God, I read in His words that God loves those who are simple and honest. I thought to myself: God wants honest people; in the past while out in the world, my guilelessness put me at a disadvantage and made me vulnerable to the bullying by others, but now in the church I no longer need to fret over being too guileless. Since then, I felt especially comforted when I read God's words saying that only the honest shall receive God's salvation. I thought of myself as an honest person, and that attaining God's salvation wouldn't be an issue. When I saw how distressed my brothers and sisters had become as they began to recognize their deceitful nature but they were unable to change it and couldn't be in accord with God's will, I felt even more relieved that, being innately honest, I wouldn't have to go through all of that. One day, however, after receiving the enlightenment of God's words, I finally realized I wasn't an honest person.

One day, I read God's words: "People who are honest are possessed of the truth, they are not pitiable, wretched, stupid, or simplehearted. ... And so, do not put this crown upon your head, thinking that you are honest because you suffer in society, are discriminated against, and are pushed around and cheated by everyone you meet. This is utterly wrong. ... Being honest isn't as people imagine: People aren't honest simply because they are straightforward and plain-dealing. Some people may be naturally very forthright in the way they speak, but being forthright does not mean they are without deceit. Deceit is people's motivations, and their disposition. When people live in this world, when they live under the influence of Satan's corruption, it is impossible for them to be honest; they can only become ever more deceitful" ("The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words were a perfect characterization of my state. I always thought: I speak frankly, I don't engage in trickery or play games, I am frequently cheated

and bullied in the world, and so no part of me is deceitful. As a result, I never checked myself against God's words exposing the deceit in man, instead crowning myself as the quintessence of honesty. I thought that God's words were all talking about other people and that I was somehow different, that I had been born with this innate honesty. But it turns out that was nothing but my own notion and imagination and was not at all in line with the truth. Another passage of God's words then came to mind: "Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. ... If your words are riddled with excuses and valueless justifications, then I say that you are someone who is loath to put the truth into practice. If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness. If seeking the way of the truth pleases you well, then you are someone who dwells always in the light. If you are very glad to be a service-doer in the house of God, working diligently and conscientiously in obscurity, always giving and never taking, then I say that you are a loyal saint, because you seek no reward and are simply being an honest person. If you are willing to be candid, if you are willing to expend your all, if you are able to sacrifice your life for God and stand firm in your testimony, if you are honest to the point where you know only to satisfy God and not to consider yourself or take for yourself, then I say that such people are those who are nourished in the light and who shall live forever in the kingdom" ("Three Admonitions" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words made me more aware that what God really means by honesty is someone who gives their heart to God, who is unwaveringly faithful to Him, who harbors no deceit or cheating in their heart, someone who possesses the truth and humanity. An honest person doesn't muddle through or cheat when performing their duty; they don't cause concern for others and God can trust them. The honest lay themselves bare in all things before God, and are also willing to share their private matters and personal troubles with their brothers and sisters. They don't try to cheat God, nor do they cheat other people. Honest people don't distort things; they call a spade a spade. Honest people give no thought to their personal prospects or future plans; they wholeheartedly expend themselves for God and only live to satisfy Him. As for me, I

just didn't get what it meant to be an honest person. In my worldly judgment of things, God's "honest person" was what we refer to in the secular world as a "guileless person." Little did I know that God's "honest person" and my "honest person" hold very little in common. How ignorant I was, how absurd!

Giving it some careful thought, Satan has corrupted man for thousands of years: We all grow up in an environment permeated with the poison and corruption of Satan. Our language and behavior, the way we conduct ourselves in society, are all subject to Satan's worldly philosophies and laws of survival. "Think before you speak and then only with caution"; "Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost"; "Speak out of both sides of one's mouth": These most famous phrases from Satan have already planted themselves in the collective unconscious of man. They are part and parcel of our lives, driving us to deceit and cunning. Given that all mankind is afflicted by deceit and cunning, what made me think I was somehow immune, or innately honest? I speak straightforwardly and without equivocation because I'm a frank and direct person. I'm often cheated by others because I'm ignorant and somewhat slow, but this doesn't mean that I'm really an honest person. When I think back, how many times have I misrepresented myself and lied to preserve my reputation and status? How many times have I wallowed in anxiety over my future prospects instead of believing in God with a pure and single-minded heart? I feared that in giving up everything for God, I'd be left with nothing, so I always wanted a promise from God, a guarantee that I would one day enter His kingdom. That was the only way I would have been able to pursue the truth wholeheartedly without worry. Even when I did make sacrifices and expend myself it was in exchange for a good destination. How many times was I unable to be faithful to God, always fussing over my personal losses and gains in the process of fulfilling my duties and fretting over my own fame and status? And how many times did I make and break resolutions in front of God, speaking high-sounding but empty words to curry God's favor? How many times did I refrain from opening myself up to my brothers and sisters and sharing my personal troubles and private affairs with them for fear that they would look down on me? How many times did I say only what I believed would benefit me personally, putting up my guard and being suspicious of others? The more I reflected on myself, the more I saw that my thoughts, words and actions were all filled with craftiness and deceit, and that I was living every moment in accordance with a deceitful nature. I am not remotely an honest person.

Thank God for enlightening me, for showing me that honest people are not just frank

and guileless, but rather those who possess truth and humanity. Thank God also for showing me that I am not honest by God's definition, but a person afflicted by a deceitful nature, a deceitful person who God has exposed. Then, I prayed to God: "Dear God, I am no longer willing to rely on my deceitful nature in life; I will work to become an honest person. I ask that You expose me and allow me to have a deeper understanding of my own deceitful nature, so that I may despise myself, deny my flesh, and soon become an honest person who possesses the truth and humanity, living out the likeness of a true human to satisfy You."

37. Only by Understanding the Truth Can One Have Discernment

By Yi Ran, Shandong Province

Several days ago, our church replaced a leader. As I did not understand the principle behind the church's revision of personnel, a conception arose within me: The sister that was replaced was very good at both receiving and fellowshiping the truth, and could be open about her own expressions of corruption. How could someone who pursued the truth so much be replaced?

Just as I was feeling very puzzled about this, I read this passage in a work arrangement: "God's family decides to train and use people in accordance with their essence. If someone's essence is one that pursues the truth, then God's family will absolutely not give up on them; if someone is willing to pursue the truth, then they will undoubtedly experience a change. If someone's essence is one that does not pursue the truth, is negligent of their duties and who does not tread the right road, then they are not worth training and neither can God perfect this kind of person. For someone whom God is not willing to perfect, God's family also cannot train them. ... So the handling of people must be approached in accordance with the requirements of God's work and people's essence. Only this is an effective way to work in concert with God and to truly serve God. If this effective way to work in concert with God is not employed, then God's work is disrupted and God's will is completely contravened" ("Fellowshiping Some Questions" in Work Arrangements). Trying over and over to figure out these words, I understood that Christ and God's words rule over the church. There is a principle at work whether the church is promoting someone or replacing them. These

changes are being approached in accordance with the requirements of God's work and people's essence, and nobody can use or replace people at will. Moreover, the church is not replacing people based on their momentary expressions of corruption, but rather the church is looking to see whether or not they pursue the truth in light of their consistent performance. The church does not train people with bad humanity and who do not pursue the truth, and the church would absolutely not give up on, neglect or ruin anyone who is pursuing the truth. I harbored misconceptions about the church's revision of personnel because I didn't understand the truth; I only valued people's superficial caliber and the skills they were gifted with, and I had no idea what kind of person God wanted to save and perfect, and I was unable to see through to people's nature and essence. With this understanding, I went before God to pray and seek: "Oh God! I know that I have been corrupted so deeply by Satan. I have no understanding of Your work, I bear many conceptions, and many of my views are incompatible with You. Today, under Your guidance, I know that whether in selecting, training or replacing people, the church approaches it all in accordance with the requirements of Your work and people's essence. But I still do not thoroughly understand the essence of the sister who was replaced, with the result that I have an opinion about the church's arrangement. I ask You to lead and guide me; allow me to see clearly so that, in my work from now on, I may not disrupt Your work because of my deviation and my errors."

After I had prayed, I took up the work arrangements and I saw these words: "By reading God's words, those who pursue the truth can measure their own corrupt condition against God's words. Their fellowship about God's words is not done just to talk about understanding God's words, but to talk also about understanding themselves. No matter what corruption is expressed, they can get it out in the open so that brothers and sisters can achieve something real, whilst at the same time resolving their own corruption. This is also the best method to lead people into God's words. ... All those who talk only about literal meanings and who are devoid of reality, do not deserve to be leaders in God's family. This type of leader and worker should be replaced" ("To Serve God One Must Learn How to Discern All Kinds of People" in Work Arrangements). From these words, I realized that those who genuinely pursue the truth can grasp the truth within God's words when they read them, they can compare their corrupt states to God's words and know their own nature and essence, and they can open up and lay themselves bare no matter what corruptions they reveal; when others hear them fellowship, they are then able to practice and experience God's words and have more faith

in God. People who genuinely pursue the truth can truly accept being pruned and dealt with by others, they focus on self-reflection and practicing the truth, and their corrupt dispositions undergo constant change.

At this time, I began to recall in detail the persistent conduct and performance of the sister. Although when resolving other people's problems she spoke eloquently and at length, using words that were reasoned and well-argued, she had not resolved the difficulty of her own entry into life, for she had always lived in a state of self-righteousness, believing that she did every job well and feeling immensely proud. If what she had received and fellowshiped had really been an understanding of the essence of the truth, why couldn't she use her understanding to resolve her own problems? Although when the leader exposed and dissected the serious problems in her work, externally she nodded her head repeatedly, expressing her acceptance and her willingness to do it in principle, she nevertheless secretly persisted in her old ways, doing things how she wanted to the detriment of the work once again. When she was being dealt with again, although her outward appearance showed that she was very remorseful, afterward she made no change whatsoever. Although she talked about her understanding of herself and brought her own corruption out into the open, the result was that she made others look up to her and think highly of her, bringing people before her. Under the guise of being "pure and open," she covertly disparaged others and exalted herself, and in this way she deceived and corrupted other people. I saw from her consistent performance that although she had worked for many years, she had only managed to equip herself with many letters and doctrines and did not understand the truth. She had no true knowledge of herself, with the result that she regarded doing a little superficial work and speaking some doctrine as understanding the truth and having reality. This then resulted in her disposition becoming more and more arrogant and proud. Only now did I realize that she was not someone who pursued the truth, nor was she someone whose understanding of truth was pure or who fellowshiped about the truth incisively. If she had been kept in her post, she could only have held up the church's work and damaged her brothers and sisters. Her being replaced really was the righteousness of God and was God's salvation of her. Otherwise, she would still be deceived by her own outward appearance and would not have seen the errors of her ways, and ultimately, she could only have caused serious damage to the church work and would have been punished by God.

Through this matter I saw my own destitution, blindness and how pitiable I was, and I realized that without truth, one cannot thoroughly understand the essence of the matter, but can only speak and see things standing in opposition to God according to one's own notions and imaginings. Only by understanding the truth can one have discernment and not be deceived. From today on, I wish to make much more effort in my pursuit of the truth, to seek the principles of the truth in all things, to do things as God requires and to soon be of use to Him.

38. I Will No Longer Be Blinded by Good Intentions

By Meng Yu, Henan Province

Once while performing my duty, I noticed that one of the brothers would often pay excessive attention to some sisters, and so I thought he was perhaps expressing a wicked disposition, and I decided to look for an opportunity to remind him of this. Later on, I saw that this brother was not achieving any significant results in his duties, and this was further confirmation that what I thought about him was correct. So I decided to find an opportunity to talk to him. However, when we touched upon this matter, he sternly denied all my comments and retorted that I was judgmental. "For all these years," he said, "whenever you fellowship with me, you lecture me with a condescending attitude, and today you speak in the same condescending manner." The fellowship turned out worse than fruitless, and it ended in complete disagreement. Seeing him react this way, I thought to myself: "I gave you fellowship to help you, not to embarrass you by exposing your shortcomings. Instead of accepting it, you looked for fault in me and accused me of being condescending. Fine! I will leave you alone. Nevertheless, my intentions were good, and your rejection only shows that you don't pursue the truth." Regarding this matter, I always considered myself as the one who was correct, while thinking the brother was the only one at fault. However, I recently gained knowledge of myself through dealing with the people, things and events that God arranged around me.

Days ago, the church assigned a new task to one of my young brothers. He used to be in a poor condition, but since the arrangement, he was transformed into a new man, more energetic in mind and more confident in word. One day, when he was fellowshiping with me,

his tone, expression and manner left me feeling deeply uncomfortable. I knew that he fellowshiped God's will and spoke truly about my issues, but I just couldn't listen to him, let alone accept what he said. As I was about to erupt and contradict him, I suddenly saw myself in him and remembered the tone and expression I used several months ago when I fellowshiped with that other brother. No wonder he'd said I was condescending. It now seemed that what he felt was real, and I was even able to appreciate the same disgust that he'd felt seeing me act that way—like the nauseous feeling of eating a dead fly. Not until then did I realize that a man with an unchanged disposition has no place for God in his heart, then even if he has good intentions, what he reveals is nothing but his naturalness and satanic disposition. Right then, I remembered God's words: "The key to self-reflection and knowing yourself is this: The more you feel that in certain areas you have done well or have done the right thing, and the more you think you can satisfy God's will or are worthy of boasting in certain areas, then the more it is worth it for you to know yourself in those areas and the more it is worth it for you to dig deep into them to see what impurities exist in you, as well as what things in you cannot satisfy God's will" ("Only by Knowing Your Misguided Views Can You Know Yourself" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words enabled me to understand that the more I thought myself correct in the things I did, the more I needed to examine and know myself with these things. For after we were corrupted by Satan, our hearts became filled with satanic poisons, our natures became wholly rebellious and defiant to God, and so if our actions are not tempered by the judgment and chastisement of God's words, then they will surely defy God. Even if we ourselves believe that what we do accords with the truth and there is nothing wrong with it, because our dispositions have not changed, our nature and essence will be antagonistic to God, and everything we reveal will still be our satanic corrupt dispositions. So, there are so many impurities in us that need to be analyzed, recognized and addressed. Now as I look back upon my expressions when I fellowshiped with that brother, I had justified that I had been right by my good intentions, but I failed to notice that I took an incorrect stance in my fellowship. I regarded myself as the master of truth, believing that I could tell what his state was, that all the issues and states I brought to his attention were accurate, and then forcibly making him accept what I was saying. But the moment he contradicted me, I then labeled him as someone who did not pursue the truth. From my actions, I saw that I had been haughty and hard, and that I had constrained and lectured others—the disgusting and

repulsive dispositions of Satan. What was the difference between what I had revealed and the political criticism launched by the CCP? The CCP acts indiscriminately, going by its own intentions when making accusations and subjecting people to forced criticism. I didn't truly pray to God or seek His guidance before I fellowshiped with that brother, nor did I make certain that what he had been revealing was indeed what I'd thought; instead, I went by my own imagining and condemned him, believing that he must be living in a state of wickedness, which had led him to achieve nothing in his duties, and I pressed hard for him to acknowledge that what I'd said was true. I found out that every move I made, the way I looked and spoke—it all reeked of the arrogant disposition of Satan. How could I be of benefit to others when giving them fellowship with such a corrupt disposition? How could the Holy Spirit work on me? Without His work, how could I expect my fellowship to achieve results just by relying on myself? Only then did I see that the reason my fellowship had been fruitless had not been because of the brother's rejection of truth, but rather because I did not have a God-fearing heart, because I'd taken a wrong position, and I had not only made God hate me, but had also disgusted other people.

I thank God for arranging this real situation to enable me to have some knowledge of myself, and to understand that if people are not changed in disposition, they cannot help but reveal their satanic corrupt dispositions even if they think they have good intentions and their actions appear to be right. It is at these times that people should reflect and try to know themselves. From now on, I wish to focus on achieving a change in my life disposition, to know myself concerning my nature and essence, to no longer take a superficial view of issues and not to overlook knowing my own corrupt nature because I have good intentions. I will seek to know myself in all things, so that I can achieve a change in my disposition soon and bring comfort to God's heart.

39. Using God's Word as a Mirror

By Wu Xia, Shandong Province

After I accepted God's work of the last days, I came to understand through reading God's words that, if one wants to achieve a changed disposition and enter onto the right track of salvation in one's belief in God, then one first has to learn the lesson of self-

knowledge. Only by accepting the judgment and chastisement of God's words, by knowing oneself from within God's words, and by achieving an understanding of one's own various satanic dispositions and corrupt essence, can one hate oneself and forsake one's flesh, and no longer do anything rebellious against God or that defies God. Only when one truly knows the truth of one's own corruption can one sincerely thirst for the truth, pursue the truth, and take God's words into one's real life to experience and practice. Only in this way can one gradually enter into the truth and achieve a changed disposition, and that is why self-knowledge is so important. Consequently, while reading the word of God, I made sure to cross-check myself against the word by which God exposes man. Whatever happened to me, I could recognize my deficiencies and inadequacies. I felt that I was able to understand myself. Yet, it was through a revelation from God that I was able to see that I did not truly understand myself according to God's word.

One day, I went somewhere with my leader to withdraw some of the church's money. When the amount of money was confirmed and the receipt was written, I thought of several brothers and sisters in the church who had recently been arrested by the CCP police for spreading the gospel. The CCP government's cruel oppression of religious belief was now becoming more and more severe, their surveillance of the church was more rigorous, and they were making every attempt to try to seize the church's assets. So to be on the safe side, I suggested that all previous money receipts be destroyed. Unexpectedly, the leader said: "If we destroyed the receipts, then there would be no evidence. What if you happened to steal the money and spend it yourself?" I didn't know what to feel after hearing this, but it certainly felt like a big insult to my integrity; it was very difficult for me to swallow. I thought: "Only a Judas could do such a thing. What kind of person do you think I am? I have followed God all these years and am a good person. How could I do something like that? Besides, I have done the church's work for so many years and have never made a mistake with the church finances, so why would I steal the church's money? In what way do I resemble Judas?" The more I thought about it, the angrier I became. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that she looked down on me and wronged me. I was so hurt that it nearly brought me to tears.

In my pain, I suddenly remembered God's words, "The environment around us as well as the people, matters and objects, all are permitted by His throne" ("Chapter 6" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I then thought:

Why would God create an environment where this sister would say such a thing? What is God teaching me? While pondering this, my heart began to calm down. My mind started to question the painful reactions I just had toward the sister's comment: Was she wrong when she said "What if you happened to steal the money and spend it yourself?" God said that man is capable of forsaking justice and shunning God at any time and in any place. Not one person amongst corrupted mankind is truly trustworthy. Could I really be the exception to the rule? Besides, how much has my disposition changed? How much truth have I obtained? If I have not obtained truth nor changed much in disposition, why shouldn't I allow others to see me that way, and on what basis should I see myself as noble and pure? And why should I be so confident that I would never embezzle the church's money? God's words say: "... God reminds all people that no matter how mature your life is, how deep your experience is, how great your confidence is, and no matter where you were born and where you are going, your nature of betraying God can come out at any time and any place. What God wants to tell each and every person is this: Betrayal of God is human nature" (Introduction to The Words of Christ As He Walked in the Churches in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Man's nature brims with the nature of Satan, they're entirely self-centered, selfish, greedy, and extravagant" ("People Make Too Many Demands of God" in Records of Christ's Talks). Are these words really only exposing others and not myself? Betrayal of God is human nature, and everyone is greedy by nature—am I the exception? Was what the sister said inconsistent with the facts? When I usually read God's word, I seem to be able to consciously examine myself in the light of the revelations of God's words. However, when the sister, without being emotional, viewed me and handled the matter according to the revelations of God's words on the nature and essence of man, I became so angry. Didn't that reveal that I don't know myself according to God's word? Did this not signify that I don't have a true understanding of the nature of Satan within me? Not until then did I realize that my knowing myself by reading the word of God was nothing more than theoretical acknowledgment and spoken understanding. I was not basing my understanding of my nature and essence on the revelation of God's word. Therefore, this situation had to happen to me: In fellowship, I talk about knowing myself in a clear and wellargued way, and I nod my head and agree when faced with the word by which God exposes man's corrupt essence; but when faced with the facts, I would die before admitting to being the kind of person that God exposes. As I reflected, I realized that this also described my

past behaviors: So many times I've declared that I lack humanity and reason, but when other people said I lacked humanity and reason based on my corruption, I immediately denied it vehemently and stubbornly defended myself; so many times my lips have uttered that I performed my duty perfunctorily, yet when other people pointed this out, I always thought of every possible way to vindicate myself and to justify myself so as to be exonerated; so many times I've declared before others that my caliber is poor and that I am slow to understand things, and yet when my leader said my caliber was poor, that I lacked capability to work and that I was not worth training, I would feel like I'd fallen into a deep freeze, I would become so downhearted and negative that I couldn't cheer up and I would throw in the towel and slack off. It was fine for me to say anything about my own corruption, but when others said something about me, I couldn't accept it, to the point where I even revolted against it. All these behaviors made me realize that I was a hypocrite who didn't know myself and who didn't accept the truth, and that all the knowledge I thought I had of myself was just me following the trend and shouting slogans, it was all doctrine and was all just me fooling both myself and others. Since I had never been able to really dissect and understand my own nature and essence through the revelation of God's words, I had not yet truly entered into any understanding of myself, and my disposition had not changed.

At that time, I realized that although I had previously actively read God's words, and was able to check myself against the words of God which exposes man, I had only been content to acknowledge that I possessed the corruptions revealed by God's words, and I had no knowledge whatever about my nature or essence after being corrupted by Satan. By doing this, I had not truly accepted the judgment and chastisement of God's words and I was unable to achieve dispositional change. I also reflected on my self-righteous mindset and found it to be really shameful. Being exposed by God truly convinced me and allowed me to clearly see that I do not truly know myself. From now on, I wish to know my corrupt essence through the word by which God exposes man, courageously face the fact that I have been deeply corrupted by Satan, accept God's judgment and chastisement, and pruning and dealing, and pursue the truth hard, so that my disposition may soon be changed.

40. It Is So Important to Obey the Work of the Holy Spirit

By Xiaowei, Shanghai City

Some time ago, even though I always received some inspiration and benefit when a sister who performed duties with me shared the enlightenment she had attained while reading the word of God, I also always had the lingering sense that she was showing off. I would think to myself, "If I respond to her right now, won't I be pandering to her? In that sense, will I not then seem lesser than her?" As a result, I refused to bring up my own views in fellowship or comment on any of the thoughts that she shared. One time, my sister, having received some insights from reading a particular passage of God's words, felt that there was something wrong with our states and asked me if I would be willing to fellowship with her on that passage of God's words. As soon as she asked, all these thoughts and feelings of resentment floated to the surface: "You just want to testify about yourself, to have an audience to preach to. Why should I fellowship with you?" I even went so far as to skip out on a meeting so I wouldn't have to hear her. After a while, I felt a heavy weight in my heart, I knew something was wrong with my state, but I couldn't think of a good way to resolve my inner conflict. All I could do was to fully invest myself in my duties, read the word of God, and sing the hymns to distract myself from these negative feelings. However, whenever I had to face the current situation, the same corrupt disposition would rise in my heart—things were getting worse, not better—and I hadn't a clue how to break free from it.

A few days later, I had a confrontation with the sister during fellowship. The sister said: "Recently you've been very quiet during fellowship, something seems off with you." I felt those words like a punch in the gut, but to not lose face I denied that there was any problem. At the time it seemed to me that the sister had been too arrogant: She seemed to speak without any regard to my own dignity and I got the sense she was looking down on me. All of my old biases against this sister came welling back up from inside me. The more I struggled, the darker grew my spirit; I could not feel God. In my pain, I knelt before God and prayed that He enlighten me to my actual state. In the midst of prayer, the word of God came to me: "Those who see the work of the Holy Spirit as a game are frivolous!" ("Knowing the Three Stages of God's Work Is the Path to Knowing God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Afterward, I also came upon the following passage: "The Holy Spirit not only works in certain people who are used by God, but, furthermore, in the church. He could be

working in anyone. He may work in you during the present time, and you will experience this work. During the next period, He may work in someone else, in which case you must haste to follow; the more closely you follow the present light, the more your life can grow. No matter what manner of person someone is, if the Holy Spirit works in them, then you must follow. Take in their experiences through your own, and you will receive even higher things. In so doing you will progress more guickly. This is the path of perfection for man and the means by which life grows. The path to being made perfect is reached through your obedience to the work of the Holy Spirit. You do not know through what kind of person God will work to perfect you, nor through what person, occurrence, or thing He will allow you to gain or see things" ("Those Who Obey God With a True Heart Shall Surely Be Gained by God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Reading this passage, I realized with a start: All this time I've been resisting the work of the Holy Spirit! In these days, my sister has often received enlightenment from reading the word of God, she has some burden for her duty and the life entry of our brothers and sisters, and is happy to support and help others; clearly the Holy Spirit is working in her. I should be obedient to the work of the Holy Spirit and accept her help, but instead I have always had misgivings about her and have taken her for a show-off, thinking she only wanted to prove how much better she was than everyone else. I was unwilling to accept her fellowship on her understanding of God's words, and when she suggested to have fellowship with me I would not respond. I was full of resistance and prejudice against her and entirely took her as my enemy. How could I possibly be someone who loves and accepts the truth? On the surface, it looked as though this sister was just pointing out what my state was, but in reality it all came from God's orchestrations and arrangements. My deep dissatisfaction with my sister was, in fact, me pitting myself against God and rejecting, refusing, and resisting the work of the Holy Spirit. Thinking back now on why I was unwilling to listen to that sister's fellowship, wasn't it that I became jealous of her because the experiences and understanding she shared contained the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit while I was unsuccessful in my fellowship? Wasn't it that I was only willing to lord over others, but not willing to be outdone? I was unwilling to let go of myself and accept my sister's help so that I could protect my own fame and status and prove that I was no less than her. Instead, I rejected, hid from, and judged her fellowship. My nature is utterly arrogant and hardened, and I lack all humanity and sense. At this point, I

realized I hadn't truly been living in obedience to and fear of God, I did not love the truth and I was blind to the precious work of the Holy Spirit in my sister. Instead, I placed my own personal status and vanity ahead of anything else. I was clearly aware of the Holy Spirit's work but intentionally resisted it. How was the essence of my behavior any different from that of those Jewish Pharisees who were well aware that the Lord Jesus' work and words were the way of the truth, but because of protecting their own fame and status intentionally resisted and condemned God? Was I not just another frivolous person who, just as God said, sees the work of the Holy Spirit as a game? Looking back, I realized that the Holy Spirit was not just working in the sister, He was also trying to make up for my deficiencies through this sister's fellowship, to open my eyes and help me gain something from the process. What did I do in return? I was arrogant and conceited and refused God's grace at every moment, and therefore I had missed many opportunities to be perfected by God. I had missed out on much of God's enlightenment, illumination and truths. How foolish I'd been, how stupid!

At that moment, I felt even greater rancor and guilt for all that I'd done, so I prayed to God, "God, I have been blind, foolish, and arrogant, and in no way deserve the work You have carried out in me or to be saved by You. But You still lead me and enlighten me, allowing me to see my own absurdity and ignorance. Oh, God! I promise You, from now on, whichever of my sisters and brothers is fellowshiping, as long as they speak in line with God's word or with the truth, I will obey and accept, because this is the path toward growth in my life and a mark of Your blessing, and because by doing so I am not obedient to any one person, but rather to all the positive things that come from You. It is a chance to accept Your salvation. Should I disobey or rebel against You again, I ask that You judge and chastise me, so that I can turn to You before it is too late."

41. The Finest Gift God Has Given Me

By Yixin, Hebei Province

Before, I would frequently hear my brothers and sisters say, "Everything that God does is for the best; it is all what people need." I verbally acknowledged this and agreed with it, but I didn't have any true understanding and experience. Later, through an actual environment that God set up I finally realized that all God was doing to me was based on

my own needs, and that it was the finest gift that can be given.

I had a particularly strong desire for status in my heart. When fulfilling my duty in the church, I was always hoping that the leader would pay attention to me and that my brothers and sisters would think highly of me, but reality was never as I hoped it would be. Over several years' time, no matter who I worked with when fulfilling my duty, I had always been the assistant. No matter what was going on, the leaders would always discuss it with my partners and arrange for them to take care of things. It seemed that in the leaders' eyes, I was an insignificant, unimportant person. I felt it unfair and I thought: "I fulfill the same types of duties and I'm no worse than the others. Why am I always the assistant? Why am I always inferior to someone else?" I experienced quite a bit of the suffering because my wishes could never be satisfied, and I was constantly living in the midst of my misunderstanding of God. I could not escape from it. One day, the leader had my partner put together some documents, but didn't ask me to help. That hit a raw nerve for me. Although I knew that I shouldn't go after that type of worthless thing, I just couldn't let go of it, and I once again sank into pain. I thought: "Why does this type of situation always find me? Why isn't what God arranged ever what I want? What is God's will in this?" I really could not understand it.

Later, I saw the following words from God: "... but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials. In whichever aspects you are not purified, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God's arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die and give up your schemes and desires, and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, for anyone who does not have several years of refinement and who has not endured a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the bondage of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects you are still subject to Satan's bondage, and in whichever aspects you still have your own desires and your own demands, these are the aspects in which you should suffer. Only through suffering can people learn lessons, gain truth, and understand God's will" ("How to Satisfy God in the Midst of Trials" in Records of Christ's Talks). I felt a wave of warmth in my heart from God's words, as if God were guiding me face-to-face, telling me what His will was in doing things this way, and allowing me to understand His good intentions. With that enlightenment from God, I took a fresh look at the

environment He had created for me. I saw then that God knew me best; He was clear that my corruption from Satan was most severe in status, that I was most greatly constrained in this area. God couldn't bear to see me always living under Satan's domain and corrupted, oppressed, tortured, and trodden on by Satan. So, God targeted my nature, continuing to arrange environments to judge, chastise, try, and refine me. All of that was done to purify and transform the corrupt disposition within me, and to save me from the constraints and binds of status. God's love and salvation was contained within it. But for so many years, I had never understood God's good intentions. I wasn't willing to accept God's work of "divestment" on me. That is why I was always misunderstanding His heart and always felt that He was hard on me, suppressing me, and wouldn't allow me to really show myself. If I, as a person who saw status as life itself, had actually had my own way in every domain, my internal desires would have just grown and grown, and in the end I would definitely have been detested, rejected, and eliminated by God because my striving for fame and gains offended God's disposition. When that time came, I would have been utterly ruined for the sake of status. Only then did I understand the earnest intentions behind the work God had done on me for many years; only then did I see that the environments God had created for me were to save me. This is a love that cannot be expressed with words. My heart was moved by God's sincere love and my misunderstandings toward God disappeared from my heart. I became willing to accept God's chastisement and judgment, to be obedient within the environment that God had created for me, and to seek the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition.

It was only through this experience that I truly recognized that God creates environments to try and refine mankind, and there is both deep meaning and great love within this. The truth is that, for me, when those situations that were not in line with my conceptions were upon me, they were exactly what I needed in life. It was an essential means of God making me know and obey Him in order to save me. Just as a mother really understands her own children—which child needs what as they are growing up, what nutrition they need to be supplemented—a mother understands that well. Today, what God does in people's lives is the same. God possesses penetrating understanding of people. The environments God creates for people and everything He does in their lives are based on what they need. All of it is most beneficial for their lives and it is to allow them to gain the truth, to escape from Satan's influence of darkness, and to attain obedience to God. Only

when people can be obedient within the environments that God has created for them can they gain the truth and life. If people give free rein to their own temperament and preferences and have God satisfy them, then not only will they not gain anything at all, but they will disgust God, and in the end can only harm and ruin themselves. This is because behind the curtain of what people like is nothing but the control of a corrupt disposition that can only make people more and more depraved and rebellious. It is entirely at odds with God's requirements. It was at that time that I finally had some practical understanding of what God said: "... the path of today goes along with judgment and curse, but you should all know that what I have bestowed upon you, whether it be judgment or chastisement, they are all the best gifts I can give to you, and they are all things that you urgently need" ("You Are All So Base in Character!" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

I give thanks for God's enlightenment that has allowed me to gain some knowledge and understanding of God's work on man, and to see that the more I am unwilling to accept something, the more this is what I need to have in life entry, and the more I should accept it. I also realize that God's essence is good, and what God does for mankind is all love. It is all what is most beneficial for people's lives; it is the sustenance most needed in people's lives, and it is the finest gift given to man by God. From today forward, I am willing to put myself entirely in God's hands, to obey and accept all the work that God completes on me. I am willing to seek to know the truth, to gain the truth, and to achieve a change in disposition soon within the environment that God creates for me.

42. I Learned to Coordinate With Others

By Liu Heng, Jiangxi Province

In a recent vote, I was elected to be a church leader. In order to repay God's love, I made a resolution before God: No matter what I encounter, I will not abandon my responsibilities and betray God. I will coordinate with my brothers and sisters to perform my duty well and will be someone who pursues the truth.

Sister Wang and I were responsible for the church work, and when at first we had differing opinions about how to organize some church matters, I would consciously pray to God asking Him to protect my heart, and to make me able to relinquish myself and not to

argue with my sister. I would also often remind myself that I must work harmoniously with this sister. However, because I only paid attention to controlling my actions in order that I wouldn't have conflicts with her, and because I had not entered into truth, over time, I had more and more disagreements with her. One time I wanted to promote a sister to the duty of watering new believers, Sister Wang said the sister I'd chosen was no good. After I switched my candidate, she still said it was unsuitable. I immediately became upset. Later I never brought up the matter again. When she asked about it, I said in a rage: "Select whoever you want!" After this, in order to avoid conflict, regardless of what she said, if there was any dissent, I wouldn't say anything. Sometimes holding it in became unbearable, so I would hide somewhere and cry. Therefore, I always felt that I had been wronged. Another time, the upper-level leader handed a task over to me to deal with, and when it was all done, I felt quite pleased. I thought Sister Wang would praise me. Unexpectedly, she rained on my parade, saying: "This really is not the right way to do this." This really irritated me. I thought: "You didn't even have a look and you flat out reject it. You're really self-righteous!" We each held to our opinions and neither of us was willing to submit to the other. Finally, I wouldn't even listen to the communications of the word of God. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that she intentionally made things difficult for me. I had tolerated her again and again, yet she still treated me this way. The more I thought about it the more I felt wronged. As a result, I was completely left in darkness and had lost the work of the Holy Spirit. From that time on, I wasn't willing to work with her. I thought: "I dare not provoke this sister, but I can avoid her." Because I was unwilling to perform my duty with this sister, I used my small stature and incompetence as an excuse to write my resignation letter. Not long after, when I met my upper-level leader, I told her about my resignation. She then communicated to me the principles of taking responsibility and resigning as well as the great care and effort God has put into saving people. My stubborn heart would not yield, however, and I was determined to resign from my post.

The next morning after I got out of bed, my head was completely blank. Even when I prayed, I could not feel God, and I felt drowsy when I read God's words. I was afraid and panicked and thought it was certainly my conduct that had made God detest me. So, I began to examine myself. After I had thought about everything that had happened over the time I'd spent coordinating and performing my duty together with this sister, I was able to see that my disposition had made God detest me. The word of God was not present in my conduct

and I had no reverence toward God. I was simply not a person who accepted the truth. As a result, I had been tricked by Satan and I had given up on my responsibilities and betrayed God unawares. After becoming aware of this, I immediately prostrated myself before God and repented: "Oh Almighty God, I am wrong. I have believed in You, but I have not been willing to experience Your work. You arranged my environment and I have not been willing to accept it; I wanted to avoid Your chastisement and judgment. My conduct has really hurt You. Oh God, I thank You for exposing me in Your work and allowing me to understand more of my satanic disposition. Now I see that my stature is truly so small. I can't handle even the smallest setbacks. When any tiny thing I don't like happens, I want to betray You. I have discarded the oaths I have made to You. Oh God, I am willing to repent, put myself aside and coordinate in earnest together with the sister. Oh God, I am no longer willing to live under the control of Satan's influence or be constrained by my corrupt disposition. I have made up my mind to retract my resignation letter. I am no longer willing to live for my own face, this time I am willing to satisfy You!" After praying, I became tearful, and soon afterward I retracted my resignation letter and tore it to shreds on the spot. When we gathered that day, a few of us were reading the word of God together. God's word says: "Your reputation has been destroyed, your bearing is degrading, your way of speaking is lowly, your life is despicable, and even all of your humanity is lowly. You are narrow-minded toward people and you haggle over every little thing. You quarrel over your own reputation and status, even to the point that you're willing to descend into hell, into the lake of fire" ("You Are All So Base in Character!" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "People do not demand much of themselves, but they demand much of God. They ask Him to show them special kindness and to be patient and forbearing toward them, cherish them, provide for them, smile at them, and take care of them in many ways. They expect Him not to be strict with them at all or do anything that would upset them even slightly, and are only satisfied if He sweet-talks them every single day. Humans are so lacking in reason!" ("People Who Always Have Requirements for God Are the Least Reasonable" in Records of Christ's Talks). The word of God had completely exposed all my inner ugliness. Only then was I able to see that my satanic disposition was so severe. I had such an arrogant and conceited nature that I always felt I was better than other people. I didn't have the slightest amount of self-awareness; I didn't know myself inside and outside. Therefore, when I was coordinating with the sister, I always wanted to be in charge, and be

the leader. I was eager for the sister to follow me in everything and listen to me. I always wanted to be the head. When the sister's opinions failed to agree with my own, I didn't seek the truth to resolve the conflict and reach a common understanding with her. Rather, I would lose my temper and cop an attitude because I had lost face, and I would become biased against the sister, to the point that I would let my anger get in the way of my work. Furthermore, I never thought to take the initiative to improve our relationship or thought to change my attitude toward performing my duty. When we were working together, I would always put on airs. I didn't demand any change in myself, I disdained to speak heart-to-heart with the sister. I fixated on her faults, and I demanded that she change herself. I considered myself to be the master of truth and saw other people as corrupt. Throughout our work coordinating together, I did not know myself. When the sister had a bad attitude, or when there was a difference of opinion between us, I didn't reflect on or know myself, but instead I would lump all the blame on her. I believed that she was wrong, so I belittled her in my heart and discriminated against her to the point that I treated her just like an enemy. I saw my corrupt satanic dispositions—haughtiness and conceitedness, arrogance and cruelty and I saw that I conducted myself extremely pettily, and I saw my narrow-minded behavior, and I realized that I possessed not a shred of the humanity or reason a normal person should possess. I was truly unreasonable! God exalted me and gave me the opportunity to perform my duty, but I didn't think about coordinating harmoniously with the sister and doing our duties well to satisfy God. All day, I wouldn't engage in honest work, I would scheme against her, and would have jealous disputes with her. I only knew to bicker about my own grievances and incessantly fight over my own face and vanity. Did I have any conscience or reason? Was I a person who pursued the truth? God requires us to put His word into practice in our lives, yet I was divorced from it in the fulfilling of my duties; I didn't seek the truth at all, and I'd never accepted or obeyed my sister's suggestions which accorded with the truth in our work together performing our duty. Whenever anything occurred, I took the lead and made her submit to me and listen to me. Was I not on the path of the antichrist? Was I not heading for self-destruction by carrying on this way? Only then was I able to see that my conduct was all about the flesh and about selfish desires, and my nature was too selfish and deplorable. My many years of believing in God did not bring me anything real and there was not a shred of change in my disposition. I couldn't go on like this, and I became willing to seek the truth and transform myself.

Afterward, I read God's word saying: "If you people who coordinate to work in the churches do not learn from each other, and communicate, making up for each other's shortcomings, from where can you learn lessons? When you encounter anything, you should fellowship with each other, so that your life can benefit. ... You must achieve harmonious cooperation for the purpose of the work of God, for the benefit of the church, and for spurring the brothers and sisters onward. You coordinate with him and he coordinates with you, each amending the other, arriving at a better work outcome, so as to care for God's will. Only this is a true cooperation, and only such people have true entry. ... Each of you, as people who serve, must be able to defend the interests of the church in all things you do, rather than looking out for your own interests. It is unacceptable to go it alone, where you undermine him and he undermines you. People acting this way are not fit to serve God!" ("Serve as the Israelites Did" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). And it was said in a sermon: "There is no main role and deputy in serving in coordination. Everyone stands on an equal footing, and the principle is to achieve a consensus through fellowshiping about the truth. This requires people to obey one another. That is, whoever speaks correctly and speaks in conformity with the truth should be obeyed. The principle is to obey the truth. The truth is authority, and whoever can fellowship about something in line with the truth and see things accurately should be obeyed. No matter what people do or what duty they fulfill, obeying the truth is always the principle" ("The Meaning and Explanation of the Ten Principles of the Church Life Established by God's Family" in Work Arrangements). From the sermon and God's word, I saw the way to practice and enter into serving in coordination with each other. That is, being considerate of God's will and protecting the interests of God's family while coordinating and performing our duties together. Regardless of what people do or what work they are doing, it should all be done by taking submission to the truth and by communicating truth to reach a common understanding as the principles. You cannot be so arrogant and conceited as to maintain your own opinions and make others listen to you, and you cannot sell out the principles of the truth to protect your interpersonal relationships. Moreover you cannot just follow your own character to create independence, you must let go of yourself and take the initiative to deny yourself, learn from others, and make up for your own weaknesses in order to obtain a harmonious partnership. Only then can you have God's blessings and guidance in your duty, can you achieve better results in church work, and can your own life be

benefited. On the contrary, if you are arrogant while working together, if you don't seek after the principles of the truth but make a dictatorship to control others, or if you operate alone and do things by your own desire, then you will suffer God's loathing and cause losses for the church work. Yet I was arrogant and always wanted to have the final say. How did I not know that the work in God's family was not something that a single person could accomplish? All people have no truth and have far too many shortcomings. Acting unilaterally makes mistakes very likely to happen. Only through cooperative work can more work of the Holy Spirit be obtained to make up for our shortfalls and prevent mistakes. At the time, I couldn't help but feel guilt and self-blame for my satanic disposition that was exposed in my arrogance and selfishness, and in not having the slightest bit of consideration for God's will, as well as for only focusing on not losing face and acting on impulse to the point of displaying shocking and rude behavior. I believe that I was too blind and foolish, and I didn't understand the meaning of God's intent to arrange an environment for me to practice serving in coordination—even to the point that I didn't try to learn from my partner's strengths to compensate for my shortcomings while performing my duties, or to learn what I needed through working together. As a result, it caused losses for the work of the church and delayed my own growth in life. Today, were it not for God's pity and the enlightenment of God's word, I would have been unable to let go of myself and would still want others to listen to me. In the end, who knows what catastrophe I would cause? Coming to this realization, I made a resolution: I am willing to act according to the word of God, I am willing to work harmoniously with the sister for the work of the church and for my growth in life and I won't think about my own interests anymore.

Afterward, I opened up to my partner sister about how I had come to know myself, and she also opened up to me about how she had come to know herself. Through having a real heart-to-heart, the prejudices I had of her and the distance between us vanished, and we both became willing to enter together into the principles of serving in coordination with each other. After that, our duty coordinating with each other was much more harmonious. When we had differing opinions, we sought the truth and grasped God's will by praying to Him. When we saw each other's shortcomings, we were understanding and forgiving; we treated each other with love. Unwittingly, God's blessings fell upon us and the gospel work bore significantly more fruit than in the past. At this time I hated having lived by my corrupt disposition in the past, and that I hadn't learned practically the lessons in the environment

God had arranged for me; even more I hated that I did not pursue the truth and had owed God too much. I finally experienced the sweet taste of putting truth into practice, I had more faith to fulfill my duties and satisfy God, and my heart became full of gratitude to God. From now on I am willing to make efforts in even more aspects of the truth, to seek to enter into the reality of God's word, to act with principle, and to perform my duties properly and repay God's love.

43. The Only Way to Avoid Disaster

By Chaotuo, Hubei Province

After the May 12 Sichuan Earthquake, I became constantly fearful and worried that I might someday be struck by disaster. Particularly as I saw disasters becoming larger and larger, and earthquakes more and more frequent, my fear of impending disaster became even more pronounced. As a result, I spent entire days pondering what precautions I should take to protect myself should an earthquake hit.

One day, at lunch, the sister of my host family turned on the TV as usual, and the newscaster just happened to be talking about earthquake safety measures. In the event of an earthquake, you should quickly run outdoors into an open space to avoid being injured by a falling building. If you cannot evacuate in time, you should take cover under a bed, table or in a corner.... After hearing this, I felt as though I had found a life-saving solution, and quickly committed these precautionary measures to memory so I could save my own life in case an earthquake hit. I went back to my room after lunch and carefully looked around the house, inside and outside, looking for a place to hide in case an earthquake hit and I didn't have time to escape, but I was greatly disappointed with what I saw: There was a ton of junk under the bed, and no extra space to take cover. Looking outside the house, within hundreds of meters of where I stood all of the buildings were five or six stories high, and closely packed together. Even if I were to evacuate from my building I would still most likely be crushed to death. I couldn't help but think: "It seems as though fulfilling my duty here is too dangerous. I'll have to wait for the leader to come and switch me to a rural host family. That way, if an earthquake does occur, it will be easier to run out into an open space. But my current duty of compiling documents involves mainly staying indoor—even living in the countryside my life would still be at risk. I might as well tell the leader to transfer me to a gospel group. That way I will at least be outside all day, and it will be safer than staying inside. The only thing is, I don't know when the leader is coming. What would I do if there were an earthquake before that? I still need to prepare a shelter for the time being." I lived in fear every day this way, and was unable to focus on performing my duty.

Then one day, I read the following passage in "Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination": "When disaster comes, all who oppose Me will weep as they fall victim to famine and plague. Those who have committed all manner of wickedness, but who have followed Me for many years, will not escape paying for their sins; they too, will be plunged into disaster, the like of which has seldom been seen throughout millions of years, and they will live in a constant state of panic and fear. And those of My followers who have shown loyalty to Me will rejoice and applaud My might. They will experience ineffable contentment and live amid joy such as I have never before bestowed upon mankind." "In any case, I hope that you prepare a sufficiency of good deeds for your own destination. Then will I be satisfied; otherwise, none of you can escape the disaster that will befall you. The disaster originates with Me and is of course orchestrated by Me. If you cannot appear as good in My eyes, then you will not escape suffering the disaster" (The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words awakened me. Indeed, God is the Lord of creation. He rules and has charge over all things. The disasters are brought about by God and they are all grasped, arranged by His hands. People's lives are also ruled by Him and under His control, and He has final say over who suffers devastation in a disaster, and who is protected and preserved. This is all God's rule and arrangement. Who can escape from God's rule over their fate and outcome? Unbelievers do not know this, and think these are natural disasters. Thus they use human means and human efforts to save themselves when faced with disasters, thinking they can avoid the resulting devastation this way. And I, who was ignorant, believed in God but did not know God's work at all. I was thinking that all I needed to do was to follow precautionary measures explained on TV to protect myself, so that I could escape the suffering wrought by disasters and survive. Having the same perspective as unbelievers truly was absurd! Shouldn't I have known that if people do not perform their duties faithfully and fail to perform good deeds, they will not be seen in God's eyes as good? Regardless of how advanced their precautionary measures, or how perfect their self-rescue plans, in the end there is no one who can escape those disasters which God visits upon man. From my various reactions

to the threat of disaster, it was evident that I did not have any real faith in God. I had no real understanding of God's work in the last days or of His almightiness and sovereignty. I had no idea who God aims to destroy in disasters, or who God wishes to save, nor did I recognize that in disasters, only those who are faithful to God and have prepared a sufficiency of good deeds are those who are spared from a calamity. Therefore, when the threat of disaster loomed, instead of reflecting on whether or not I had prepared good deeds, was faithful to God, pursued the truth to be saved by God, I spent all my time contemplating ways to save myself. Lacking the truth is really pitiable!

During Noah's time, people were promiscuous and evil to a certain degree. They were extremely sinful, had all distanced themselves from God, and did not worship Him. When God decided to destroy the earth with the flood, because Noah feared God and kept far from evil, built the ark in accordance with God's will, expended everything upon God's request, and showed his utmost loyalty, he was seen by God as good. Therefore, when disaster arrived, only the eight people in his family received God's protection and survived. And I recalled what was discussed in a sermon: "If you don't prepare any good deeds, when disaster strikes, your heart will be in a panic all day long. Without good deeds, a man's heart feels no comfort, and he has no confidence or peace in his heart. Because he has not prepared good deeds, there is no real peace or joy in his heart. Evil-doers have a guilty conscience, and are evil at heart. The more evil deeds they do, the guiltier they feel and the more fearful they become. If you want to make your heart comforted and at peace when the great disaster comes, you need to do more good and prepare more good deeds now. Only then will you feel peace and comfort in your heart when disaster strikes" ("The Important Meaning Behind Preparing Good Deeds" in Sermons and Fellowship II). After reading this I understood that without gaining the truth, without doing good deeds, people will lack God's care and protection, and so they will be panicked when faced with a disaster. Only those who pursue the truth, are devoted to fulfilling their duty, do not muddle through, practice and enter in according to the principles of the truth in all things, and whose deeds are seen by God as good will gain God's protection and be preserved in a disaster, just like Noah. I thought about how I was constantly feeling uneasy and nervous, fearing my own death in a disaster. I realized, wasn't it because I had not done my duty faithfully and had not prepared any good deeds that I was so terrified of disaster falling? Thinking back on the times I was compiling documents, I saw that other brothers and sisters did more than me and I was really afraid that the leader wouldn't think much of me. So that I could get more done and the leader would think highly of me, I just did some cursory edits on them before handing them over to her. I wasn't as meticulous as I had been in the past; I was no longer giving thought to how to edit them to achieve testimony to God, so that my brothers and sisters could gain some benefit and edification from reading them. When I saw that the documents written by brothers and sisters weren't very coherent, I didn't give them earnest guidance and help. Instead, I just casually wrote some comments and that was it, not caring whether they understood them or would gain some edification from them. I hurriedly sent them back, and as a result they didn't know how to revise them, and then sent fewer and fewer documents. This seriously impacted the progress of this work. Even so, I did not reflect on my actions, nor did I try to identify and rectify the source of the problem, but blamed the leader, claiming that problems arose because she didn't place importance on this work. I was so unreasonable! I could see from this that I didn't have a true burden for the work of the church and I particularly was not fulfilling my duty with a heart of devotion to God. Instead, I did things for the sake of my own reputation and status. Not only was fulfilling my duty that way not preparing good deeds, but it was muddling through and trying to deceive God. It was doing evil. How could I presume to satisfy God with such actions, receive His praise and care, and thereby gain spiritual comfort? If I had continued on this path without pursuing the truth properly, and failed to be faithful to my duty without preparing adequate good deeds, I surely would have been unable to escape the wrath of God's punishment of the wicked, even though following those precautions set out by worldly people when disaster strikes.

Thank God for His guidance in opening my mind to allow me to understand that only by doing my duty properly and performing a sufficiency of good deeds may I gain deliverance from the suffering wrought by disasters and escape with my life. This is the one and only way. In the future, I wish to pursue the truth hard, be as faithful as possible in fulfilling my duties, and prepare ample good deeds to satisfy God.

44. Judging by Appearances Is Just Absurd

By Yifan, Henan Province

In the past, I often judged people by their appearances, holding charming, erudite and eloquent people in especially high regard. I believed such people were sensible, good at understanding others and generally good and kind. Only recently, as the reality revealed itself, have I come to correct this absurd way of thinking.

One night near dusk, as soon as I had returned to my host family, I saw a young man wearing a suit and leather shoes sitting in the room. He wore a finely wrought pair of spectacles, which accentuated his cultured and scholarly manner. My hostess was an elderly sister who informed me that the young man was her son and that he was currently working as an official in the municipal government of a large city. He dressed so smartly, was so cultured in how he spoke and comported himself, and was reputed to be a college graduate, and he had a decent job in the municipal government—because I had had to guit school early due to my family's poor financial situation, all this made me incredibly envious. It was truly the first time I had seen someone with such charm and scholarliness. I thought to myself: "Someone so cultured and of such high status and cultivation will certainly be a good person who is amiable, humane and rational." With that thought in mind, I began trying to discuss matters of faith with him, but his reaction was guite contrary to my expectations. He rose to his feet in a clamor and slammed his fist down on the table yelling, "Get out of here right now! If you don't leave this instant I'll call the police!" Having spoken, he immediately took out his cell phone and began dialing 110. I was utterly dumbfounded and didn't know what to do next. It was nearly 10 p.m., if I left now where would I go? Just then, the elderly sister quickly came forward and tried to talk her son down, saying, "It's already late, she can leave tomorrow." As soon as he saw that I would spend the night there, he became furious, literally pushing and shoving me out the door, and in the process yelling, "The CCP government is an atheist government that does not allow people to believe in God. How could I, a cadre of the government and beneficiary of public funds, allow a missionary to stay in my home? Get out of here now!" With that, he furiously picked up my bicycle and threw it right at me and then shoved me and my bike right out the door. The elderly sister went after me with the intent of taking me to another host family's house, but her son wouldn't allow it, pulling her back inside and locking the door. I heard her crying, "Where do you

expect a girl to go late at night all by herself?" "Let her go where she goes—with her God's protection she has nothing to fear, right?" He yelled in reply, tearing her back inside.

Staring blankly at the blinking stars of the night sky and the cars roaring by on the highway, I felt sad and heavy hearted: "If you don't want me living in your house then fine, but there's no reason to stop the elderly sister from taking me to another host family. How could you be so inhumane, so vicious! Even a beggar should not be treated in this way! I have no idea where another host family is and I'm stranded with no place to go in the dead of night. What am I supposed to do?" With these thoughts rattling through my head, tears came to my eyes. At that moment, the fine impression I had of the elderly sister's son's charm, knowledge and cultivation was thoroughly wiped away. Only then did I think of a sermon, "How could we call those who resist or persecute God truly good people? Ever since man was corrupted by Satan, he has become an expert in disguise and in covering himself with life philosophy. On the outside, he looks like a person, but when someone begins to testify to God, his demonic nature is revealed. Not many people realize this, so they are often blinded and fooled by the platitudes and niceties of others. God's words and work can best expose man. Those without the truth are merely hypocrites. Those who understand the truth will see clearly with regard to this issue. Those who do not understand the truth fail to see anything clearly and as a result their viewpoints are absurd" (The Fellowship From the Above). These words made me come to my senses. Indeed, the fellowship was exactly right: The corrupt are all good at pretending, and just because they seem cultivated and polite on the outside, that doesn't mean they are good in substance. Only those who love the truth and can accept the truth are good, kindhearted people. If someone seems nice on the outside, but they do not acknowledge God or accept the truths expressed by God—and are even capable of opposition, vexation, and hate—then they cannot be called someone who is good. I, however, used my own imagining and secular worldview to judge people. I always thought that those with knowledge, status and cultivation were invariably humane, rational and understanding of others. My viewpoint could not have been more absurd! Little did I know, on the outside some may look cultured and charming, but on the inside they are sick of the truth and hate the truth, and the moment someone mentions God or faith in God, an unrestrained fury surges forth from them as though they are enemies, and they even follow in the CCP's wake, defying God and persecuting God's chosen people. This government official that I met was a perfect example. On the surface,

he had charm, eloquence, and culture, but as soon as I brought up matters of faith, he completely lost it. He condemned, expelled and threatened people who believed in God, and he completely revealed his satanic nature that is hostile to God. In the face of these facts, I realized that I must not only assess people by what's on the outside; what's key is to look at their attitude toward God, and toward the truth. If they do not love the truth and accept the truth, then no matter how great their expertise or status, no matter how impressive they seem on the exterior, no matter how cultivated they are, they are still not truly good.

Through this experience, I see that I have not been judging people by their essence, but by their appearance; such outlook has been so absurd. This experience has also revealed that I have been following God for many years without having understood the truth; my outlook on things has not undergone a true transformation, and I don't know how to discern people, I don't understand things thoroughly and my stature is pitifully immature. In the future I will do my utmost to pursue the truth, learn to see people and things according to God's word, and correct all of my absurd viewpoints within and seek to become compatible with God.

45. Whatever God Says Is the Very Judgment of Man

By Xunqiu, Henan Province

I used to think that God judged and chastised man only when revealing man's inherent corruption or conveying harsh words determining someone's final destination, but those gentler words were not words of judgment and chastisement. It was only much later that an experience led me to realize that even God's gentle words are also His judgment and chastisement. I realized then that every word God utters is His judgment of man.

Recently, the elderly sister of my host family was upset because she and her daughter-in-law had butted heads. I had fellowship with her several times, but there was no shift in her state. Gradually I became impatient, thinking to myself, "I have fellowshiped with you quite a few times, but you haven't changed. You probably have no interest in the truth. I will never fellowship with you again." After that, I seldom asked her what kind of state she was in. One day, the sister working with me brought up that sister's state and suggested that we have more fellowship and pray with her. Hearing that, I didn't say anything aloud but I thought

to myself: "I've shared fellowship with her a number of times and it's all been fruitless. As I see it, having more fellowship with her is just a waste of time." I knew this revealed my arrogance, which was a disposition of Satan. I was giving her the cold shoulder and showing no love for her. However, I just couldn't change my state. When we prayed together, I still found it hard to let go of my prejudices against her, so much so that I sank into spiritual darkness and could not feel God with me. I also felt suffocated, as if something was blocking my heart and could not be cleared. Later, I brought my predicament in front of God and prayed, "God, I am aware of my arrogance and my inadequate humanity. I showed neither consideration nor sympathy for my sister; I don't want to live in this situation, but my heart simply cannot change. God, I beseech You to enlighten me, to have me understand the truth, and to know myself." As I offered that prayer, I vaguely recalled some words of God. I immediately opened the book of God's word and found the following statements: "Why is it said that the extent of your resolve to love God, and whether you have truly renounced the flesh, depends on whether you are prejudiced toward your brothers and sisters, and on whether, if you are, you can push such prejudices aside. Which is to say, when your relationship with your brothers and sisters is normal, then your conditions before God are also normal. When one of your brothers and sisters is weak, you will not loathe them, despise them, make fun of them, or give them the cold shoulder. If you are able to be of service to them, you will commune with them.... If you feel you are unable to provide to them, then you can pay them a visit. This doesn't have to be done by the church leader—it is the responsibility of every brother and sister to do this work. If you see that a brother or sister is in a bad state, you should pay them a visit. This is the responsibility of every one of you" ("The Work of the Holy Spirit and the Work of Satan" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words that "when your relationship with your brothers and sisters is normal, then your conditions before God are also normal" were clearly imprinted in my mind. I pondered these words of God while engaging in seeking. Through the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit, I felt this seemingly gentle statement actually embodied majesty and judgment, and it pierced my heart like a sword. God has always clearly told man that only on the basis of God's words can humankind establish normal relationships among brothers and sisters, and that if their relationships with brothers and sisters are normal, then their state before God can also be normal. But in my interactions with others, all that I manifested was the corrupt

disposition of Satan: I disdained, rejected, and delimited others. I didn't have a normal relationship with people, so how could I enjoy a normal relationship with God? It is the immutable responsibility of people who believe in God to visit and serve brothers and sisters who are passive and weak. It is the life to be lived by people who seek to love God, and it is the conduct of brothers and sisters who love one another. On the contrary, when I saw that sister was in a bad state, although I appeared to have fellowship with her, I was not helping and supporting her with a heart of love for God, wanting to satisfy God, or a heart of love for brothers and sisters. Nor did I understand her suffering of living in darkness or patiently fellowship with her to help her out of the negative state. Instead, I made demands on her based on my own personal standards, thinking that she should just turn around as soon as I had shared fellowship with her. When her state still hadn't changed after fellowship, I looked down my nose at her, even deciding that she had no intention of pursuing the truth. Therefore, I disdained her and shunned her. This is very far from what God requires. I thought I had fellowship with her just a few times and then lost patience. I delimited and disdained her. My humanity is so lacking! At that time, I lost a normal relationship with God and became subject to His chastisement, my soul suffering in spiritual darkness. Wasn't it the case that God's righteous disposition had come upon me? The more I thought about it, the more strongly I felt that this very statement was God's face-to-face judgment of me. I was ashamed and deeply remorseful. But at the same time, my reverence for God welled up spontaneously and I realized that God's disposition is one of majesty and wrath. I realized that God is indeed supremely righteous and holy. God can examine my each and every thought, so there is no escape from His judgment.

The judgment of God's words helped me let go of my prejudice against the elderly sister and I became willing to fellowship with her with a spirit of love and kindness. Unexpectedly, though, before I fellowshiped with her again, she had received enlightenment from God and come out from her negative state by praying and listening to hymns of God's word. At that moment, I felt happy that her state had improved. I was grateful that God had led us, as He always will. I also felt ashamed of the satanic disposition I had exhibited.

Thanks be to God! Despite the fact that I had shown only rebellion and corruption throughout this experience, I learned that God's gentle words are also His judgment and chastisement of man, and that every word from Him is the truth, and they are all things that corrupt human beings lack within their humanity. This is why every word from God is

judgment of man. I will never again regard God's words through my own notions and imaginings. I will accept God's judgment and chastisement of words with absolute submission, so that I can gain and understand more truths and transform my disposition as soon as possible.

46. What Is Truly Accepting Truth?

By Xiaohe, Henan Province

In the past, every time I read the words revealed by God about how people do not accept truth, I didn't believe those words applied to me. I enjoyed reading the word of God and communicating God's word, and I was able to accept and acknowledge everything God has said as truth—regardless of how much it pricked my heart or didn't conform with my notions. Moreover, regardless of how many imperfections my brothers and sisters would point out, I could acknowledge it and accept it. I didn't seek to justify myself, so I thought that I was a person who surely accepted truth. In my opinion, only people who were especially arrogant and conceited, and who had notions about the word of God and wouldn't acknowledge that God's word is truth were the ones who wouldn't accept truth. It wasn't until one day when I was listening to a sermon that I understood what it meant to truly accept truth.

It says: "It is not enough to merely acknowledge that God's word is truth, you must accept it in your heart and allow truth to have place in your heart and wield power. It must take root in your heart and become your life. This is the true expression of accepting truth. ... What does it mean to accept it in your heart? Your heart acknowledges that this sentence is truth and has a true recognition of the substance of truth. Then you must completely accept this truth and allow it to have place in your heart and take root. Afterward, you must live by this truth and see things according to this truth. This is accepting truth. ... Eating and drinking the word of God and acknowledging that God's word is truth does not mean that a person has accepted truth. Rather, it is thoroughly recognizing the substance of truth in God's word and accepting it in your heart. It is completely denying your notions of God and former misconceptions you have held on to in order to accept God's word as truth and live according to God's word. This is truly accepting truth" ("How to Know Christ Is the Truth, the Way, and

the Life" in Sermons and Fellowship II). When I heard this, my heart was instantly shocked. So, that was not what I thought about accepting truth. I carefully listened to it one more time, and through pondering and seeking, I finally understood what it meant to accept truth. Being able to verbally acknowledge that God's word is truth or being able to accept imperfections mentioned by other people was not truly accepting truth as I had thought. Truly accepting truth means not only acknowledging that God's word is truth, it is also recognizing the substance of truth and completely accepting it into your heart. It is completely denying your former notions, misconceptions, and satanic poisons. It is allowing truth to take root in your heart and being able to live by truth. This is truly accepting truth.

After understanding all this, I began to reflect on myself: I believe I am a person who accepts truth, but have I accepted God's word in my heart? Does truth wield power in my heart? Have I denied the past notions and misconceptions that have existed in my heart? After carefully examining myself, I realized that I had not done any of this. For example: God has revealed that there is no true love among mankind, and they all take advantage of each other. Even though I verbally acknowledged the truth that God has spoken, I always felt in my heart that my wife and parents and I all had true love for each other. My lips acknowledged the truth that God does not perfect mankind based on their status, but rather according to whether or not they have truth; but my heart still held on to my personal viewpoints that in the church the higher my status was the more God would perfect me, the higher my status was the more brothers and sisters would look up to me. I thought God would also take delight in me. Therefore, I always worried about my status, and I always felt uneasy about it. I acknowledged with my mouth that God said hardships and refinements, and dealing and pruning are the love of God, are most beneficial for man's life. But when God used people, matters, and things that were not in line with my notions to refine me and deal with me, I was not willing to accept it, even to the point that I would complain against God. I knew that God's requirement for us to be honest people is very important for our salvation, but I didn't emphasize putting it into practice or entering into it. I would frequently lie and deceive for my own dignity. After which, I wasn't willing to open up to others. When encountering trouble that would require physical hardship while performing my duties, I would start to work perfunctorily and couldn't devote myself to my duties. With my words, I accepted God's requirement to seek His will in all things and to act according to His desires, but in real life when I faced matters, I did things as I preferred and according to my own will.

I completely put God at the back of my mind. Also, when other people pointed out my imperfections, saying I was too arrogant and that I would do things my own way, my heart wouldn't accept their criticisms. But I was afraid that others would say that I didn't accept truth, so I would not and acknowledge it against my will. But in reality, I did not take their criticisms into consideration. There were many things about me that showed that I had not accepted truth. But when I saw that God's word reveals that all people do not accept truth, I did not accept God's word as truth, and did not try to understand the substance of God's word and examine myself. Instead, I imagined that I was an exception to God's word and considered myself to be someone who had accepted truth. Was this not the most obvious expression of not accepting truth? At that time, I saw that I was someone who did not accept truth in any way. My so-called displays of accepting truth were completely external actions, and they were a false disguise that did not even scratch the surface of accepting truth, but I lacked self-awareness. I truly did not know myself! After becoming aware of this, I couldn't help but feel afraid. I knew that I had believed in God all these years yet had lived outside of His words. I had truly not accepted God's judgment and chastisement. I was simply an unbeliever, without God in my heart and without truth in life. If I continued to believe like this, God's word would never be able to become my life. I would never be able to break away from Satan's influence and be saved and made perfect. On the contrary, I would be condemned by God, and would fall into God's punishment.

Praise God for guiding me and allowing me to understand what it means to truly accept truth; for allowing me to see that my past knowledge and practices were too absurd and were not in line with God's will. I make up my mind to start anew and concentrate my efforts on accepting the substance of truth into my heart in all that God has said and implementing it into my practice. I want to be able to live by God's word, to become a person who truly accepts truth.

47. The Real Meaning of Rebellion Against God

By Zhang Jun, Liaoning Province

In the past, I believed that "rebellion against God" meant selling God out, leaving the church and returning to the world, or walking away from one's duty; I thought these behaviors

constituted rebellion, and that those who rebelled against God were all sifted out by God, and their faith in God would ultimately end in failure. So I would remind myself that I must absolutely not rebel against God as they did. Therefore, I was cautious in all my endeavors and submissively accepted all the tasks the church arranged for me to do. I neither gave up my duty when I was dealt with and pruned because I didn't perform my duty properly, nor did I withdraw from the church when trials befell, regardless of the hardship. Thus, I believed that I had never once rebelled against God, and I felt that I had already acquired some stature and was confident that I would follow God until the end and ultimately achieve salvation.

One day during my spiritual devotions, I read this in a sermon: "There are several different types of rebellion against God. One type of rebellion is going against His will or going against His words; another type is having an arrogant disposition, lacking God in one's heart, and thus boasting and being hostile to God—this is the rebellion of being disobedient and defiant to God; there is one more type, which is the rebellion of selling God out and forsaking God. ... The rebellious behaviors that we frequently speak of in fellowship refer primarily to the first two types. This is because those who sell God out and forsake God are not within the scope of God's salvation, and the rebellious behaviors mentioned in the words of God are also of the first two types; the third type of rebellion is not mentioned. We must not misunderstand or misinterpret God's intentions, believing that only selling God out or forsaking Him can be called rebelling against God, as if going against His word or having an arrogant disposition weren't a type of rebellion. This is such a one-sided understanding! So what really is rebellion? How should people recognize it? According to the word of God, all things that are incompatible with God are His enemies, and all things that go against God's words are rebelling against His words. Rebelling against God's words is rebelling against God, and acting as His enemy is also rebelling against Him. It seems that these two principles are not in line with human notions, but this is precisely the essence of the problem" (The Fellowship From the Above). After reading this sermon, I realized that rebelling against God was not simply expressions of selling Him out, leaving the church, or walking away from one's duty. Rather, behaviors that went against God's will or His word, or that opposed Him were also forms of rebellion. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I began to reflect on my actions: God's will is for us to pursue the truth and seek dispositional change as we fulfill our duties. I, however, focus only on work and on seeking to gain high status within the church

when fulfilling my duty, so that my brothers and sisters would look to me and hold me in high esteem. God requires us to perform our duties loyally, to be considerate to His will when facing difficulties, and to forsake the flesh and practice the truth. However, I always seek the way that requires the least effort in fulfilling my duty, and I am slipshod and I try to deceive God. I only care for my flesh in times of hardship, complaining of my difficulties and slacking off in my duty, so much so that I even think of giving up entirely as a means of escaping my duty. God demands absolute loyalty and complete devotion. In the presence of God, however, my thoughts are often occupied by my family and relatives, and I am often in two minds about my belief in God and about performing my duty, and I am unable to give my heart to God. God asks that we learn lessons in all things and enter into the reality of His word so that we can be made perfect by Him. When I encounter unfavorable people or matters, however, I don't believe that all things are orchestrated by God and I find myself living constantly in a state of deliberation about rights and wrongs, and am unable to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. God asks that we enter into the reality of truth and accept God's salvation in various environments and trials of hardship that He arranges for us. When I encounter dealing, pruning, setback, or failure, I misunderstand and blame God. I feel despair about the road ahead, and I lose my faith in God, to the point where I even consider leaving the church. God asks that we be serious, practical, and effective in our spiritual lives. I, however, often follow rules and procedures, and engage in religious rituals, which has resulted in me often being without a normal relationship with God and feeling numb within my spirit. God asks that we exalt and testify to Him in our work and lead people before Him. However, I exalt and testify to myself in all things, make others look to me and listen to me, thus bringing them before me. God asks that we use the truth to resolve our problems. Yet I boast and speak of letters and doctrines before other people, I limit others with rules, I solve problems according to the ways of man, and I suppress others with my status. God asks that we work strictly in accordance with the work arrangements. I, however, often follow my own desires as I perform my duty, doing things the way I deem fit without any principles. And so on. Aren't all of these behaviors states of rebellion against God in which I've gone against God's will and His word, and been in opposition to God?

At that moment, I couldn't help but feel a sense of dread. It turns out that I had unknowingly been rebelling against God in all my actions while mistakenly believing that, as long as I didn't sell out the church, or leave the church, or abandon my duty, then I was not

rebelling against God. What's more, I had shamelessly thought that my stature exempted me from being capable of rebelling against God. I really had no knowledge of myself, and my understanding of God's word was so one-sided and shallow! The words of God say, "God has revealed the nature and substance of humanity, but humans understand that their way of doing things and their way of speaking are flawed and defective; therefore, it is a strenuous task for people to put truth into practice. People think that their mistakes are merely momentary manifestations that are revealed carelessly rather than being revelations of their nature" ("Understanding Nature and Putting Truth Into Practice" in Records of Christ's Talks). "Man's nature is their life, it is a principle that they rely on in order to survive, and they are unable to change it. Just like the nature of betrayal—if you can do something to betray a relative or friend, this proves that it is part of your life and the nature that you were born with. This is something nobody can deny" ("A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (1)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Yes, am I not precisely the type of person who makes a fuss over outward practices, who only settles for not being overly rebellious or defiant in my belief in God and in my duty, who settles for not behaving in obviously sinful ways, but who does not know my own nature? The behavior of corrupt mankind is dominated by their nature, and so our disposition is an expression of our nature. Since man's nature is rebellious, then we will inevitably rebel against God; this is not something we can control through being cautious. Yet, I was not concerned with knowing my own nature according to what is revealed in God's words. Instead, I was satisfied merely with keeping to some outward practices and following some rules, which resulted in me not having put any effort into pursuing the truth through all my years of following God, and not having had my life disposition changed at all. Instead, I have constantly lived by my rebellious nature, and if I continue to do so, given a conducive environment, or when I encounter persecution and tribulation or a situation that endangers my own life, I will inevitably be dominated by my nature, and will sell the church out or leave the church. And wouldn't I then have completely lost my chance to attain salvation? This is a dangerous path indeed!

Thank God for His enlightenment that has remedied my erroneous understanding concerning rebellion against God. His enlightenment has enabled me to understand that forsaking and violating His word are forms of rebellion, and it has shown me that I am always at risk of rebelling against God, and even more so am always in danger of betraying God

and abandoning Him. From this day forth, I wish to put effort into God's word and contemplate more the reality of His word, so as to truly understand the essence of the truth and to enter and practice in strict accordance with the criteria of the truth. I am resolved to uphold God's utterances in all circumstances and to truly resolve the problem of my rebellion.

48. The True Face of a So-called Good Person

By Kemu, Henan Province

In my own mind, I've always thought of myself as possessing good humanity. I've thought this because my neighbors often complimented me in front of my parents for being sensible and showing concern for our family, saying I was the apple of my parents' eyes. After getting married, my in-laws praised me in front of the neighbors for being kind and filial to them. In my work unit, my leader praised me for being honest and competent. And since accepting God's work of the last days, I've been obedient with whatever the church asks me to do. I never contradict the leader even if I'm rebuked for not doing a good job, and I often help brothers and sisters who are in need. As such, I believe myself to be a reasonable, compassionate, and kindhearted person with humanity. I've never thought of myself in terms of the words in which God reveals that man lacks humanity or has poor humanity. When having fellowship on God's words with brothers and sisters, even though I know I need to be aware of my own nature, and that only by really knowing myself and clearly seeing the truth, the ugly face of my corruption by Satan can I truly develop hatred for myself. Only then can I pursue the truth, put God's words into practice and experience them, and then gradually achieve a change in disposition and be saved by God. But I still maintain my own views. I feel it's true that I've been corrupted by Satan, but even if I'm not someone with the best humanity, I'm also not the worst; my humanity is still a bit better than others' by comparison. In other words, regardless of what God's word says or what brothers and sisters say, I am not willing to disassociate myself from the idea of being a person of good humanity.

One day, as I was reading the word of God, a passage caught my attention. God says, "Some people are inherently good; they are able to practice truth. Some people's humanity is weaker, thus it is hard for them to practice truth; this means they will face some suffering.

Would you say that he who does not practice truth has ever sought the truth in his actions? He absolutely has not sought it. His own thinking arises: 'This way is good, it is to my advantage.' In the end, he acts based on his own ideas. He does not seek the truth because there is something wrong with his heart, his heart is not right. He does not seek, does not examine, nor does he pray before God; he just stubbornly acts according to his own wishes. This type of person simply holds no fondness for the truth. ... Those without love for the truth will neither seek it in the moment, nor will they examine themselves afterward. They never scrutinize whether the things they do are right or wrong in the end, thus they always violate principles, violate the truth. ... A person who has a heart is only able to make a mistake once when undertaking a course of action, twice at the very most—once or twice, not three or four times, this is normal sense. If they are able to commit the same mistake three or four times, this proves that they harbor no love for the truth, nor do they seek the truth. This kind of person is definitely not a humane individual" ("Practicing Truth and Resolving Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). After reading this passage of God's words, I had a sudden revelation. As it turns out, being someone who is praised by others doesn't prove that a person possesses good humanity. Good or bad humanity is closely linked with how people treat the truth. A person of truly good humanity seeks the truth and practices the truth in everything, and examines and knows himself afterward. I have always considered myself to have good humanity, so am I someone who seeks and practices the truth in everything? Thinking back, I did not pray to God or seek the truth with regard to many things I encountered. I did not examine or understand myself afterward. Even though I had revealed my corrupt disposition, I did not resolve my issues by seeking the truth, instead continuing to commit the same mistake repeatedly. Sometimes even if I understood a little of the truth, I didn't seem to want to practice it. I recall many examples of this vividly. When there was some estrangement with the brothers and sisters I performed my duty with, I was aware that it would directly affect work effectiveness if the problem was not resolved, but because of my pride and vanity, I refused to let go of my ego and have open communication with them. Instead, I bit the bullet and continued working, resulting in very ineffective work. When I sometimes saw brothers and sisters reveal a certain aspect of their corrupt disposition, I didn't try to have fellowship on the truth with them to help them know themselves, but instead judged them behind their backs. I didn't repent or seek to change even after being dealt with a few times, but instead persisted in my old ways. I did not strive for the best outcomes in

doing my duty, but instead always dealt with things in sloppy, lazy and slippery ways, always trying to deceive God to maintain my own name and status. I didn't think much about it or have a guilty conscience. I didn't seek or investigate when encountering issues in my duty, but just did as I wanted. Even if it brought losses to the church, I did not feel like I was indebted to God, nor did I feel ashamed by my evil deeds. Even when God warned me through His words and dealt with and pruned me through my brothers and sisters, I still didn't seek the truth to resolve this problem, committing the same transgressions upward of three or four times. Do these actions not prove that I don't love the truth or practice the truth, and that I lack humanity as disclosed by God's words? God's words say: "How can there be goodness in those who do not love the truth? How can there be righteousness in those who only love the flesh? Are not righteousness and goodness all in reference to the truth? Are they not reserved for those who wholeheartedly love God? Those who do not love the truth and who are but putrid corpses—do not all these people harbor evil? Those unable to live the truth—are they not all enemies of the truth? And what about you?" ("Only the Perfected Can Live a Meaningful Life" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Regardless, I haven't sought to know myself based on God's words, but continued to wear the laurel of "good humanity" on my head. How shameless I've been!

At that time, my heart was filled with self-recrimination, and full of gratitude to God. I could not help but pour myself out before God: "God, now I know that I am not a person with good humanity. Through the enlightenment of Your words, I have come to understand that a person with true humanity is one who loves the truth, is someone who listens to God's words and seeks to obey God, is someone who is willing to practice the truth and pursue a love of God. I also realize that my understanding of myself is not based on the truth of God's words, but is based on my own imagination and notions as well as my worldly views. It's totally absurd. If I continue to believe this way, I'll never achieve a change in disposition or be saved. God, thank You for Your enlightenment and guidance. From now on, I don't want to measure myself according to Satan's views or my own imagination. I want to know myself based on Your words, do my utmost to pursue the truth, accept Your words as my life, and seek to become a person with truth and humanity to comfort Your heart."

49. This Is Putting Truth Into Practice

By Fan Xing, Henan Province

Some time ago when a sister and I performed our duties together, I developed some bias against her which I always kept in my heart and didn't openly communicate with her. When we went our separate ways, I still had not entered into the truth of a harmonious collaboration. Later, the church arranged for me to work with Sister Wang and I established a resolution before God: From now on, I will not walk the path of failure. I've learned my lesson, so this time I will certainly have more open communication with this sister and achieve a harmonious collaboration.

Every time there was a conflict or a gulf between us as we performed our duties together, I would take the initiative to have fellowship with the sister and speak from my heart, and I would ask her what I was performing improperly. She would then point out that I was arrogant and conceited and that I would always reject her viewpoints in our communications and fellowship. She said that sometimes when I would point out her state I unfairly labeled her, that I would always take unilateral action, and that during gatherings I always selected and read God's word according to my own wishes. I nodded in agreement to all these things the sister pointed out about me. I thought: "Since you say I am arrogant, I will speak with more humility from now on and pay particular attention to speaking wisely and tactfully. If I discover any problems you have, then I will downplay them when I mention them. If you don't recognize them, then I won't talk about them anymore. During gatherings, I will read whatever words of God you say you would like to, and I will listen to everything you say. Won't this resolve every issue?" After that, I began to put this into practice. Before speaking, I would think about how I could avoid negating her idea. When our viewpoints were not aligned, I would defer to her viewpoint and carry out her idea. When I saw something that she was doing wrong, I wouldn't clearly point it out to her. But after a period of time of behaving this way, I realized that my ideology of "forsake the flesh and put the truth into practice" had not changed our relationship at all. Rather, it reinforced my biases against her. In seeing these results, I felt upset. I thought: "I have already tried my best to put the truth into practice, so why isn't it working? This sister is not easy to get along with, she is completely unreasonable." Therefore, I was trapped in refinement and my heart became extremely pained.

One day our leader visited to gain an understanding of our work and asked how our states had been over that period of time. I then shared fellowship on my state. After listening, the leader said: "This method of yours is not putting the truth into practice. You are impure inside. You are doing this for your own purposes and are not acting in accordance with truth." Following this, we read two passages of God's words: "On the outside, it seems as if you are putting truth into practice, but in reality, the nature of your actions does not show that you are putting truth into practice. There are many people who, once they have certain outward behaviors, believe 'Am I not fulfilling my duties? Did I not forsake my family and job? Am I not putting the truth into practice by fulfilling my duties?' But God doesn't recognize that you are putting the truth into practice. All those whose actions are tainted by personal motives and aims are not practicing the truth. Strictly speaking, this kind of behavior will probably be condemned by God; it will not be praised or remembered by Him. Dissecting this further, you are doing evil and your behavior is in opposition to God. From the outside, these things you are doing seem to conform to the truth: You are not interrupting or disturbing anything and you haven't done real damage or violated any truth. It appears to be logical and reasonable, yet the essence of your actions pertains to doing evil and resisting God. Therefore you should determine whether there has been a change in your disposition and whether you are putting the truth into practice by looking at the intentions behind your actions in light of God's words. It is not determined by human words or opinions. Rather, it depends on God saying whether or not you are conforming to His will, whether or not your actions possess the reality of the truth, and whether or not they meet His requirements and standards. Only measuring yourself against God's requirements is accurate" ("What You Should Know About Transforming Your Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). "Human ideas usually look good and right to people, and they appear as though they would not violate the truth very much. People feel that doing things in such a manner would be putting truth into practice; they feel that doing things that way would be submitting to God. Actually, they are not truly seeking God or praying to God about it; they are not striving to do it well, in accordance with God's requirements, in order to satisfy His will. They do not possess this true state; they do not have such a desire. This is the greatest mistake people make in their practices. You believe in God, but you do not keep God in your heart. How is this not

a sin? Are you not deceiving yourself? What sort of effects can you reap if you keep believing that way? Moreover, how can the significance of belief be manifested?" ("Seeking God's Will Is for the Sake of Practicing the Truth" in Records of Christ's Talks). I fathomed God's words and compared my so-called state of "putting the truth into practice" with them. My heart lit up. All along, my motive in wanting to coordinate harmoniously with my sister was not at all to satisfy God, but to protect my own pride and vanity. I was afraid the leader would say my humanity was flawed, that I didn't pursue the truth, and that I didn't work well with anyone. In addition, I wanted to use it as a means to ease my relationship with that sister and break free from the embarrassment and pain produced by the conflict. I thought it would redeem my image in others' eyes and allow them to see that I had changed. It is clear that my so-called "putting the truth into practice" was for my own purposes. It was all done in front of others and was not established on the basis of understanding the truth and living out the reality of the truth in order to satisfy God. I didn't despise myself and sincerely forsake the flesh because I wasn't aware of my arrogant and conceited nature. In reflecting on my work with that sister, when I spoke I was unwittingly standing on a pedestal belittling my sister. When handling matters, I loved to be in charge; I did things my own way, and never consulted other people on their ideas. When she pointed out the problems that I had, I didn't seek out the corresponding truth to analyze and understand the essence of my nature. More so, I didn't seek out how I should practice in accordance with the truth and in accordance with God's will. I only changed a few superficial actions, thinking that since behaving that way wasn't right, if in the future I just swapped those behaviors for ones that everyone saw as good and in line with human notions, that would be putting the truth into practice. I saw that everything I was practicing was just the truth based on my own notions. It had nothing to do with God's word, and God would not acknowledge that I was putting the truth into practice. In God's eyes, all my actions were running contrary to the truth and resisting God.

After becoming aware of this, when I revealed my corrupt disposition or I became aware that my state was not right, I would look for relevant words of God that addressed my issue, and dissect my own corrupt essence and recognize the root of the corruption from God's words. In gatherings I would proactively open up and seek from brothers and sisters who understood the truth and had experience which aspects of the truth I should put into practice to resolve the issue. With this kind of practice and entering in, my speech and actions were

subdued, and I knew what my place was. I had respect for people and submitted with patience. Forsaking the flesh became much less difficult and I could also have heart-to-heart communication with the sister I was partnered with. Our association had become much more harmonious than in the past.

Through these experiences, I have come to understand that putting the truth into practice should be based on God's word and should be established on the principles of truth. Any practice that departs from God's words is just external action, that is, putting the truth of their own notions into practice. Even if I did things well and correctly, it still wouldn't be considered putting the truth into practice, and it particularly wouldn't bring changes to my life disposition. From now on, regardless of what I am doing, I want to fully put God's word into practice so that my conduct will be in accordance with truth and with God's will, and that I can obtain God's satisfaction.

50. A True Partnership

By Fang Li, Henan Province

Not long ago, Brother Liu and I were both elected to be church leaders. When we did church work, we could discuss anything. Sometimes I even asked him to point out my shortcomings, and we never argued about anything that cropped up, so I thought we had achieved a harmonious partnership. But in the light of the facts and compared with the truth of God's word, I discovered that a true harmonious partnership was not what I had thought.

At a gathering one day, Brother Liu mentioned some shortcomings of mine before our leader, saying I was arrogant, unaccepting of the truth, controlling, overbearing.... Hearing him say that made me very angry, and I thought: "Yesterday I asked you if you had any opinions of me, you said no, but now, in front of our leader, you say so much! You're so dishonest!" But then I thought: I believed my partner and I had a harmonious relationship in our duty. But it turns out that he had so many views about me, which proved that there were still misunderstandings between us and that our relationship was anything but harmonious—what on earth was going on? Faced with the facts, I couldn't help but go over in my mind the times when we had performed our duty together: At gatherings, even though my brother also fellowshiped, he spoke little, because I spoke for most of the meeting and barely gave

him a chance to talk; at work we did indeed discuss whatever problems came up, but when our opinions differed, I always stuck to my own views and denied his, and the issues were resolved when my brother simply stopped arguing; from the outside there were no disputes or conflicts between us, but inside it always felt like there was a barrier between us, something that stopped us from being completely open. That was when I realized that, while the two of us appeared to be partners working together, I was actually giving all the orders, and our relationship was not that of mutually complementary and equal partners, but was actually that of the leader and the led. Only in the light of the facts did I finally realize that what I had thought of as a "harmonious partnership" was just a relationship in which we didn't argue or quarrel on the surface. But from my brother's reaction, I saw that this was not a genuinely harmonious partnership. So, what is a truly harmonious partnership? I looked for answers to my question in God's word, and came upon these words, "You on the upper levels hear a lot of truth, and understand a lot about service. If you people who coordinate to work in the churches do not learn from each other, and communicate, making up for each other's shortcomings, from where can you learn lessons? When you encounter anything, you should fellowship with each other, so that your life can benefit. And you should carefully fellowship about things of any sort before making decisions. Only by doing so are you being responsible to the church and not being perfunctory. After you visit all the churches, you should get together and fellowship about all the issues you discover and problems encountered in work, and communicate the enlightenment and illumination that you have received—this is an indispensable practice of service. You must achieve harmonious cooperation for the purpose of the work of God, for the benefit of the church, and for spurring the brothers and sisters onward. You coordinate with him and he coordinates with you, each amending the other, arriving at a better work outcome, so as to care for God's will. Only this is a true cooperation, and only such people have true entry" ("Serve As the Israelites Did" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After carefully weighing God's words, I suddenly understood. A true partnership means that the partners place the work of the church first; for the interests of the church and the life of the brothers and sisters, they can fellowship with each other and complement each other's weaknesses, so that better results can be achieved in their work; they hold no misunderstandings or prejudices against each other and maintain no difference in status. Comparing my own behavior to that, I felt shame

and regret beyond words. Looking back on my behavior, I realized I never considered the church's interest, I always put myself first, I worked from a position of status and meticulously tended my own reputation and position, and I feared only that others would think little of me or look down upon me, and my fellowship with my brothers and sisters was not complementary or conducted from a place of equality, so it never achieved the purpose of common, mutually supportive entry into God's word. While on the surface my partner and I appeared to be discussing how to do our work, in my heart I didn't accept his ideas, and in the end I went with my own ideas rather than considering what would be best for the work of the church; even though sometimes I asked him to point out my shortcomings, I still only went through the formalities, and when he did point out my shortcomings, I was simply unable to accept them, but instead I always argued, made justifications, and pleaded for myself, which put constraints on him and made him too afraid to speak to me openly and unwilling to bring up my shortcomings again, which led to misunderstandings between us and cost us the ability to complete the church's work with one will. That was when I realized that my partnership in service had none of the substance of harmonious partnership, or in even more serious terms, I was engaging in despotism and dictatorship. Working like that is no different than how the CCP, the king of devils, maintains its grip on power! The CCP puts despotism into practice, insisting on final authority in all things and afraid to listen to the voice of the masses or govern through political views different from its own. And I, with the little status I have today, want to be in charge of the limited territory I control. Am I acting in any way different to the way the CCP maintains its grip on power? Thinking of all this, I suddenly felt afraid. Seeing how much danger I was in, I knew that if I didn't change, my end would be the same as the CCP's—punished by God.

After realizing all of this, I no longer held any views against Brother Liu. Instead, I was grateful to God for helping me know myself in such circumstances and for showing me the danger I was in. Afterward, when I was partnered with my brothers and sisters, I learned to lower myself, have the heart to care for God's will and be responsible in my work, and listen more to the opinions of others, and after some time, I realized that this type of practice not only gave me a more complete and thorough understanding of the truth, it also brought me closer to my brothers and sisters and allowed us to share more openly. And with these kinds of fruits to show, I finally understood how good it can be doing partner service according to the path required by God!

I thank God for His enlightenment and guidance, which not only helped me know my corrupt disposition, but also made me understand what a harmonious partnership truly is. From this day on, I wish to cast off my satanic corrupt disposition within the judgment and chastisement of God's words, truly enter into the truth of partnership in service, and finally become one who serves God and who conforms to God's will.

51. It's Not Easy Being an Honest Person

By Zixin, Hubei Province

After accepting Almighty God's end-time work, through reading God's words and listening to sermons, I came to understand the importance of pursuing being an honest person in one's belief, and that only by becoming an honest person can someone gain God's salvation. Thus I began practicing to be an honest person in real life. After a period of time, I found that I gained some entry into this. For example: While praying or conversing with someone, I would be able to speak the truth and from the heart; I could also take fulfilling my duty seriously, and when I revealed corruption I could open myself up to other people. Because of this, I thought being an honest person was quite easy to practice, and not at all as difficult as it was made out to be by God's words: "Many people would rather be condemned to hell than speak and act honestly" ("Three Admonitions" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). It was not until later that I was able to appreciate through several experiences that it really is not easy for us, corrupt human beings, to be honest people. God's words really are absolutely true and completely unexaggerated.

When I was compiling a document one day, I found that a sister from the church was better than me at compiling documents. I then thought: "I must handle the documents she compiles strictly, in case the leaders see that she is better than me and they promote her, putting my own position at risk." After this thought surfaced, I felt accused by my conscience. After examining and dissecting this I recognized that it was a manifestation of struggling for fame and gain and being jealous of true talent, so I prayed to God and forsook myself immediately. In a gathering, I had originally wanted to openly declare my corruption, but then I thought: "If I share fellowship on my own evil intentions, how would the sister I was partnered with and my host family sister see me? Would they say my heart is too malicious

and my nature is too wicked? Forget it, I'd better not say it. It was just a thought, and it's not like I had really done that anyway." And just like that, I merely casually mentioned how I was very nervous that I would be replaced when I saw someone else compile documents well—I hid away my true dark side. After that the sense of blame in my heart magnified. I hence vowed before God that this would only happen once, and that the next time I would definitely put being an honest person into practice.

A few days later while chatting with my partner and my host family sister, I heard the host family sister talk about how great two sisters who used to live at her house were (I also knew them), but she never said a word about how good I was. I felt very unhappy. In order to make her think highly of me, I then listed the flaws of those two sisters one by one to show her that they were not as good as me. After saying this, I realized that what I had said was inappropriate, and that my intent and purpose was to put others down to raise myself up. But I was too embarrassed to open up, so I said to the host family sister: "When I heard you praise those two sisters, I felt you have quite a few idols in your heart, so I had to damage their image so you will no longer look up to them." As soon as the words had left my mouth, the sister I was partnered with said: "This depends on whether you had any ulterior motives. If so, that's really sinister. If not, then it can only be said to have been a revelation of corruption." Hearing her say this, I became terribly afraid that they would develop a bad impression of me, so I quickly tried explaining myself: "I didn't have any ulterior motives. It's just that I didn't communicate it the right way...." After this specious reasoning, I became extremely upset and felt particularly accused internally when I prayed: "You are too cunning. You speak in roundabout ways, make up lies, and cover up the truth, always hiding and tucking away your evil intentions and arrogant ambitions. Isn't this deceiving God?" Even so, I, so hardened, still did not repent and only begged for God to forgive me.

The next day, I suddenly got a high fever, and every joint in my body ached. I initially thought I had caught a cold overnight and that I would get better if I just took some medicine. But who knew—taking medicine was no help, and two days later I couldn't even get out of bed. What's more, my tongue swelled up and became harder, and my throat also swelled in pain, hurting so much that I couldn't even speak. Swallowing was hard enough on its own, let alone eating. In the face of this sudden illness, I grew afraid, and prayed to God in my heart over and over. At that moment, I realized that this illness was not happening by accident, and so I came before God to reflect on all the things I'd said and done during this

period. As I reflected, I understood that there had been several instances in which I'd spoken evasively and had concealed my own despicable motives. I had known perfectly well that I had been speaking nothing but lies and had cheated my sisters, and I had felt a sense of reproach, and yet I still had not had the courage to tell the truth. Little did I realize that my cunning ways had already become second nature, and I could no longer help it. For the sake of my own reputation and status, my vanity and prestige, I had brazenly tried to cheat God and cheat my sisters again and again. I had not volunteered to be open about my corruption and had not sought the truth to resolve my problems; if I'd carried on that way, wouldn't I have been the one who would've suffered loss in the end? God scrutinizes the innermost heart of man, and no matter how I tried to conceal myself, I couldn't cover up my despicable ugliness. Once I had come to some understanding of myself, I knelt before God and prayed: "O God! Only now do I see how corrupt I am. Being controlled by my deceitful nature, I find it so hard to say even one honest word. O God! I ask that You guide me to open up and lay bare my faults, and to be an honest person before You." Under God's guidance, I finally mustered up my courage and told my sisters the truth about the whole thing, from beginning to end. Only then did my heart feel a little peaceful and at ease.

It was only through this experience that I deeply understood God's words that "Many would rather be condemned to hell than speak and act honestly" are indeed true. After being corrupted by Satan, lying, cheating, and engaging in trickery became human nature and became deeply entrenched in mankind's hearts. On top of that, people really treasure reputation, status, and all sorts of benefits; those who are constrained by these things find it very difficult to speak honestly. So for people, being an honest person is harder than climbing up to the sky. I used to think that being an honest person was easy. That was because what I opened up about were just inconsequential corruptions I revealed that everyone frequently shared in fellowship. They had nothing to do with the deepest things in my soul, so no one would look down on me for talking about those things. That kind of practice was under the precondition that they were superficial actions and would not touch upon my personal interests. If it impacted my vital interests, my status and my face, then my nature would reveal itself and I could no longer maintain my disguise. With the truth before me, I began to deeply appreciate that it really is not easy being an honest person. Especially for someone like me who considers reputation and status to be so important, if I don't put aside all considerations of face, if God's chastisement and judgment do not accompany me, I will be absolutely incapable of the reality of the truth of being an honest person in practice. From now on, I will conscientiously pursue the truth, accept all of God's words, and understand my own deceitful nature even more deeply. I will put aside my own face and status and be a truly honest person; I will live out a true human likeness to repay God's love.

52. Understanding on Putting the Truth Into Practice

By Hengxin, Hunan Province

Not too long ago, after listening to some sermons, I started to understand that only those who practice the truth can obtain the truth and ultimately become ones who possess the truth and humanity thus attaining God's approval. From then on, I made a conscious effort to forsake my flesh and practice the truth in my daily life. Some time later, I happily discovered that I could practice some truths. For example, in the past, after I revealed corruption, I was afraid to show my dark side to others. Now I was consciously open with my brothers and sisters, dissecting my corrupt disposition. Before, when I was pruned and dealt with, I would always make excuses and shirk responsibility. Now I made a conscious effort to deny myself instead of trying to justify my bad behavior. In the past, when I experienced friction with the brothers and sisters that I was partnered with, I was narrow-minded, petty and prone to sulking. Now when I encountered those situations I would forsake my flesh and consciously exercise tolerance and patience with others. Every time I thought of my "results" in practicing the truth, I would feel extremely happy. I thought that my ability to practice some truths meant that I was a genuine practitioner of the truth. And so, in this way I unknowingly came to live in a state of complacency and self-admiration.

One day, I came upon the following words of God: "Some people say: 'I feel that I am able to put some truths into practice now, it's not that I can't put any truth into practice. In some environments, I can do things in accordance with truth, which means I count as a person who puts truth into practice, and I count as a person who has the truth.' Actually, in contrast with the states of the past, or in contrast with when you first believed in God, there is a little transformation. In the past, you didn't understand anything, and you didn't know what the truth was or what a corrupt disposition was. Now you know some things and you are able to have some good

practices, but this is only a small part of the transformation; it is not truly a transformation of your disposition, because you are unable to carry out advanced and deep truths that involve your nature. In contrast to your past, you indeed have some transformation, but this transformation is only a small transformation of your humanity; when compared with the highest state of truth, you are way off the mark. This is to say that you have not hit the mark when putting truth into practice" ("Understanding Nature and Putting Truth Into Practice" in Records of Christ's Talks). After reading these words, I could not help but be stunned. All I have accomplished were just a few good behaviors? I'm still far from genuinely practicing the truth? Well then, what does it mean to genuinely practice the truth? I began to look for truths related to this question. Later, I read a sermon that says: "Those who willingly practice the truth can afford the price and are willing to accept the hardships involved. Obviously, their hearts are filled with happiness and enjoyment. Those willing to practice the truth will never just go through the motions, because they are not just doing it for show, but because they possess the conscience and reason of a normal humanity, and are performing their duty as God's creatures. To them, practicing the truth is fundamental to being human, and it is a quality one with normal humanity should possess" (The Fellowship From the Above). After reading this, I finally understood: Genuine practitioners of the truth can practice the truth because they understand the purpose of doing so. They know that practicing the truth is both the foundation and the reality of being a person, and it is a quality that humans should have. Therefore, they don't do it for show; they see it as their duty. They are willing to endure hardships and pay the price; they are devoid of personal intentions and desires. But how did I practice the truth? After revealing my corrupt dispositions, I may have been forthright and laid them bare to my brothers and sisters, but in my heart I was thinking, "See how I practice the truth! I'm able to lay open my own corrupt dispositions to you. That makes me better than you guys, huh?" When I was pruned and dealt with, I may not have made excuses out loud, but inside I was saying, "See? I no longer make excuses. I've improved so much. I probably qualify as someone who is willing to accept the truth now, huh?" When I had friction with the brothers and sisters I partnered with, I may have consciously tried to restrain myself and avoid any outbursts, but in my heart I was thinking, "See? I'm not like I was before, petty and narrow-minded. I've changed, huh?" ... When I thought of my mindset when I practiced the truth, I finally admitted that I wasn't really practicing the truth. I was full of my own motives

and desires. I was doing it for show. I wanted other people to admire me and compliment me, leaving them a good impression. I had not been practicing the truth because I understood its significance or because I was willing to satisfy God, but instead I did it simply to satisfy myself and to show off to others. I had been tricking and cheating God, and the essence of my actions was a betrayal of the truth. My so-called "practicing of the truth" was just following the rules. It was just an exercise of self-restraint relying on willpower, and just keeping certain bad behaviors in check. It was only a false appearance. I was still quite far from meeting the standards required of a truth practitioner. However, not only did I shamelessly think that I was a practitioner of the truth, I even became self-congratulatory as a result. My behavior was truly beyond the pale!

Thank God for His enlightenment and guidance. Thank Him for showing me that I was not a true practitioner of the truth and that my implementation of the truth did not meet God's standards, and for allowing me to find the correct path to practicing the truth. From this day forward, I'm willing to examine my own intentions and make demands of myself according to the standards of practicing the truth. I will rid myself of impurities and become a genuine practitioner of the truth.

53. The True Reason for Ineffective Work

By Xinyi, Shaanxi Province

Some time ago, when I went to the church for gatherings I would often hear leaders and co-workers say that some brothers and sisters, after attending fellowship with me, became negative, weak, and lacked motivation to continue in their seeking. Others felt it too challenging to believe in God and misunderstood God. Some said that their condition was fine before they met with me, but after they saw me, they felt tremendously pressured and uncomfortable. ... Hearing this, my heart sank, and I felt terribly wronged—every time I came to have fellowship with them I would stay for a number of days, and, in order to resolve their problems, I would comb through all sorts of chapters and cite countless passages of the word of God, talking until my mouth was dry, and all the while thinking that my efforts were yielding good results. I never imagined that things would turn out like this. Why had this happened? I held this question in my thoughts as I prayed to God, "Oh God, I am surely at

fault for the outcome, but I don't know where I went wrong. I ask for Your guidance, so that I may become more aware of my faults. I am willing to wait to receive Your enlightenment."

After finishing my prayer, I began to reflect back upon fellowship with my brothers and sisters: When I saw that they didn't understand God's will or they had notions about work arrangements, I would dissect their arrogant nature and share fellowship on the consequences of arrogance, saying that it would inevitably be met with punishment. If I saw that problems were arising in the church's election process, I would talk about how failing to select someone suitable would hold the church's work back and ruin the lives of our brothers and sisters. In this way, God would come to detest us and we would be eliminated. When I saw brothers and sisters slacking off in their duties, I would raise some people who had been expelled as examples. I would tell them that they were being deceptive, this constituted a betrayal of God, and if they didn't repent they would have the same outcome as people who had failed. When some brothers and sisters were unwilling to go out and share the gospel because of the CCP government's mad arrests and persecution of Christians, I told them they were disobeying and resisting God. ... Scene after scene like this clearly flashed through my mind. Oh God! How was that using the truth to resolve their problems? I was using pure intimidation! Under God's guidance, I thought of a passage of a sermon, "Service in line with the will of God requires that in all things and with regard to all issues we should exalt God, testify to God, commune God's will, commune God's requests, and allow others to act in accordance with God's word. We should not make people act in accordance with the principles, rules and sayings of man. Your communion should enable people to come before God and obey His will, act according to God's word and, ultimately, come to know God and obey Him" (The Fellowship From the Above). At this moment, I experienced a sudden revelation. God's commission for those who work as leaders is to exalt and bear witness to Him, and to be able to point out the states of brothers and sisters and the essence of their problems. Then, they should share clear fellowship on God's requests and His will for mankind so that brothers and sisters are able to practice according to God's words and ultimately achieve understanding of and obedience to God. But when I was trying to resolve issues for my brothers and sisters, I relentlessly dissected their nature and the way in which they acted, and brought up the potential consequences of their actions to intimidate them, trying to force them to know themselves. I rarely talked about God's will or God's views or hopes in a matter. I also rarely used the truth to share fellowship on my brothers' and sisters'

conditions. This led to them being unable to realize God's will, having no real understanding of themselves and being even less capable of seeing the earnest intention of God's salvation and His love for mankind. As a result, they lived in passive states. It was only at this point that I realized I had been acting out of blind adherence to my own desires. I had been resisting God! Leading my sisters and brothers in this way, not only was I unable to aid them in understanding and obeying God, but I was actually causing them to misunderstand and have more and more conflict with God. In this way, they grew further and further apart from God and committed more and more transgressions. Not only was it extremely damaging to the work of the church, but it hindered my brothers' and sisters' entry into life. It was then that I realized that what is most key in supporting my brothers and sisters is to help them understand God's will through reading and fellowshiping about the word of God, understand the earnest intention of God's salvation, come to know the root of their problems and the essence of their corruption and, in so doing, learn to hate themselves, act according to God's requests and, ultimately, come to know and obey God. This is the true meaning of service in accord with God's will and only this kind of service is considerate of God's will.

I offered thanks to God for showing me the real reason why my duty had been ineffective. From then on, I began consciously seeking out the relevant truths based on my brothers' and sisters' states, trying to grasp what the essence of their problems was, and then sharing fellowship on God's will and His requests for mankind based on His words. I talked about why God would have us act in the way He requested, what His earnest intentions were for us, what kind of effect He expected to have, and how we could work with God to be in accordance with His will. After communing in this way, I saw God's blessings: My brothers and sisters began to understand God's will and witness God's salvation. They came to understand that the price God has paid for man is beyond comprehension. They started to have some understanding of their rebellious nature, became willing to pursue the truth, and felt motivated to fulfill their duties.

Through my practical experiences, I have come to have a deep sensation of the very real nature of God's love. When I worked according to my own will, resisting God in my service to Him, God quickly revealed my shortcomings and deficiencies, and corrected the errors in my work. Otherwise, I truly do not know where my actions would have led my brothers and sisters or how much harm I would have brought to them. I come before God and offer up a prayer of gratitude: "Almighty God, thank You for Your real and true work,

which allowed me to see Your wondrous actions and the salvation which You bestowed upon me. From now on, I vow to double down on the truth and work harder to understand Your requests, so as to seek and grasp Your will and work according to Your desire in all things, performing service in accordance with Your will."

54. The Secrets Hidden Behind My Pursuit

By Li Li, Shandong Province

Not long ago, I was elected as a mid-level leader by my brothers and sisters. At one gathering with my co-workers, I thought to myself: "I must do well. If I perform poorly, how will my leaders and co-workers see me?" So, whenever we were discussing something, as long as I had just a little understanding of the subject, I would try to be the first to say something. However, when I had no understanding of the topic at hand and was unable to say anything, I found myself becoming anxious. Over a few days of meetings, I felt very tired and particularly anxious, as though I was in some combat arena. I later thought over what I had revealed in these gatherings and came to the conclusion that it was brought about only by my own vanity. I didn't try to reflect or understand myself more deeply. Then on another occasion, the leaders notified me of a gathering; I felt particularly excited when I learned that the upper-level leaders would convene the meeting, and I thought: "Does having me attend this gathering mean that they want to cultivate me? If I do well and leave a good impression then maybe I'll be promoted, and when my own responsibility is increased, then not only will my co-workers admire me, but my brothers and sisters will also look up to me." So at the meeting, I was extremely careful with my fellowship and my words for fear that anything I said that was out of place would leave a poor impression on my leaders. This is how those several days of gatherings finally came to a close. Those days were incredibly exhausting for me because I had been so on edge, but I still felt very pleased with myself. I felt my performance was not bad, and that the future would hold a lot of promise. From that point onward, my pursuit really gained a lot of momentum.

One day, I read the following passage from a sermon: "When people tried to get to know themselves in the past, they only paid attention to what transgressions they had committed or what corruptions they had revealed, but neglected to dissect their every word

and action to see which were Satan's corrupt dispositions, which were the poisons of the great red dragon, which were mankind's imaginings and conceptions, and which were falsehoods and deviations. Besides these things, people must also dissect their own attitudes and internal states, to grasp the things hidden deep in their hearts, and come before God to see through these things using the truth. Only then can a person know the reality of their own corruption and see the problem of their corrupt essence. Just because a person has not committed major transgressions does not mean there are no problems deep in their heart. Some hidden malice, dispositions and problems in a person's nature are even more difficult to resolve. Small illnesses can't kill people; only major illnesses take lives" (The Fellowship From the Above). After reading this passage, I understood that knowing myself was not just knowing the corruption I had already revealed, but it was also looking deep into my heart and mind; it was the only way to quickly get a grasp of my own state and be able to have true understanding of my corrupt disposition. At that time, I couldn't help but think of my conditions from the two previous gatherings, and inwardly I thought: What kind of nature were the things I revealed being dominated by?

Under God's guidance, I read His words: "[S]ome people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to meet together and speak; they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and surrounding them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value their images. Let us analyze their natures from these behaviors: What sort of nature do people with such behaviors possess? If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is a classic image of Satan. The aspects of their natures that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their natures" ("How to Know Man's Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). I tried and tried to fathom every one of God's words, and compared my own thoughts, words and deeds with them—only then did I have a bit of an awakening. I was particularly anxious and constrained at the gatherings, constantly thinking of being good in fellowship so that my brothers and sisters would think well of me, and I became nervous when I couldn't share fellowship, worried about how others would see me. Wasn't the reason for all of this to have others pay attention to me or attach value to me? When the leaders thought highly of me, I thought my own future was full of promise, and felt smug and full of enthusiasm. Wasn't all of that to obtain higher status and more power, and to satisfy my own ambitions and desires to pursue fame and status? I saw that my own nature is too arrogant and haughty, that I always want to stand higher, to govern others, to have a place in people's hearts. The road I was taking was no different from Paul's. Paul did not pursue the truth, he always pursued fame and status and sought to have others see him highly, look up to him, and he ended up bringing people in front of him and becoming an antichrist. Wasn't I just the same? I hadn't been thinking of how to perform my duty to satisfy God. Instead, I sought fame and status in order to fulfill my ambition and desire of standing out from the crowd. Wasn't this exactly how the archangel revealed its arrogant disposition?

Thinking back on it now, I was dominated by my arrogant nature and did so many things that resisted God: I bustled around performing my duty and was desperate to show myself off so that I could gain a higher status and the admiration of my brothers and sisters. When I opened myself up to them, I never really analyzed the corruptions hidden deep inside, rather I talked about some of my external acts to covertly exalt myself and bear witness to myself so that others would see that I was able to know myself. When I read the word of God, it wasn't to raise my understanding or to gain the truth, but to show off to my brothers and sisters, to resolve others' problems and have everyone see that I understood the truth. Thinking of all this, I cringed: I had not been performing my duty to satisfy God. I had been completely engaged with my own affairs, resisting God, and the path I was taking was that of an antichrist. If it weren't for God enlightening me to realize my own arrogant nature today, to see the ambition and the impurity behind my enthusiastic pursuit and that I was on the wrong path, then I would have continued living according to my arrogant nature. In the end, I would have brought people in front of me, and I would have done evil things that resist and betray God, and thus be subject to God's punishment.

I thank God for His timely enlightenment and guidance. This experience has made me realize that, in my experience not only should I focus on recognizing my own expressions and transgressions, but even more importantly, I should compare them to the truth and analyze the things hidden deep inside to gain a better understanding of my own nature and essence, and to achieve a change in disposition. From now on, I will dissect myself by gaining a grasp on my own heart and mind as well as my internal condition. I will know my

own corrupt essence, seek to change my disposition, and will soon get on the right track to be saved by God.

55. Experiencing God's Special Love

By Jiayi, Anhui Province

My nature is arrogant; no matter what I'm doing, I always use ingenuity and originality to show my brilliance and therefore when I carry out the church work, I frequently violate the work arrangements and do things my own way. Especially when selecting and using people, I would never consider it carefully according to the principles of the truth, and I wouldn't earnestly probe to understand all the circumstances of the person I wanted to select. The result of this was that I ended up choosing some deceitful people and those who only spoke of letters and doctrines to take upon themselves important responsibilities in the church. This created a big loss for the church work as well as for the lives of my brothers and sisters. So I was removed from duty.

When I obtained word that I was to be replaced, I was stupefied. How could something like this happen to me? After a period of time, the church did not give me any duties. Then I thought: It looks like my problem is quite serious. It is likely that I will be expelled. Some people had been expelled in the past because they had always performed their duties perfunctorily and cheated God and greatly interrupted and disturbed the church work. And some others had become antichrists and were expelled because they often exalted themselves, testified of themselves, and competed with God for His chosen people. Would I not even more so be expelled today because I have worked perfunctorily and recklessly, exalted myself, testified of myself, and greatly interrupted and disturbed the church work? In seeing this disaster I had created, I trembled with fear. My heart incessantly said: "I'm finished. This time I am completely finished. I have resisted God and offended God's disposition. God would certainly not save me. Even though God has said He is doing everything He can to save mankind, it applies to those who are slightly corrupt and those who have committed small transgressions. An arrogant and conceited person such as myself who is blind to God and has committed all kinds of transgressions certainly will suffer God's punishment. Even if I strive to pursue the truth and make a fresh start, God will not forgive me, because my actions have caused God to lose hope in me and have grieved Him too much." Unwittingly, I sank into pain and despair.

In my extreme pain, I thought a lot. But even more I wished that God would give me another chance to fulfill a duty. But every time this idea came into my mind, the words "grievous sin" would negate and smother out any gleam of hope in my heart. Pain and selfblame tormented me and caused me so much pain that I didn't want to live. I nearly fell apart. Just at this moment, I read God's word saying, "God does not like cowards; He likes people with determination. Even if you have revealed a great deal of corruption, even if you've taken many winding roads, or even if along the way you've had many transgressions or have resisted God—or there are some people who hold in their hearts some blasphemy against God or blame Him, have conflict with Him-God doesn't look at this. God only looks at whether or not a person will someday be able to change. ... It is that God's will to save mankind is sincere. He gives people opportunities to repent and opportunities to change, and during this process, He understands people and has a profound knowledge of their weaknesses and the extent of their corruption. He knows that they will stumble. ... He understands every person's difficulties, weaknesses, as well as their needs. Even more, He understands which difficulties each person will encounter in the process of entering into a change in disposition, and what kinds of weaknesses and failures will occur. This is something that God understands most. That is why it is said God sees into the depths of people's hearts. No matter how weak you are, as long as you do not forsake the name of God, as long as you do not leave God or this way, you will always have an opportunity to achieve a change in disposition. And if we have the opportunity to achieve a change in disposition then we have hope for our survival. If we have hope for our survival, we have hope of being saved by God" ("What a Change in Disposition Is and the Path to a Change in Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). I also listened to these words from a sermon, "God is doing all He can to save mankind. Especially for the transgressors, people think that they are beyond saving, but God is not willing to give up on them and still wants to save them. Some people have serious transgressions. God said to them, 'You just need to return to the devotion you had before and pursue the truth. I still want to save you.' Regardless of what transgressions you have, as long as you have the will to never leave God and the desire to seek salvation, then God will not give up on you" ("How to Know Christ Is the Truth, the Way, and the Life" in Sermons and Fellowship II). These words moved my heart. I burst into tears and sobbed. I didn't realize how many times the "impossible" had unexpectedly turned for the better. God said that He still wants to save me if I don't give up my pursuit, seek to repent, and don't leave or forsake Him regardless of my situation. I couldn't help but prostrate myself before God: "Oh God! I believe in You and follow You, and yet I rebel against You and defy You at every turn. I often go by my own wishes when performing my duty and I interrupt and disrupt the church work; but You have forborne with and forgiven me. You have given me another opportunity to repent and be saved. Oh God! Your love has eliminated my misunderstandings and suspicions of You. It has caused my dying heart to recover and rise out of extreme pain and despair. It has once again ignited my desire for life—to seek after salvation. Oh God! You are so great, so good! Your love for me is so deep, so big! I am speechless when faced with Your love, I am ashamed and unable to show my face. I feel deeply that I would be ashamed to live in Your presence. At this moment, I can only give You my deepest thanks and praise. I can only offer You the song of my heart: 'Your love makes me unable to choose anything else, I should not make You worry about me again. Unbearably corrupted, I enjoy Your love so much and so greatly. You are the only One in my heart worth loving, the only One worth being passionate about, worth looking up to and worth relying on. If I lost Your love, I would have only pain and would not be able to go on. Knowing You, my whole life is so happy and joyful. No matter what happens, I will always follow Your footsteps, right there with You, comforting You. Even in great pain, I will stand witness for You and satisfy You. Tribulations and refinement bring my heart closer to You. With You in my heart I am eternally happy."

At this moment, I began to calm down and examine my behavior. While I was performing church work, I was being dominated by my arrogant and conceited nature; I always thought myself better than everyone else, that there was no work in the church I couldn't do, and no work I couldn't do well. So, in performing my duty, I never relied on God nor looked up to Him. I didn't seek God's will and I didn't act on the work arrangements or the principles of the truth. I completely relied on my own mind, inner qualities, and experience to do things my own way. When handling matters, I frequently did things on my own, and I never consulted with others. Even if I did consult with others, it was only so I would appear humble. In reality, I already had a plan in my mind and because of this, I rarely incorporated other people's ideas. My approach to work arrangements from the above was such that I would

implement any that I thought were right or which passed my own approval, and if they did not conform to my notions, I would refrain from doing them or procrastinate over them and would not implement them proactively. If brothers or sisters tried to deal with and prune me, I was even more so unwilling to accept it. I relied on my satanic nature to run amok in my work for many years. I basically did not pursue truth and I didn't emphasize knowing myself. In consequence, I completely didn't understand the disposition of God nor the substance of God. I didn't have the slightest degree of reverence or fear toward God. I acted recklessly in front of God. I would dare to say anything and do anything. I selected deceitful people and those who preach letters and doctrine to shoulder the responsibility of church work, which damaged the lives of brothers and sisters and interrupted and disrupted the work of the church. I didn't realize that I was being a false shepherd; I was taking up the path of serving God while resisting Him. Although the brothers and sisters reminded me many times, I didn't accept their advice because of my arrogance and continued in my ways. Because of the many times I resisted God and went contrary to Him, I provoked God's anger and was removed from duty, which brought me into self-reflection.

Upon examining this, I gradually began to awaken out of my stupor. All along, God had put a lot of thought into all the things that befell me with the intent of saving me. I couldn't help but prostrate myself again before God: "Oh Almighty God, I thank You! Even though being replaced this time felt just like the trial of death and my pain was incomparable, it enabled me to experience Your great love and salvation for me. If I had not been replaced this time, I would still be living inside my own conception and imagination, continuing to do things the wrong way. I would still believe that forsaking my family and job for working in the church was faithfully serving You. I wouldn't have reflected on my conduct, and wouldn't have realized that my service was resisting You, and that it was offending Your disposition. If things went on like this, I would only become more and more arrogant and conceited. Ultimately, I would be resisting You as an antichrist and would have to face Your punishment. Oh God, Your love for me is so great and so real! Today's replacement is truly how You are saving me. Your chastising love has conquered my heart. I thank You from my heart for saving me and protecting me. I thank You more so for causing me to truly experience through Your revelation that Your righteous disposition cannot tolerate offense; I thank You for letting me see the profound fatherly love You have in the heartless smiting and painful trials of man. At the same time, You have also allowed me to know my own corrupt substance and to see that I have been corrupted very deeply by Satan. The disposition of the archangel is deeply rooted within me and I greatly need Your chastisement, judgment, trials, refinement, and even Your punishment and cursing to cleanse and save me. It is only through this work that I am able to emerge with reverence toward You and to be protected and cleansed. Oh God, from this day on, I am willing to diligently pursue truth and truly submit to Your work. I will accept Your judgment and chastisement. Regardless of how You treat me, I will give in to Your arrangements and I will not complain. I ask only to become a genuine person, that I may satisfy You."

56. Be Strict With Oneself First in Order to Discipline Others

By Xiaoyan, Henan Province

The church arranged for me to work together with an elderly sister in a duty that involved general church affairs. After working with her for some time, I found her to be careless in her work and that she did not accept the truth. As such, I formed an opinion about her. Gradually, the normal relationship between us was lost, we couldn't get along well, and were unable to work harmoniously together. I felt that it was entirely her fault that our relationship had come to this point, and so I tried to figure out all kinds of ways to communicate with her so that she could know herself. But all my attempts to communicate with her ended in vain or were sometimes even counterproductive. In the end we parted ways in enmity. So, I was even surer that she was not a person who accepted the truth. After that, the church arranged for me to stay with a different host family. Soon after, I discovered many problems with the host family brother and sister, and I again "labored" to give them fellowship, but all my attempts were ineffective, and they began to feel prejudiced against me. Faced with these circumstances, I was very troubled and puzzled: Why do all the people I meet not accept the truth? One day, I found the source of the problem when in my work I hit a wall.

That day, the leader had arranged for me to send her the work arrangement, and I entrusted the elderly sister of the host family to deliver it to her. Who would have known that a week later, the package would be sent back to me intact. Faced with this situation, I was stunned and poured blame on the elderly sister for her careless mishandling of the matter,

which had resulted in the package not being delivered to the leader in time. The leader also didn't contact me for a few days after this, and I was beginning to feel unsettled: Usually if something was not delivered or sent late, the leader would call immediately to inquire about the situation. Why hasn't she contacted me this time? Did she not want me to do this duty any longer? The more I thought about it, the more fearful I became—my thoughts were filled with worry and regret, and I couldn't help but fall to the ground before God and pray: "God, I feel so very upset and conflicted in my heart. The work arrangement has been sent back to me intact. I don't know what is happening, and I don't know what Your will is now that this is happening to me. Please lead and enlighten me and help me to understand Your will." Right after the prayer, a line of God's words kept flashing in my mind, "Whenever you do something it goes awry or you hit a wall. This is God's discipline" ("Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I suddenly realized that the issues I had run into during work, not being able to work together with the elderly sister, and the opinions the host family brother and sister had of me; were these not God's way of dealing with me through the people and matters around me? I silently called out to God: "God, I know that You deal with and discipline me because You love me, but I don't understand what aspects of me You wish to deal with in arranging these circumstances. I pray that You enlighten me and guide me."

Later, when I was reading the word of God, I saw these two passages: "You must first resolve all the difficulties within yourself by relying on God. Make an end to your degenerate dispositions and be able to really understand your own conditions and know how you should do things; keep fellowshiping anything you don't understand. It is unacceptable for you not to know yourself. First heal your own sickness, and by means of eating and drinking My words more, contemplating My words, live life and do things according to My words; whether you are at home or in some other place, you should allow God to wield power within you" ("Chapter 22" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "When you encounter things, you need to make a choice, you need to approach them correctly, you need to calm down and you need to use the truth to resolve the problem. What is the use of your ordinarily understanding some truths? They are not there just to fill your belly and they are not there to merely be spoken and nothing more, nor are they to resolve the problems of others; instead they are to resolve your own difficulties, and only after

you resolve your own problems can you resolve others' problems" ("Confused People Cannot Be Saved" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words illuminated me. Yes, when things happen, we should first know ourselves, seek the truth to resolve our own corruption and remedy our own states. Only when we have our own entry and then fellowship with others can we really help others and resolve their problems. But I never examined or knew myself when things happened, but instead I blindly fixated on others, and I always found fault with them whenever possible. When I couldn't work harmoniously with the elderly sister, I attributed it to her, and tried to figure out ways to communicate with her so that she would know herself and learn lessons. When my fellowship had no effect, not only did I not reflect on myself, but on the contrary, I became certain in my heart that the elderly sister was not accepting the truth. When the host family brother and sister were not willing to listen to me give them fellowship, I believed it was because they were not pursuing the truth, and not able to accept the truth. When the work arrangement was sent back to me intact, I blamed others and shifted the responsibility onto others. When all this happened, I failed to examine what corruptions I had revealed, and which truths I should enter. Instead, I made demands of others according to my own standards, and if someone could not meet my standards or refused to accept my fellowship, then I jumped to the conclusion that the person must not be pursuing the truth and did not accept the truth. I was truly so arrogant and self-righteous, and I had no self-knowledge at all. I had no knowledge of the corruptions I revealed at all, nor did I seek the truth to solve my own problems, and I always found fault with others. How then could I have worked harmoniously and gotten along with others? It was then that I realized: The reason I couldn't get along with anyone was not because they weren't pursuing the truth or accepting the truth, but because I had no self-knowledge, and I wasn't focusing on using of truth to solve my own problems.

After realizing all of this, I began to pay attention to my own entry. When encountering issues, I first reflected on and knew myself, and focused on seeking the truth to solve my own problems. Subsequently, when I communicated the truth with my brothers and sisters, they began to show some knowledge of their own corruption, and we gradually developed a harmonious partnership. Only when faced with the facts had I finally been able to see that, when issues arise, it is extremely important to get to know oneself and solve one's own problems first; only then can we live out our normal humanity, have a harmonious partnership with others, and reap the harvest of our life experiences.

57. I've Had a Taste of God's Salvation

By Cheng Hao, Hunan Province

The duty that my wife and I fulfill in the church is to preach God's gospel of the last days. Just not long ago, my wife was promoted to gospel group director, while I, as a result of my own arrogance and wanton behavior, disrupting and interfering with the gospel work, was sent home to reflect on myself. Given that my wife and I began fulfilling our duties at the same time, seeing her promoted while I was dismissed from my duties was a hard pill to swallow. Tears came to my eyes as I thought: "God is classifying people according to their kind and, since I've been dismissed and sent home, I'm certainly being exposed and eliminated by God. Oh! Who would have thought that after all these years, my life as a believer would end in such utter failure? All I can do now is wait for my punishment." Then I headed home with a heavy heart. From then on I became mired in my sense of defeat and my heart was full of misunderstanding and blame for God. I sank entirely into a darkness I could not extricate myself from.

One day, I happened upon the following two passages of God's words: "I never said that you have no future prospects, much less that you have to be destroyed or suffer perdition. Have I publicly announced such things? You say you are without hope, but is this not a conclusion you yourself have drawn? Is this not the effect of your own mindset? Do your own conclusions count?" ("You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will for the Salvation of Man" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "You don't see God's righteous disposition, and you always misunderstand God and distort His intentions, which causes you to always be pessimistic and lose hope. Is this not self-inflicted? ... You do not understand God's work and you don't understand God's will at all; even more so, you don't understand the good intentions God has put into His 6,000 years of management work" ("God's Will Is to Save People to the Greatest Extent Possible" in Records of Christ's Talks). Reading these passages, I realized with a start: Is God not talking about me? As soon as I learned that the church was sending me home, I started taking stabs in the dark, and concluded that I had been exposed and eliminated by God. I then lost the confidence to pursue the truth. I lived in a perpetual state of negativity and misunderstanding, utterly resigned to my own failure. At that point, I

looked into my heart, asking: "Do I really understand why I've met with this 'misfortune'? Do I really understand God's will? I don't! Has God said that I can't be saved? He hasn't. Then why would I make wild conjectures and unfounded delineations? Was this not arrogant and deceitful? Hasn't sinking into this place of dark suffering been my own doing? How foolish, how absurd I have been!" Thus, I went before God in prayer, asking for His enlightenment so that I may understand His will in being exposed this way.

Later, I saw this passage of God's words: "All that He does is true love for you; He has no ill intention. It is because of your sins that He judges you, so that you will examine yourselves and receive this tremendous salvation. All this is done to work man. From beginning to end, God has been doing His utmost to save man, and He is certainly not willing to completely destroy the men He created with His own hands. Now He has come among you to work; isn't this even more salvation? If He hated you, would He still do work of such magnitude to personally lead you? Why should He suffer so? God does not hate you or have any ill intention toward you. You should know that God's love is the truest love. It is only because of people's disobedience that He has to save them through judgment; otherwise, they would not be saved. ... He does not have the heart to let you become even more depraved; neither has He the heart to see you living in the filthy place like this, being trampled by Satan at will, or the heart to let you fall into Hades. He only wants to gain this group of you and thoroughly save you. This is the main purpose of doing the conquering work on you it is just for salvation" ("The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (4)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). All these heartfelt words from God warmed my heart and roused me from my numb state. As it turned out, though my situation seemed like misfortune upon first inspection, it was actually God visiting His love upon me. God wanted me to reflect on myself through that failure and fall so that I could find the root of the failure and get back onto the right path. His goal in exposing me was not to eliminate me, but was to save me. That was God's will. I had been arrogant and uncompromising, fulfilling my duties recklessly and according to my own will. God simply couldn't bear to see me continue to fall into corruption. He especially could not bear to see me face punishment for offending God's disposition through my wanton acts. Thus, He brought salvation upon me through judgment and chastisement. The church now arranging for me to return home was to force me to return before God and reflect on my deeds through that failure and stumbling, and that kind of

exposure. It was to have me know my own corrupt essence and that the path I was taking was wrong, and to have me develop true repentance, allowing me to step onto the right path of pursuing the truth and a change in disposition. This was the very real work of the salvation that God visited upon me. All He did was care for and love me. Otherwise, I would still be unwittingly living in sin, still be acting recklessly, disrupting and interfering with the gospel work. In the end, I would have been punished by God for offending His disposition. It wasn't until that moment that I came to see how real God's salvation is. There is nothing false or empty about God's love—it is true and real. It is through failing and stumbling that people know themselves, and it is through judgment and chastisement that He purifies and transforms people. I, however, failed to know God's work and the method of His salvation. I failed to seek the earnest intention in God's salvation, instead delimiting myself at every turn while misunderstanding and complaining about God, living within negativity and throwing in the towel. How unreasonable I am—how little I understand!

I couldn't help but prostrate myself before God and offer up my thanks and praise to Him: "Dear God, thank You! Through this experience, I have realized that Your salvation is real and that Your judgment and chastisement are full of love. Without these, I never would have taken an honest look at myself. I would have continued to live in corruption, on a downward spiral, trampled by Satan and carried off by it in the end. Through this experience, I have also come to realize that Your essence is love and that no matter what You do, it is to save mankind. God, I vow to become a new person, to invest myself fully in pursuing the truth and changing my disposition. No matter what the outcome, I vow to fulfill my duties as a creature to satisfy You."

58. There Is Great Happiness in Being Honest

By Gan'en, Anhui Province

Since I was small, my parents have always taught me that, "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed." What's more, I've myself seen many people get cheated, and some have even been cheated to financial ruin, so I felt even more that this phrase my parents taught me was very fitting with modern society. Unknowingly, I began to base my conduct and my association with others on this life axiom,

and I never granted my trust to others lightly. I've always felt that in situations where you don't know someone's true intentions, you should always watch out no matter who you're dealing with and you shouldn't show your hand too soon, otherwise you'll open yourself up to being fooled and suffering a loss. Thus, it's enough to have no heart to harm others—in this way you will protect yourself, and will win the praise of the people around you.

Even after I had accepted God's work in the last days, I kept to this life axiom in my dealings with others. When I saw that God asks that we be innocent, candid and honest, I was only candid about little things that were of no personal interest to me. I would almost never share those aspects of my disposition that I found severely corrupt, for fear that my brothers and sisters would belittle or look down on me if I opened myself up to them. When my leader singled me out for going through the motions in my work, I became full of resentment and suspicion and thought to myself, "Why is my leader always singling me out and going through the particulars of my state in front of all my brothers and sisters? Is it not obvious that this will make me lose face and embarrass me in front of everyone? Perhaps my leader isn't so keen on me, so he's decided to pick on me." It was especially painful and unbearable to see other brothers and sisters being promoted while I remained in the same position. I suspected that I wasn't being promoted because I was not worth training. My heart was filled with misunderstandings and complaints; I felt I had no future, and that there was no use in pursuing too hard. Because I was always on guard and suspicious of others whenever I encountered any issue, and I was unable to be open and seek the truth to resolve it, I misunderstood God more and more and felt less and less connected to Him. My condition was becoming more and more abnormal; I had no words to say when praying to God, I couldn't quieten my heart before God when reading His words, and I wasn't being responsible in my duties, and finally I lost the work of the Holy Spirit and fell into darkness. I was completely unable to understand any issues that arose in my duties and I didn't know how to solve them, and the results from my work took even more of a nosedive.

In the depths of suffering, lost and without direction, I came upon this passage of God's words: "If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never acknowledge such faith. Lacking true faith, you are even more devoid of true love. And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will, then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people" ("How to Know the God on Earth"

in The Word Appears in the Flesh). As I mulled over God's words, I suddenly reflected upon my own actions in everyday life. With a start, I thought: "Am I not living with 'guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters' as it says in God's words? As such, am I not a deceitful man in the eyes of God?" At that moment, the words "deceitful man" pierced my heart like a knife, causing me unbearable suffering. I had always thought that as long as I kept to the principle "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed" in my dealings with other people, then I would be a good person. So, in all my years, I had lived by those words in my dealings with other people and in handling matters. Never did I expect that the consequences of living by this axiom would actually turn me into a man of deceitfulness. This meant that "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed," the axiom I so long upheld, did not conform to the truth and was in direct contradiction to God's words. It was an awful feeling to find that this principle of conduct, which I had upheld for as long as I could remember, was knocked down and negated by God's words seemingly overnight, but I had no choice but to accept the facts.

I calmed myself down to contemplate and seek, and reexamined this axiom. In the light of God's enlightenment, I gradually came to have some understanding and discernment. On the surface, "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed" seems to be a sensible enough idea and in line with people's conception of right and wrong. There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with the idea at first, because it just states that we should guard against others, but not set out to do harm to others. Further, living by this axiom prevents us from falling into traps while at the same time allowing us to learn how to become "good people." However, when we subject this phrase to close scrutiny, it becomes clear that this is actually a particularly sinister and cunning method by which Satan corrupts mankind. This phrase is secretly telling us that you can't trust anyone, that anyone is capable of doing you harm, so in your dealings with others, never go all in. In this way, I guard against you, you become suspicious of me and neither of us really trust each other. This leads us down a road to scheming and enmity, which causes humanity to become more and more corrupt, disingenuous, cunning and deceitful. Even worse, under the domination of this satanic life axiom, when we are faced with God, who is lovely and good, we are suspicious and on our guard, believing that God, too, is deceitful and malicious that God is not working in our best interest. As a result, no matter how much God loves us

and is considerate toward us, we are reluctant to accept Him or place our faith in Him, and even less likely to appreciate what lengths He goes to for us. Instead, we question everything He does with a heart filled with doubt and deceit, and foist our misunderstandings, complaints, disobedience and resistance upon Him. In this way, Satan accomplishes its goal of corrupting and poisoning humanity and making us turn away from or betray God. However, I lacked discernment and was unable to see through these sinister intentions of Satan. I took its fallacy for a principle of conduct to be respected and upheld and subsequently became more and more deceitful. For example, when I encountered judgment, chastisement, pruning and dealing: God's will was to make me reflect on myself and know myself by means of various real situations, and for me to seek the truth so that my corrupt disposition could be cleansed and changed. And yet I refused to take this from God, and neither did I pursue entry from a positive standpoint; instead, I suspected that it was my brothers and sisters who had it in for me, and that God did not value me. Finally, as my misunderstanding of God became more and more pronounced, I lost the work of the Holy Spirit and fell into darkness. As is now clear, the phrase, "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed" is nothing more than a fallacy devised by Satan to entrap and corrupt humanity. Living by this so-called axiom will only lead people to become more and more sly and deceitful, and unjustly suspect and guard against others all while misunderstanding and turning away from God. In the end, a life so led will only earn the disgust of God and lead one to lose the work of the Holy Spirit and fall into darkness. Apart from being in pain, even more serious is that one could also lose the chance to be saved. At this point, I finally realized that the phrase, "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed" was simply not a principle that people should conduct themselves by, but rather a cunning plot by Satan to hoodwink and torment people. Moreover, it was a fallacious heresy used by Satan to corrupt people, and to make them lose their normal humanity and shun and betray God. Living by this phrase could only lead one to defy God and thus be detested, rejected and sifted out by God.

Later, I saw the following passage of God's words: "In substance, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him. Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above

and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. ... If your words are riddled with excuses and valueless justifications, then I say that you are someone who is loath to put the truth into practice. If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness. If seeking the way of the truth pleases you well, then you are someone who dwells always in the light. If you are very glad to be a service-doer in the house of God, working diligently and conscientiously in obscurity, always giving and never taking, then I say that you are a loyal saint, because you seek no reward and are simply being an honest person. If you are willing to be candid, if you are willing to expend your all, if you are able to sacrifice your life for God and stand firm in your testimony, if you are honest to the point where you know only to satisfy God and not to consider yourself or take for yourself, then I say that such people are those who are nourished in the light and who shall live forever in the kingdom" ("Three Admonitions" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). From God's words I came to realize that the substance of God is faithful, and so God loves and blesses the honest. Only honest people meet the standards of human conduct, and only honest people can be after God's heart, attain God's salvation and be gained by God. I also came to understand how to act as an honest person: Honest people speak simply, openly and without deceit—they call a spade a spade. The honest never cheat others, they do not act perfunctorily and they deceive neither God nor man. The heart of an honest person is without crookedness or deceit. In speaking and acting they do not harbor wrong intentions or ulterior motives; they don't speak or act for their own profit or to satisfy their flesh, but rather for the sake of being a true person. The honest person is open and upright, their heart is honest, and they are willing to give their heart and life to God. They ask for nothing in return, but only strive to satisfy God. Only those who possess these traits can be called honest people, people living in the light.

Once I had understood the principles associated with being an honest person, I began to try to put them to practice in real life. In my dealings with others, I consciously tried to treat them honestly, and not to be deceitful, or to second-guess and put my guard up. When

I practiced in this way, my relationship with my brothers and sisters became more and more normal, and I felt so free and liberated; it seemed much more relaxing to live this way. When I demonstrated corruption while fulfilling my duties with my sister, I would proactively go find her to lay bare my understanding of myself in fellowship and the sister would do likewise. During this process, not only did we not develop prejudices toward each other, but we actually became even more harmonious in our coordination. When I cited God's words in laying bare my corruption during meetings, my brothers and sisters didn't disparage me or look down on me as I had imagined, but on the contrary, they fellowshiped their own experiences and knowledge to help me, so that I saw God's love and salvation for man. When, in fulfilling my duties, I worked not for my own reputation and status but to satisfy God, I felt the Holy Spirit working on me, enlightening and guiding me, so that I could gradually come to understand God's will. As a result, I was very effective in fulfilling my duties. In prayer, I consciously tried to share my innermost thoughts with God and have genuine spiritual communion with God. I found that when I did that, I grew closer and closer to God and I came to appreciate that every environment God arranges for me is what is needed in my life. From the bottom of my heart, I felt how lovely God is, and all of the misunderstandings I had about God disappeared. Through this practical exercise and experience, I experienced how being honest allows one to live in the light and receive God's blessing. Being an honest person is truly meaningful and valuable!

In experiencing the benefits of being an honest person, I became even clearer that Satan's axiom, "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed" corrupts and torments humankind. If one upholds this axiom, they will always live in darkness, corruption and torment. Only by being an honest person can we live in the light, be nourished and receive God's praise. From now on, I vow to start anew and thoroughly abandon this axiom of Satan, "One shouldn't have the heart to harm others, but must be vigilant so as not to be harmed." I will take being honest as the principle and standard of my conduct, and I will seek to be an honest person who delights God.

59. A Brief Talk About the Source of the World's Darkness and Evil

By Yang Le, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

When I was still at school, my father grew sick and passed away. After he died, uncles on both sides of the family who had often been helped by my father not only did not take care of us-my mother, my two sisters and I, who had no source of income-but, on the contrary, did everything they could to make a profit off us, even fighting with us for the little legacy my father had left behind. In the face of my relatives' indifference and all the things they did that I never could have expected, I felt such extreme pain and couldn't help but hate the utter lack of conscience and the heartlessness that these relatives displayed, at the same time also gaining a sense of the fickleness of human nature. After that, whenever I saw some occurrences in society of family members fighting each other over money, or even suing and murdering each other over money, I would feel that the world today was too full of darkness, that people's hearts really were sinister and the world really was too fickle! At that time, I thought the reason why the world was so full of darkness was because people had turned bad, that they no longer had any conscience and that there were too many evil people in the world. Afterward, only through reading the words of God did I realize that what I had seen was just a surface-level phenomenon, and was not the source of the world's darkness and evil. From God's words I saw clearly the real source of darkness and evil in the world.

God's words say: "Before he was corrupted by Satan, man naturally followed God and obeyed His words after hearing them. He was naturally of sound sense and conscience, and of proper humanity. After being corrupted by Satan, man's original sense, conscience, and humanity grew dull and were impaired by Satan. Thus, he has lost his obedience and love toward God. Man's sense has become aberrant, his disposition has become the same as that of an animal, and his rebelliousness toward God is ever more frequent and grievous. Yet man still neither knows nor recognizes this, and merely opposes and rebels blindly" ("To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Knowledge of several thousand years of ancient culture and history has closed off the thinking and concepts and

mental outlook of man so tightly as to be impenetrable and nondegradable.[1] ... Feudal ethics have taken the life of man into 'Hades,' so that man has even less ability to resist. Various kinds of oppression forced man to gradually fall deeper into Hades.... Knowledge of ancient culture has quietly stolen man from the presence of God and turned man over to the king of devils and its sons. The Four Books and Five Classics have taken the thinking and concepts of man into another age of rebellion, causing man to further worship those who wrote the Books and Classics, furthering their notions of God. The king of devils heartlessly cast out God from the heart of man without their awareness, while it gleefully took over the heart of man. From then on, man was possessed of an ugly and wicked soul with the face of the king of devils. A hatred of God filled their chests, and the maliciousness of the king of devils spread within man day by day.... This gang of accomplices![2] They come down among the mortals to indulge in pleasures and stir up disorder. Their disturbance causes fickleness in the world and brings panic in the heart of man, and they have distorted man so that man resembles beasts of unbearable ugliness, no longer possessing the slightest trace of the original holy man" ("Work and Entry (7)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words expose the root of all of the darkness and evil in the world, and that all of this came about because of Satan's corruption. In the beginning, mankind created by God obeyed and worshiped Him; they were able to obey God's words and they possessed the consciences and reason of normal humanity. But ever since mankind was corrupted by Satan, they started to listen to Satan's words, thus losing God's oversight and protection and falling under Satan's domain. Over several thousand years Satan has continuously used theories of materialism, evolution, and atheism to deceive and corrupt people. Phrases such as "There is no God on earth whatsoever," "There has never been any Savior," "Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "A man dies for money; a bird dies for food," "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," "A small mind makes no gentleman; a real man is not without venom" and "Seize the

Footnotes:

^{1. &}quot;Nondegradable" is intended as satire here, meaning that people are rigid in their knowledge, culture, and spiritual outlook.

^{2. &}quot;Accomplices" are of the same ilk as "a band of hoodlums."

day for pleasure, for life is short" are all poisons instilled in us by Satan. These things become our lives and become the laws of survival that we rely upon, so that very few people believe in the existence of God anymore, no one worships Heaven anymore, and no one listens to reason or their conscience anymore. There is no longer any place for God in corrupt humanity's heart, no longer any restrictions from the laws and regulations that came from God. Man has all been poisoned and controlled by Satan, so that man has become ever more arrogant, crafty, selfish, contemptible, greedy, fierce, ever more evil and debauched, unrestrained, ever more lawless, godless and perverse. They have become the degenerates devoid of conscience, of morality, of human nature, and maliciousness has come as second nature to them. In particular, "Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost" is a lethal poison that Satan plants in man. I developed a deep understanding of this from my uncles. Corrupt humanity lives only for the sake of their own self-interests, placing profit above everything else, thinking "Why get up early if there's nothing in it for me?" To obtain more and greater interests, man can do any evil or wicked thing, make any shameless, contemptible or low-down shady deal. There is no true love or affection between people—it is all cheating, using and harming each other. Members of the same family can fall out with each other and become enemies, fighting each other for money and interests. Then even more so, relatives and friends forget all moral principles for the sake of profit; they may look human, but they have the hearts of beasts. That man can do these evil things is all because they are corrupted by Satan. And this is the source of the darkness in the world.

In the many phenomena that we live amongst, we can see most easily the darkness of the world. We can say that the people who lead the evil trends of the world nowadays all belong to Satan. Particularly, the atheist authoritarian rulers are the princes of the devils, and among these the CCP is the darkest and most reactionary power. Ever since the CCP took power, it has used the power in its hands to suppress and control its people, spreading all sorts of fallacies and lies to deceive people and poison their minds, so that man no longer resembles man. The CCP reveres violence and advocates revolution. It uses violence to seize power and to govern the nation. Across the board, it uses force to resolve things, and under its authority people also prefer violence. Interpersonal conflict and violence are all too common. There are ever more cases of robberies and murders that make people's blood boil, and the ways in which people are murdered are also ever more cruel and odious. These

are all facts that are there for all to see. In the CCP's economic development, sayings such as "Doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice," "Prostitution is better than poverty," "Money makes the world go round," "One can be without anything but money" and "Money can do anything" are all revered. With its powerful advocacy of such things, people esteem money and power, whoever has the money and the power can prosper, and whoever has no money and no power can only be oppressed and swallow all grievances, with the result that people's hearts are filled only with money. For money, the ties of kinship are forgotten; for money and power they can take and offer bribes, buy and sell official posts, rob, defraud, kill people and take their possessions—it can be said they will use any means necessary. What's more, prostitution is ubiquitous in today's society and the places for whoring and drugs can be seen everywhere. Sexual bribes and sexual transactions are in vogue and people adhere to evil, esteem evil, not thinking it is shameful, but instead thinking it is glorious. What is most evil and reactionary is that the CCP strongly advocates atheism, it denies the existence of God, it denies God's sovereignty, and forbids people to worship the real God but instead makes them worship Satan. Those who live under the CCP's deception and disinformation do not know there is a true God or worship the true God, but instead follow Satan and esteem evil so that they are ever more corrupt and depraved. Now I can see ever more clearly that because of this "model" of the CCP, man became so corrupted and evil, with no conscience, no humanity. The root of all this ruin lies entirely with the CCP. The arch-criminal that created the evil in man's hearts, the corrupt morals and fickleness of the world in society is the CCP. The CCP having power is Satan having power; the CCP is the root cause of all the world's darkness and evil. So long as the CCP does not crumble and Satan is not annihilated, mankind will not be able to live in the light and the world will never know peace.

After seeing the darkness and evil of the CCP and how it corrupts and tramples people underfoot, I feel even more the holiness and beauty of Christ. Only Christ can save mankind and help them break away from this dark and evil place, and only when Christ takes power will light be brought to mankind. Because God is the origin of righteousness and light, only God cannot be overwhelmed or violated by all the darkness and evil, only God can change the old face of the entire world and bring light to earth, and only God can bring mankind to a wonderful destination. Apart from God, no one can perform this work and no one can defeat or annihilate Satan. Just like it says in God's words: "In the vast expanse of the

world, countless changes have occurred, oceans silting into fields, fields flooding into oceans, over and over. Except for He who rules over all things in the universe, no one is able to lead and guide this human race. There is no mighty one to labor or make preparations for this human race, still less is there anyone who can lead this human race toward the destination of light and liberate it from earthly injustices" ("God Is the Source of Man's Life" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "I will correct the injustices of the human world. I will do My work with My own hands throughout the world, forbidding Satan from harming My people again, forbidding the enemies from doing whatever they please again. I will become King on earth and move My throne there, making all My enemies fall to the ground and confess their crimes before Me" ("Chapter 27" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I saw in God's words His almightiness and His authority, saw that only God can save us who live under the domain of Satan and who have been so afflicted and trampled underfoot by it. Because of this my heart yearns all the more for Christ to take power, and for Satan's kingdom to soon meet its end.

I give thanks to the enlightenment of God's words that allowed me to see the source of the darkness and evil in the world, that caused to arise in my heart a true loathing of Satan, and that allowed me to understand that only Christ can lead man to break away from this dark place, to enter the light. Only by following Christ and worshiping Christ can man break away from Satan's affliction. From today on, I wish to pursue the truth and follow Christ's lead, to accept God's words and make them my life, to rid myself of all the great red dragon's poisons, to cast off the control of Satan's dark influence, to utterly rebel against Satan, and to attain God's salvation and be perfected by God.

60. What Is It That Has Deceived My Spirit?

By Xu Lei, Shandong Province

I'm a leader in The Church of Almighty God. One day I received a notice from my senior leader, asking me to attend a co-workers meeting. Thinking that by attending a co-workers meeting I would be able to understand even more truths, I felt very happy. But then I thought: "Lately, I haven't been achieving good results in any work that I'm responsible for. If my

superior knew that, she would certainly have to deal with me, and may even replace me. What would I do then?" When I thought of this, I couldn't help feeling worried. The next day I went to the meeting place with a heavy heart. I saw that my superior had not yet arrived, so I chatted with some co-workers about the state of our work. I thought: "I don't know what state any of their work is in. If all of them have done their work well and it's only me who is so bad, then I'm done for." Little did I expect that many of my co-workers were saying how they hadn't done very well with some parts of their work. When I heard this, my heart that had been so heavy before suddenly felt a lot lighter. I thought: "It turns out that no one has done their work well, not just me. No need to worry then. The leader can't possibly replace all of us." The greater part of my uneasy feelings then disappeared in an instant.

Just as I was starting to get comfortable in my state of self-consolation, a passage in a sermon drifted into my mind: "If one brings worldly views into God's family, then they are conceptions and they defy God. Many people have the same views on things as unbelievers. Because they have no truth within them, once they come into God's family they use worldly views to view the work of God's family, to comment on the matters of God's family, with the result that they hold themselves back, causing themselves to always be weak and negative, to be unable to pursue the truth or pay the price. Is this not created by their ignorance?" ("How to Know Man's Conceptions and Judgments" in Sermons and Fellowship III). These words made me think of my reaction a moment ago. When I thought of how I hadn't done well at my work, my heart felt very heavy and I was constantly worried about being replaced. But when I knew that my co-workers had also not done their work well, I felt immediately relieved, and thought with an easy conscience that it wasn't just me whose work had not achieved anything. If our superior was to deal with us, then everyone would have their share. We could not possibly be all replaced. Wasn't this type of thinking dominated by Satan's poison: "It is not a sin if everyone does it"? Wasn't I really using Satan's viewpoint to measure the principles of the church's work? I wasn't performing my duty well, and I wasn't seeking the truth or reflecting on myself, but instead I was finding excuses and reasons to comfort and indulge myself—wasn't I harming myself by doing this? Wasn't I defying God? Thinking back, there were many times when I accepted the domination of this viewpoint of Satan's to forgive myself. For a while, I lived in the flesh with no entry into life and, although worried about my own salvation, when I saw some brothers and sisters having also made no entry into the truth, I became free from anxiety and stopped giving myself a hard time. I thought

now that so many of us had made such a shallow entry into life, God couldn't possibly sift us all out. I therefore lived in a laissez-faire state of self-indulgence, carrying no real burden for my own life. When I hadn't written any articles for a long time, I hadn't satisfied God's will and felt self-reproach, I would see that some other brothers and sisters hadn't written articles either, and so would think that it wasn't a big deal. In any case, I wasn't the only one who wasn't writing articles, and so the feeling of self-reproach would vanish, and much less did I seek or contemplate the truth on this matter. When I didn't see any result from my gospel work, I would feel anxious, and would think about how to cooperate so as to achieve good results. But when I saw others achieving no better result than me with their gospel work, I would feel at ease, thinking that it wasn't a problem, and that it wasn't just me who achieved nothing. I would then be much less conscientious in the gospel work. At that time, I saw that the viewpoint of Satan—"It is not a sin if everyone does it"—had taken root in my heart so very deeply. Under the domination of this viewpoint, I was constantly muddling through and indulging myself when performing my duties, wasn't putting my all into them and wasn't seeking the best possible outcome. I hadn't performed the function a created being should perform and I'd caused great loss to the work of the church. Harmed by this poison of Satan, I was always just muddling along in the course of my following God. Although I was expending myself for God, in my heart I did not take the truth seriously, and I did not care about or focus on my own entry into life; I had no objective to pursue, no direction in life. This had led me to believe in God for many years without achieving any reality of the truth, and my corrupt disposition had changed little. I completely had no conscience, reason, integrity or dignity that a normal person should possess. I was really harmed so badly by this poison of Satan!

Thinking carefully, I had been living within my own imagination and conceptions all the while, believing in "It is not a sin if everyone does it," that if many people commit the sin then God will let us slip through the net and not hold anyone accountable, never thinking whether or not God would actually treat people this way. At that time, I couldn't help thinking of God's words, that say: "He who defies the work of God shall be sent to hell; any country that defies the work of God shall be destroyed; any nation that rises up to oppose the work of God shall be wiped from this earth and shall cease to exist" ("God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words made me tremble with fear. I saw that God's disposition will not allow anyone to commit offense and

that He will not base His decision on whether or not to destroy man on the number of sinners, but rather on man's attitude toward God and on whether or not they possess the truth. I thought of the people in the time of Noah who, because of Satan's corruption, shunned God and did not worship Him, and lived in wickedness and promiscuity, becoming so degenerate that God destroyed all that lived in that time apart from Noah's family. His destruction of the city of Sodom was also like this. Now the people in the last days have reached several billion, a number far surpassing those in Noah's day. The degree of sin has also far surpassed the sins of those days, but it has never said in God's words that those who commit all manner of evil deeds may be exempted from being chastised because there are so many of sinners in the last days. The ones God saves and perfects are those who yearn for the light, who sincerely believe in God and pursue the truth and who pursue dispositional change. Even if these people commit some transgressions, God still gives them a chance, allowing them to repent and pursue change. But as for those who believe in God but who don't pursue the truth at all, like a Hanhao bird, God only abhors them, detests them and rejects them; if these people never repent, then in the end God will destroy them. Only then did I see how little I had understood God's disposition. I didn't understand that God is a righteous, holy God who does not allow man to commit offense, to the extent that I had been confounded by Satan's poisons and had fallen into its cunning schemes. Today, if it had not been for God's enlightenment, I would still be living in sin without thinking it was sin, and in the end I would have been unable to gain the truth, my corrupt dispositions would not have changed at all, and I would have been punished by God without even knowing how I died it really had been so dangerous!

I give thanks to God for His enlightenment that made me wake up from Satan's deception and realize that "It is not a sin if everyone does it" was entirely a heretical fallacy of Satan. It was Satan's cunning scheme to harm and ruin people. And from God's words I saw that God is righteous, that God's disposition will not allow any offense, that God will base the final decision on people's end on whether or not they have the truth, and that He will not show exceptional mercy on someone who has no truth and who has not had their corrupt disposition changed. From today on, I wish to spare no effort in pursuing the truth, in pursuing to understand God, to base my view of all things on God's words, to use God's words as the standard by which I will make strict demands of myself, to abandon all the lies and deceptions of Satan, and to seek to be one who lives according to the truth.

61. God's Word Turned My Wrong Ideas and Viewpoints Around

By Peihe, Hubei Province

I always believed that my husband and I passed our lives "with our faces to the soil and our backs to the sun" because we didn't study enough, and because we had no knowledge. That's why I decided that no matter how hard or how much I had to suffer, I would send our children to school so that they could accomplish something and stand out from the crowd, and wouldn't have to follow in our footsteps. With that guiding us, my husband and I ate and dressed simply and squeezed every penny to send our oldest daughter to technical school and our oldest son to university. We still had two more children, so to send them to university, my husband had to leave home to work for years, and I tended the fields and the pigs at home from dawn to dusk. Whenever the farm work got too exhausting, I wished I could simply stop. But at the thought of how competitive society is today, if I didn't send my children to school, they would only have a future working in the mud like me, they would never achieve anything and would be looked down upon. Only by getting into university could they find a good job or become an official, achieve something, gain a future for themselves, and gain glory for us. When I thought of this, I felt that the pain and exhaustion I suffered would be worth it. And so, every day when I woke up, I kept myself so busy with my work that often I had no time to read God's words or for a normal spiritual life, and even less time for a normal church life or to perform my duties, but I thought nothing of it, and continued to work myself to the bone for my children ...

Recently, I read these words of God: "As far as children go, all parents hope that their children will receive higher education and that they'll someday get ahead, have a place in society as well as have both a stable income and influence—that way they can honor the family line. Everyone has this point of view. Is it the right viewpoint to hope that 'the son becomes a dragon, the daughter becomes a phoenix'? Everyone wants their children to go to a prestigious university and then pursue advanced studies, thinking that after getting degrees they'll stand out from the crowd. This is because in their hearts, everyone worships knowledge, believing that 'The worth of

other pursuits is small, the study of books excels them all.' On top of that, competition in modern society is particularly fierce, and without a degree you're not even guaranteed to be able to put food on the table. This is how everyone thinks about it. ... But did you think about how many toxins and how many of Satan's ideas and theories will be instilled in them after they've received that kind of education? ... Until one day, your children return and you tell them about believing in God, and they show antipathy. After you tell them about the truth, they say you're foolish and laugh at you, and scoff at what you say. At that time you will think that sending your children to those schools to get that kind of education was choosing the wrong path, but it will be too late for regret. ... When it comes to their children, no one is willing to bring them before God to completely accept the viewpoints and ideas that God requires, or to be the kind of person God requires. People are unwilling to do this and don't dare to do it. They are afraid that if they do, their children won't be able to make a living or have a future in society. What does this point of view confirm? It confirms that mankind has no interest, confidence and moreover no genuine faith in the truth or in God. What mankind looks up to and worships in their hearts is still this world, thinking that people who leave this world won't be able to survive. ... These human ideas and viewpoints are in opposition to God, are a betrayal and rejection of God, and are incompatible with the truth" ("Only by Knowing Your Misguided Views Can You Know Yourself" in Records of Christ's Talks). Each and every one of God's words moved me deeply. So many years of enduring all kinds of hardships, laborious work, and sparing no expense so that my children could go to university, and why? Because I believed Satan's rule of survival: "The worth of other pursuits is small, the study of books excels them all"! Under the influence of Satan's poison, I put knowledge above all else, and thought that only with knowledge could one stand out, accomplish things, have a future, and gain status in society. I thought those without education were an underclass deserving of disdain, the lowest of the low. So, to ensure my children could succeed in the world and avoid lives "with their faces to the soil and their backs to the sun," I did everything in my power to send them to study and provide them a higher education. For so many years, I put my goal before anything else, meanwhile I buried God's words, my duties, and my own salvation in the back of my mind. Satan's poison hurt me so deeply! Even though I had followed God for years, I had not obtained the truth, and my viewpoints hadn't changed at all. What I worshiped was still knowledge, and what I yearned for and relied on was Satan. I was totally an unbeliever who pursued worldly trends and resisted God!

Later, by constantly reading God's words, I understood that some knowledge can allow us to have some things such as common sense, insights and principles in life, and this kind of knowledge can be somewhat beneficial to us. Most knowledge, however, comes from various theories of Satan, and is fallacies and heresies that Satan uses to deceive and corrupt people. Satan uses study and learning to trick people into receiving its education, and thereupon it pours its poison and thoughts into their minds, and once the poison is delivered, people are completely taken over by atheist thoughts and fallacies that deny and resist God, so that Satan achieves its goals of corrupting and devouring people. Phrases such as "There has never been any Savior," "Humans evolved from apes," "All weathers are formed by nature," "One's destiny is in his own hand," "Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost," are all ideas and viewpoints concerning the theories of materialism and evolution. They have been injected into the deepest parts of our hearts, and they make us resist God and deny His existence more and more. Because I couldn't see through Satan's trick, I eagerly sent my children off to receive a satanic education, handing them to Satan without ever considering how to bring them before God or make them accept the truth that comes from God and make them live according to God's requirements. Recently, my son graduated from university, and even though he gained much knowledge, he was saturated with all the fallacies and heresies of Satan. When I mentioned anything about belief in God, he paraded all kinds of scientific knowledge and theories to refute me, he called me uneducated, ignorant, and undiscerning, he said I should believe in science.... Facing all this, I felt such regret, and only then did I realize that all satanic culture and knowledge are contrary to the truth and hostile to God. They are the tools Satan uses to corrupt and control people. I also came to understand that having a lot of knowledge is not a good thing. The higher an education people receive, and the more knowledge they grasp, the more satanic poisons there are instilled within them, the further they become from God, the harder it is for them to accept the truth, and the harder it is for them to receive God's salvation. One could say that the more books a person reads and the more knowledge they have, the more serious their resistance to God. This kind of knowledge is a very dangerous thing!

Enlightenment from God finally made me understand that "The worth of other pursuits is small, the study of books excels them all" is a satanic fallacy, just one of Satan's lies to

deceive, delude, and corrupt people. I understood that, by living under Satan's domain and accepting Satan's ideological education, we can only become more and more corrupted. At the same time, I understood that only by bringing our children before God to read God's words and behave in accordance with His requirements can they live out meaningful lives. Just then, I came before God and poured out my heart to Him: "God, I don't want to be deceived and afflicted by Satan anymore, I want to proactively pursue the truth and change all my own fallacious views, I want Your words to be the foundation of my existence, and I want to bring my two youngest children before You, so that they can receive Your salvation and become genuine people."

62. My Life Principles Left Me So Damaged

By Changkai, Liaoning Province

The phrase "All lay loads on a willing horse" is one with which I am all too personally familiar. My husband and I were both particularly guileless people in the world. When it came to matters that involved our own personal benefit or loss, we weren't the type to haggle or fuss with others. Where we could be forbearing we were forbearing, where we could be accommodating we also did our best to be accommodating. As a result, we often found ourselves bullied by others. So I really believed the saying "All lay loads on a willing horse" to be absolutely true—if you have too much kindness in your heart, if you're too accommodating and modest in your affairs, you're very likely to be bullied. With this in mind, I resolved to no longer subject myself to all that bullying and live in frustration: I vowed not to be too accommodating in future matters and in dealings with others.

After I believed in God, I was working alongside a sister in fulfilling our duties. This sister frequently pointed out my inadequacies and shortcomings; I had the feeling that she was holding me down in every way. At first I was able to exercise forbearance and not make an issue out of it with her. Later, however, after this sister proved to be unrelenting in pointing out my corruption, I finally thought back to that phrase "All lay loads on a willing horse." It occurred to me that the sister must have recognized that I was too kind and therefore an easy target, so she made things hard on me by nitpicking over petty and inconsequential matters. I decided I was no longer going to be patient and accommodating, so I really lost

my temper at her and let out all of my dissatisfaction and resentment, giving her a piece of my mind. Later, the sister asked me to have fellowship with her and apologized to me, saying that she was trying to help me by pointing out my deficiencies, never imagining it would hurt me. Hearing her say this, I was extremely smug, as if I had been victorious in battle. What's more, I was even further convinced that there was a lot of merit to the phrase "All lay loads on a willing horse."

Later, while reading "The 100 Axioms of Satan Upon Which Corrupt Humans Rely for Existence" issued by the church, I saw a passage which said: "All lay loads on a willing horse.' ... Humanity has been corrupted by Satan for thousands of years and there are countless fallacies which Satan uses to deceive people. Here we summarize 100 fallacies which humanity prizes as precious maxims to guide them through life. These fallacies have already taken root in the deepest depths of the human heart; if not equipped with the truths, humans are largely incapable of uncovering the true nature of these fallacies. If humans continue to hold Satan's fallacies up as maxims and principles for living, corrupt humanity will never attain salvation." After reading this passage from the fellowship I had a sudden realization, as if waking up from a long dream: The phrase "All lay loads on a willing horse" was a fallacy created by Satan to deceive and corrupt humankind. God asks that in our interactions with others we should be accepting, patient, tolerant, and forgiving. We should be thoughtful, respectful, and loving toward others. By contrast, Satan's life principle, "All lay loads on a willing horse," subtly guides us away from good and toward evil, teaches us to not be too kind or conciliatory in our dealings with others. To protect ourselves, we must practice "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," we must learn to be tough, barbarous, and evil. I realized that "All lay loads on a willing horse" represents a fallacy that is diametrically opposed to the truth—it is Satan's logic, it is the negative thing of Satan, and is a poison of Satan. Satan works through these specious theories to deceive humans into scheming against one another, murdering in cold blood, engaging in dogged and endless competition, submitting to no one until there is no humanity left within them. In this way humans become as corrupt as Satan itself, sacrificial objects to be buried with it, and Satan achieves its goal of corrupting and consuming all of humanity. I couldn't see through the illusion and took "All lay loads on a willing horse" as a truth to be accepted and respected. I thought that I couldn't be too kind or accommodating, and that being patient or tolerant in dealings with others was the way of the stupid and ignorant and would only leave me vulnerable to bullying. Therefore,

when this sister pointed out my inadequacies in order to help me recognize them and change for the better, not only did I not accept her comments, but I actually thought she was bullying me and nitpicking at inconsequential details. As a result, I lost my temper with this sister, thus oppressing her. Even when she abased herself and offered me an apology, I still didn't gain insight into myself or feel embarrassed, but rather sat there pleased as Punch, thinking that I had won, and thus I even further identified with and held aloft the satanic law of "All lay loads on a willing horse." How absurd, how preposterous I was! I had mistaken wrong for right, getting things completely backward! God's work in the last days is to cleanse humanity of Satan's poison, and use truth to change their corrupt disposition. In my own case, however, I hadn't sought the truth, or strived to dissect and recognize Satan's poison existing within me, nor did I practice the truth to change myself. Instead, I held on to Satan's fallacies and rejected the truth. If I continued on like that, I would never begin to understand myself. I would never achieve a change in my disposition and gain the truth. In the end, I would have to be annihilated by God, as is Satan's fate.

Thank God for His enlightenment and illumination, which allowed me to realize that "All lay loads on a willing horse" is Satan's axiom, and that it is nothing but a fallacy which Satan uses to deceive and corrupt mankind. This phrase is in direct opposition to the truth, and can only corrupt and ruin mankind. If man attains his sustenance from Satan's poison, if he acts according to Satan's axioms, he will only become more corrupt and evil. He will be less and less humane and more and more in opposition to God, removed from God. He will never receive God's salvation. I vow to put all my effort into God's word and into my pursuit of the truth, so that I may come to recognize the many varieties of Satan's venom within me, thoroughly forsake the fallacies of Satan, and no more act according to Satan's axioms. I vow to seek out God's will in all matters, and follow His word, so that God's word may take root deep within my heart and become the axioms by which I do things, the standards against which I measure myself, so that I may become someone who entirely lives by God's word.

63. I Am Indeed the Progeny of the Great Red Dragon

By Zhang Min, Spain

God's words say: "It was previously said that these people are the progeny of the great red dragon. In fact, to be clear, they are the embodiment of the great red dragon" ("Chapter 36" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Although I acknowledged verbally that God's words are the truth and that they reveal our actual state, I did not agree in my heart that I was the progeny nor the embodiment of the great red dragon. Instead, I always felt that I was capable of following God and expending myself for Him, that I was able to get along well with the majority of my brothers and sisters, and that the people around me thought quite highly of me. Though I possessed corrupt dispositions, I thought, that did not mean that I was as malicious as the great red dragon. Only after undergoing the experience of being exposed did I finally see the truth of how I had been corrupted by Satan, and I saw that I was filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and that I was eminently capable of doing the exact same things as the great red dragon.

My duty in the church was to compile articles. One day, my group leader told me that the sister I worked with and I would henceforth be responsible for all the work of compiling articles from all the churches, and that if anyone had a problem, then we could all discuss it and fellowship together. When I heard this news, I felt a little taken aback and I felt enormous pressure, and yet I still felt pleased with myself. I thought to myself: "We'll have a hand in compiling all the articles from all the churches. It looks as though I am able to do my part and I am a capable person within the church." A feeling of "responsibility" suddenly welled up inside me and, before I knew it, I was acting and talking in the position of a reviewer. One time, when we were exchanging ideas with brothers and sisters from the all-church article work group, I noticed that one of the brothers in the group was very actively engaged in our work. Whenever a problem arose, he would always take the initiative to express his own views, and sometimes when another brother or sister asked a question and I had already replied to in our online group, he would still insist on expressing his views after me, and his view on the matter would unerringly differ from mine. Whenever this happened, I would feel quite unhappy, and would think to myself: "He's so actively engaged in this group and many people agree with his views. Could it be that he wants to surpass me? Hmph! He knows too

little about me. He doesn't know what duty I do, yet still wants to compete with me. Isn't he lacking in self-awareness?" Thinking of this, I began to feel aversion toward this brother arise in my heart.

Later, I organized the brothers and sisters in the all-church article work group to exchange ideas about problems in the articles. Most of the brothers and sisters agreed with my suggestions, but this brother once again took a different view on things and pointed out my shortcomings. I knew that it was normal for people to have different suggestions whenever a problem arose and that we should accept whatever suggestion benefited the performance of our duty, but when I thought of how this brother had rejected my suggestion in front of so many other brothers and sisters, I became filled with resistance and dissatisfaction. I thought: "The other brothers and sisters can accept my suggestion without any differing views. But you have to make it all about you—are you trying to make things difficult for me on purpose to show how responsible toward work you are and how clearly you understand things? You are so arrogant and so difficult to get on with!" The more I thought about it, the more averse I became toward this brother, to the point where I didn't even want to say anything to him at all. Several days later, this brother sent us an article for us to read. He said the article was very well written and that we should send it out for everyone's reference. When I heard him speak in such a self-assured tone, I began to feel uncomfortable, and I thought: "We've already read through these articles. If this article hasn't been selected already then there must be something wrong with it. You must be as blind as a bat if you can't even tell this." In this way, I suppressed the dissatisfaction I felt inside and read this article all over again very unwillingly. I thereafter communicated to him my opinion and some of the issues I felt were present within the article, but he refused to accept my opinion and instead reminded me to take a serious approach to each and every article, or that I should ask my superiors to read this article through again. The resistance I felt within me grew at that moment, and I thought: "Since I met you, you've very seldom accepted or followed any of my suggestions, but instead you always make different suggestions for everyone to refer to and adopt. You show off your abilities at every opportunity and you are so arrogant. You simply have no regard for me whatsoever. Having dealings with someone like you is such a bother and so upsetting!" I even thought: "How could the church choose him to compile articles? Someone like him with such a terribly arrogant disposition is simply unsuited to perform this duty. Perhaps I should report his problems to my leader and let my

leader decide whether he is suited to this duty. It might be best if my leader transferred him elsewhere." When I thought about this, I realized that my state was wrong. I did not understand enough about this brother and I knew that I should not make judgments about him so lightly, but that I should be treating him fairly. I only thought about these things, however, and did not reflect on myself in regard to this matter any further, nor did I seek the truth to resolve my own corruptions, but instead continued to brood on this brother.

One day, my leader suggested that we exchange ideas with leaders and co-workers from all the other churches so as to discuss how we could better grasp the principles of article writing and take this work in hand. I agreed but then I felt incredibly nervous. This was going to be the first time I'd ever attended an online gathering to exchange ideas with the mid-level leaders and co-workers. Besides, I was not very good at expressing myself, and I worried that I wouldn't be able to fellowship clearly and that I would make an embarrassing spectacle of myself, and so I felt tormented by the prospect. The day before the online gathering was to commence, however, I suddenly received a message from this brother asking whether he could attend the gathering. When I read his message, I almost lost it. I thought: "You've attended gatherings to exchange ideas several times before and you've never accepted any of our suggestions, so what's the point in attending this one? I already feel under a lot of pressure with this gathering. If you ask me a difficult question tomorrow, you'll just make the whole thing even more unbearable for me." When I thought of him attending the gathering on the next day, I knew that I really did not want him there at all, and I tried to think of something to say to make him not want to attend. I pondered on what to say for a while but still couldn't come up with a suitable reason, so I said bluntly, "The content of this gathering will be pretty much the same as our last gathering. You don't need to attend." I'd thought that if I replied to him in this way then he wouldn't come back with anything else. To my surprise, however, he sent another message saying, "I have some time tomorrow and I'd like to hear what everyone will be discussing." When I read his message, I felt very upset, but I still had no reason to deny him permission to go. All I could do was reluctantly agree, but I still hesitated to add him to the group. I thought to myself: "You're such a pain! Why can I never get rid of you? Will we be able to achieve anything at this gathering with you in attendance? Are you trying to make things difficult for me on purpose?" I kept trying to think of a reason to stop him from attending, and I even thought of unfriending him, but then I thought: "Fine, you can attend. If you are as disagreeable and nitpicking as you were

at the last gathering then everyone will see how arrogant and conceited you are, and then no one will think very much of you. ..." Just then, I realized that my prejudices against him had transformed into hatred and that I was just expressing my evil intentions. If I allowed this situation to continue to develop, I dreaded to think how I would have treated this brother. And so, I hurriedly prayed and called to God, asking Him to protect my heart. Once I had calmed down, I began to reflect on why I had reacted so strongly when I encountered something which didn't accord with my own ideas, why I couldn't accept any voice that opposed me, and why I had formed such strong prejudices against this brother.

As I sought, I read a passage in fellowship: "How those who serve as leaders treat brothers and sisters who they find disagreeable, who oppose them, and who hold completely different views than them, is a very serious issue and should be handled with caution. If they do not enter into the truth of this issue, they will certainly discriminate and censure people when met with this kind of issue. This type of action is precisely an expression of the nature of the great red dragon that resists and betrays God. If those who serve as leaders pursue the truth, and possess conscience and reason, they will seek the truth and handle this matter correctly. ... As people, we need to be just and fair. As leaders, we must handle things according to God's words in order to stand witness. If we do things according to our own will, giving free rein to our own corrupt disposition, then that will be a terrible failure" (The Fellowship From the Above). This fellowship moved me greatly. I thought of why I had been so resistant and so averse toward this brother, so much so that I had even begun to hate him—was it not simply because he did not agree with my fellowships and had made some other suggestions which had caused me to lose face? Was it not simply because I'd seen him engage so actively in our group and gain everyone's approval, and so I felt that he had stolen my thunder? At first, we brothers and sisters had worked together to perform our duty, and because of our different calibers and understandings, it was normal to have different opinions on certain issues. All this brother was doing was expressing his own views—he harbored no wicked intentions. And yet I always wanted him to listen to me and obey me. I wanted him to agree with me and accept whatever I said, and he could not possibly say anything different from me. When his actions touched upon my self-regard and my position, resistance arose within me, so much so that I even excluded him and did not want him to attend the gathering. And if I did allow him to attend, it was only because I wanted him to make a fool of himself. I dissected these thoughts and ideas and saw that all I had been

expressing was a malevolent and arrogant satanic disposition. My actions truly had been so despicable and ugly!

I then read in fellowship: "No matter who you may be, as long as you disagree with them, you become a target for their punishment—what disposition is this? Is this not the same as the great red dragon? The great red dragon seeks supremacy over all and regards itself as the center of all things: 'If you don't agree with me then I'll punish you; if you dare to oppose me then I'll use military force to quash you.' These are the policies of the great red dragon, and the disposition of the great red dragon is that of Satan, the archangel. There are some people who, once they become leaders or workers, begin to implement the policies of the great red dragon. How do they do this? 'I'm a leader now and my first duty is to make everyone obey me in heart and by word, and only then can I begin my official work" ("To Enter Into the Reality of the Truth, One Must Focus on Changing One's Life Disposition" in Sermons and Fellowship XIII). "If a brother or sister takes a view or has an opinion on someone who genuinely possesses the truth and who can accept the truth and put it into practice, or if they discover that that person has shortcomings and makes mistakes, and they reproach them, criticize them or they prune them and deal with them, won't that person end up hating them? That person must first look into the matter and think: 'Is what you say right or not? Does it accord with the facts? If it does accord with the facts, then I'll accept it. If what you say is half right or it basically accords with the facts, then I will accept it. If what you say does not accord with the facts, but I can see that you are not a wicked person, that you are a brother or a sister, then I will be tolerant, and I will treat you correctly" ("The Deviations and Errors Which Must Be Resolved in Order to Practice Knowing Oneself" in Sermons and Fellowship VIII). From the fellowship, I saw that since the great red dragon came to power, it has never taken the interests of ordinary people into consideration, nor does it ever think about how to manage the country well or how to allow the Chinese people to live happy lives. Instead, everything it does is done merely to protect its own position and power. In order to rule over the people permanently and keep people firmly controlled in its grasp, it implements a policy of unified ideology and unified voice, it forbids people from having opposing views and from saying no to it. As long as an idea is put forward and advocated by itself, then everyone has to accept it whether it is right or wrong, and everyone absolutely must go along with it. If anyone doesn't agree with it or opposes it, then it will take their lives and impose sanctions on them, in pursuit of the satanic law of "Those who follow

me shall prosper while those who resist me shall die." Anyone who raises an objection is viewed as a cancer that needs to be cut out and it is anxious to kill all who oppose it as soon as possible and destroy them to their very roots. The massacre of college students in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989 is a typical example. Those college students were just protesting against corruption and advocating democracy, but they were viewed by the CCP as enemies. The CCP called the student movement a counter-revolutionary rebellion and decided to enact a bloody suppression of the students. When I compared my own behavior to that of the great red dragon, I realized that the nature I had been expressing was exactly that of the great red dragon. I was a corrupt person and my disposition had not changed at all. Nor did I possess even a shred of the reality of the truth, and the views I raised were not necessarily always right. I always wanted others to listen to me and obey me without question, or else I'd grow sick of them and would shun them, so much so that we would become irreconcilable. I would think of every possible means to get rid of them—I was so evil and devoid of humanity! I thought of how the church had arranged for the brothers and sisters and me to perform our duty together so that we could learn from each other's strengths, work together in harmony, and perform our duty together to satisfy God. And yet I hadn't thought of these things at all, but instead had only considered whether or not I'd be able to hold onto my own position, whether or not my self-regard and dignity would be wounded, and whether or not anyone else would listen to me. To those who had views which differed from mine, I would exclude them and suppress them—I really had acted like a bandit who ruled as a lord over his own hill. By doing this, how could I have satisfied God in the performance of my duty? I was just doing evil and resisting God! When I thought of these things, I felt even more ashamed; I saw that I was so arrogant and conceited, that I had the same disposition as the great red dragon and that I was also eminently capable of doing all the things the great red dragon did. Only then did I see that I was indeed the progeny of the great red dragon and that I was filled with the great red dragon's poisons. If I did not pursue dispositional change, then I would involuntarily do things which would interrupt and disturb God's work and, in the end, I would be punished and cursed by God for having offended His disposition. At that moment, I began to understand God's will and His good intentions. If this situation had not befallen me, I would have been totally unable to recognize that I possessed both the essence of the great red dragon—which was arrogant and conceited and which sought supremacy over all—and a God-resisting satanic nature. At the same time, I also

came to understand that God arranging this kind of situation was indeed the best protection for someone like me who was so arrogant and conceited, and who thought himself so supreme. If all the brothers and sisters had supported me and approved of me, and no one had raised any objection whatsoever, then I would have been even more arrogant and conceited, I would have made others follow me and obey me in all respects, I would have stood in God's place without even being aware of it, ruling my own kingdom and eventually offending God's disposition until God detested and rejected me. When I understood these things, I offered up thanks and praise to God from the bottom of my heart. I also let go of my prejudices and opinions about this brother. No matter how this gathering to exchange ideas turned out, I was willing to forsake my satanic nature and submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. Never did I imagine that the outcome of the gathering would be beyond all my expectations. That day, under the guidance of God, the gathering went very smoothly, and when I exchanged ideas with that brother, we were able to find common ground and we both helped strengthen each other's weaknesses. We relied on the guidance of God and brought the gathering smoothly to a close.

Through being exposed by God, I came to recognize that I was indeed the progeny of the great red dragon and that the poisons of the great red dragon had long since become my life. If I couldn't cast off these corrupt dispositions, then in the end I would only have been detested and rejected by God, God would have weeded me out, and I would have lost forever my chance to attain salvation. I thought of God's words which say: "Being My people who are born in the country of the great red dragon, surely there is not only a little, or a part, of the great red dragon's venom within you. Thus, this stage of My work is primarily focused on you, and this is one aspect of the significance of My incarnation in China" ("Chapter 11" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "It was previously said that these people are the progeny of the great red dragon. In fact, to be clear, they are the embodiment of the great red dragon" ("Chapter 36" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I also came to understand from God's words that God's work to save man is very practical and wise. God expresses His words to expose the poisons of the great red dragon and the satanic nature which exist within us, and by revealing the facts, God allowed me to have some understanding and discernment of the poisons of the great red dragon within me, and thereby reject it and forsake it, never to be corrupted or harmed by it again. I knew that there were still many satanic philosophies and axioms, and many poisons of the great red dragon within me. But from that day on, I wished only to pursue the truth in earnest, accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words, strive to rid myself of all the great red dragon's poisons as soon as possible, and live out a human likeness in order to bring comfort to God's heart!

64. I See the Truth of My Corruption

By Li Heng, Jiangsu Province

Among the words by which God reveals man I found this passage: "It was previously said that these people are the progeny of the great red dragon. In fact, to be clear, they are the embodiment of the great red dragon" ("Chapter 36" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I thought these words of God were meant to reveal those atheist authoritarian rulers, because they stifle people's thoughts and strictly forbid people from believing in God and worshiping God; they cruelly persecute God's chosen people, they disrupt and destroy God's work wherever they can, they do many wicked things and are perverse and godless, opposing God in everything. I, on the other hand, am a believer in God who fulfills their duty in the church, and even though I have corrupt dispositions, I'm nowhere near as malicious as them—how could I be the embodiment and child of the great red dragon? That was until I was exposed by God's work, and only then did I realize that the essence of my nature was the same as that of the great red dragon, and that I was, without a doubt, the embodiment of the great red dragon.

There was a deacon in our church who was tightly bound and constrained by her family. As a result, she wasn't conscientious in fulfilling her duties, and often she forgot to attend group meetings. I fellowshiped with her, saying, "You shouldn't be so irresponsible or slipshod with your duties. You are a church deacon and you have responsibility for the lives of our brothers and sisters. God has entrusted you with such an important commission, and God will detest and hate it if you treat it lightly!" After I'd given her this fellowship, she not only didn't accept it, but she also made excuses and gave reasons to refute me. I thought, "She is not at one with God. She can't be someone God wants to save, can she? Surely

she's unfit for use by God, or someone who is revealed and eliminated by God?" I began watching closely for a replacement in our church. As soon as I found the right person for the job, I planned to get rid of her. But for the time being there was no one suitable, so my only option was to fellowship with her again. Afterward she came to understand that she had failed to fulfill her duty and was irresponsible and neglectful, and she wanted to atone for her past mistakes. But still, I always felt like it wasn't enough, and I didn't have much fondness for her after that. Once, I asked her to hold a meeting with a host family that was a little far away from where she lived, but she refused and was unwilling to go. The anger in my heart surged up when she said that. I thought to myself: "You are too picky in fulfilling your duties, doing what you like and ignoring what you don't. You haven't the slightest shred of obedience and you refute anything that's said to you. The church has no use for people like you, and you should simply be expelled. In any case, you've brought this on yourself by not doing your duty properly." Even though I knew expelling people arbitrarily goes against principles, this idea was so strong and it kept coming up in my mind, I couldn't control it, and in my heart it troubled me constantly, and my state went into a rapid decline. In pain, all I could do was come before God and pray to Him, "Oh God! The sister is not listening to me, so I feel like I want to expel her as soon as may be. I know that this thought is wrong, but I can't help it. O God! I ask You to save me and let me take the correct approach to this sister, and let me not do anything that defies You." After I prayed, I was much calmer, and my desire to expel her wasn't as strong as before.

And then a passage of God's words arose in my mind, "The manifestations of the great red dragon are resistance to Me, lack of understanding and comprehension of the meanings of My words, frequent persecution of Me, and seeking to use schemes to interrupt My management. Satan is manifested as follows: struggling with Me for power, wanting to possess My chosen people, and releasing negative words to deceive My people" ("Chapter 96" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words shocked me. Was my revelation not precisely that of the great red dragon? The great red dragon, however, was capable of doing things which I had not done. I thought of how God performs His work of the last days to save man, and yet the great red dragon frantically suppresses, cruelly torments and persecutes God's chosen people, doing all it can to spread rumors to vilify and discredit The Church of Almighty God and to disturb people from believing and following God, attempting to take away their

chances to be saved, disturbing and interrupting God's work. Wasn't that exactly what I was doing? When I saw that my sister had some shortcomings, I didn't fellowship about the truth out of love to help her recognize her transgressions, understand God's will to save mankind, and be able to submit to God's work; instead, I magnified and over-analyzed her shortcomings and I wanted to follow my own desire to expel her and destroy her chance to be saved. Wasn't I trying to disrupt and destroy God's work of salvation among man? Was I not indeed the embodiment of the great red dragon? In a sermon, I read, "See how the great red dragon persecutes God and how it cruelly harms God's chosen people, then look at how you resist and rebel against God and how you are incapable of getting along peacefully with God's chosen people. You are filled with grudges and are too selfish. How are you any different from the great red dragon? ... Many people don't recognize the poisons of the great red dragon that lurk within them. They always think the great red dragon is too evil, and that when they hold power, they will be much better than the great red dragon; but is that truly the case? If you took power this instant, how much better than the great red dragon would you be? Could you do so much better than the great red dragon? The truth is that the great red dragon holding power is no different than any of corrupt mankind holding power. If the great red dragon can kill 80 million people, how many will you kill when you hold power? Some say, 'If I held power, I wouldn't kill anyone.' Just as you say this, someone will stand up and curse you, you will get furious and say, 'Then I'll just kill one, I'll make an exception.' When a group rises up to oppose you, you will say, 'Killing a group isn't much, the great red dragon killed 80 million. I'm only killing a small group, that's much less than the great red dragon.' When 10 million rise up to oppose you, you will say, 'I can kill these 10 million too, because if I don't, how will I hold on to power?' Don't you see a problem here? When you have no power, you do no evil, but there is no guarantee you won't do evil deeds when you hold power, because man's natures are all the same" ("How People Should Cooperate With God's Work of Perfecting Man" in Sermons and Fellowship III). Through the enlightenment and illumination of God's words and the analysis of this sermon, I finally saw clearly my true colors, that I was the embodiment of the great red dragon, and that my corrupt essence was no different from the essence of the great red dragon's nature. When my sister didn't clearly understand the truth and was slipshod and irresponsible in her duties, I didn't help her with a loving heart at all, but instead I spoke demandingly to her with a forceful tone. And when she rebutted me and didn't follow and obey my arrangements, I became angry and

condemned her as someone being exposed and eliminated by God, evil intent arose in my heart and I wanted to expel her from the church. Wasn't I behaving like the great red dragon, with its policies of "Exalt only myself," "Those who obey shall prosper, while those who resist shall perish," "Blow things out of proportion" and "Massacre the innocent"? These are all classic examples of the great red dragon's poisons! The great red dragon massacres innocents and kills countless people; it has never had any regard for people's lives, and if anyone doesn't agree with it or obey it, or they offend it in some way, then it murders them. If I were in power, I would be just the same as the great red dragon, and there would be no evil that I wouldn't do and I would be completely a law unto myself. Were it not for the work arrangements and principles laid down by the church keeping me in check, and my brothers and sisters supervising me, I would surely have long ago placed my sister's head on the chopping block. From my own thoughts and ideas, I saw that, since I had revealed such things, then all I needed would be power and position to be able to do the same deeds as the great red dragon, that of massacring innocents. God's enlightenment and guidance enabled me to know my own ugly and malicious nature and essence, and it was God's judgment and chastisement which gave me the chance to repent. My heart was filled with gratitude for God, and I also came to hate and repent of my actions even more.

This experience gave me some true understanding of my corrupt essence. I saw that I was truly someone without reason or a conscience, undoubtedly the progeny of the great red dragon. But it also made me feel that no matter how piercing God's words may be or whether they accord with man's notions, every utterance is the eternal, unchanging truth, and sooner or later corrupt humanity will be utterly convinced. O God! I want to perform my duties well to repay You for the grace of Your salvation, I want to make peace with my brothers and sisters and make up for my past mistakes, and become someone new who comforts You.

65. I Am Willing to Accept the Supervision of All

By Xianshang, Shanxi Province

A little while ago, every time I heard that the district preachers were coming to our church, I would feel a bit ill at ease. I didn't reveal my feelings outwardly, but my heart was full of secret opposition. I thought: "It would be best if you all didn't come. If you do come, at least don't work in the church with me. Otherwise, I'll be restricted and unable to commune." Later, the situation got so bad that I actually hated their coming. Even as such, I didn't think there was anything wrong with me and certainly didn't try to know myself in the context of this situation.

Until one day, I read the following passage of God's word: "The teaching of the feudal code of ethics and passing down of knowledge of ancient culture has long infected man and turned man into devils big and small. There are but few who would readily receive God and jubilantly welcome the coming of God. Man's face is filled with murder, and in all places, death is in the air. They seek to cast God out from this land; with knives and swords in hand, they arrange themselves in battle formation to annihilate God. ... Across this land are scattered idols, with all colors of the rainbow, which turn the land into a dazzling world, and the king of devils keeps a smirk on its face, as if its evil plot has succeeded. Meanwhile, man is completely unaware of it, nor does man know that the devil has already corrupted him to such degree that he has become senseless and defeated. It wishes to wipe out God's all in one blow, to again insult and assassinate Him, and attempts to tear down and disturb His work. How could it allow God to be of equal status? How can it tolerate God 'interfering' with the work among men? How can it allow God to unmask its odious face? How can it allow God to disrupt its work? How could this devil, fuming with rage, allow God to govern its court of power on earth? How could it willingly admit defeat? Its odious countenance has been revealed for what it is, hence one finds himself not knowing whether to laugh or cry, and it is truly difficult to speak of. Is this not its essence?" ("Work and Entry (7)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I contemplated the meaning of this passage while reflecting on my recent condition: Why was it that I so disliked the district workers coming to our church? Why wasn't I willing to let them work alongside me in the church? Was it not because I was worried that if they were to come into the church, they

would realize that I wasn't working according to principle or God's will and would deal with me with regard to this issue? What's more, was I not scared that their coming would throw a wrench in my work plans? Was I not scared that they would commune better than me and cause me to lose my privileged status in the hearts of my brothers and sisters? If they didn't come, I could go about my work plans just as I pleased. Even if my methods did not accord with principle or God's will, no one would know and certainly no one would deal with me or criticize me. In this way, my standing in the hearts of my brothers and sisters would only become greater, more privileged and more stable. All the brothers and sisters of the church would look up to me, admire me and obey my orders. The whole church would revolve around me. Was this not my true purpose? Was I not scheming to drive out God from the hearts of my brothers and sisters so that I may gain status in their hearts? Was I not a living and breathing example of those poisons of the great red dragon, "The emperor is as far away as the sky," "There is no king but me"? In order to control and claim dominion over humanity, the great red dragon combated the coming of God with full force, not allowing God to have a hand in the affairs of men, to expose its ghoulish face, to interfere in its plans or govern in its dominion. Thus, it wildly opposed, disrupted, tore down and decimated God's work. It fantasized that, one day, it could wrest God from the hearts of humankind and fulfill its despicable objective of becoming the eternal arbiter of man and forcing mankind to worship it. What difference was there between my own thoughts and the actions of the great red dragon? Because I wanted to maintain my own status and assure that I could go my own way and not be restricted in my work, I didn't want to let other leaders or workers supervise or inspect my work. I didn't want anyone else meddling in the work of my church or watering my brothers and sisters. Why didn't I want this? Was it not just because I wanted to control and claim dominion over others? Was my ultimate ambition not to proclaim myself king and earthly ruler over my brothers and sisters? I saw that the poison of the great red dragon—that unchecked arrogance and megalomania—had already penetrated to the core of my being. The influence of the great red dragon had long since taken hold within me: I had become as malevolent a demon as the dragon itself. On the surface, I was working to fulfill my duty, but my heart held ulterior motives. In reality, I wanted to break up the throne, set chaos in the ranks and erect my own empire in opposition to God and in obstruction of the execution of God's will. My nature was pure evil and so terrifying! If not for the harsh revelation and judgment of God's word, I never would have known to what degree I had been corrupted by Satan and opposed God. I never would have come to realize that, deep within my soul, a dastardly plot had been hatched and that my true nature was so deeply afflicted by evil.

Thank You God for Your revelations and enlightenment, which allowed me to realize my satanic nature of arrogance and vileness. I see that I am, in fact, a child of the great red dragon and of the archangel. God, I vow to seek the truth with diligence and come to a deeper understanding of how the great red dragon's poison afflicts my nature. I vow, more so, to accept the inspection and supervision of other workers and leaders. I will accept the dealing and pruning of all. I shall place myself under the inspection of the entire congregation so I may fulfill my duties conscientiously to comfort Your heart.

66. Discriminating Against Dissenters Is Too Malicious

By Xiaojin, Zhejiang Province

I am a church leader of The Church of Almighty God. In February of 2007, the church issued a work arrangement and it emphasized that "They must reassign all those who are effective and experienced in watering new believers to complete these tasks. Those who are not suited to watering new believers absolutely should not be used in this capacity, and they must be transferred so that this work is not held up" (The Fellowship From the Above). Because I had some preconceived ideas about the sister who watered new believers in our church, once I'd read this arrangement, instead of going by principles to decide whether the sister was suitable or not, I made a judgment of her in my heart: "This person performs her duty perfunctorily and does not focus on reading the words of God. Besides, she cares for the flesh, so she simply isn't suitable to water new believers. More importantly, she thinks she has some caliber and so she has become arrogant and she looks down on others. Last time, she went to the upper-level leaders who were in charge of watering new believers and she spoke ill of me. If it were not for the demands of my work, I really wouldn't want to bother with her anymore." Thinking about this, I made a plan in my heart: Why not take advantage of this opportunity and replace her so that I won't have to see her anymore? Isn't she arrogant? I'll just replace her and then I'll see how prideful she is!

Consequently, I didn't take the effectiveness of her work into consideration and I didn't

think about the interests of the church. I didn't discuss it with my co-workers and I didn't obtain the approval of brothers and sisters of the church; I was impatient to have my own way and remove her from her duty. Afterward, I summarily arranged for Sister Zheng to fulfill the duty of watering new believers. In my view, she could endure hardships, she spoke kind words and was a fast worker. She had compassion for people and was very suitable to perform the duty of watering new believers. Little did I expect that the upper-level leaders responsible for watering new believers unanimously thought that the original sister was good at watering new believers, and that she was the right one for the job. Therefore, I did my best to speak highly of Sister Zheng, even to the point of saying there was no one who could perform the duty of watering new believers better than her. But just then, I received news saying that Sister Zheng was being watched by the police because of preaching the gospel. I grudgingly had no alternative but to reinstate the original sister to water new believers. Facing this situation, my heart was severely distraught and depressed, and I felt I had nowhere to vent my frustrations.

One day I read a passage in a sermon that said: "How those who serve as leaders treat brothers and sisters who they find disagreeable, who oppose them, and who hold completely different views than them, is a very serious issue and should be handled with caution. If they do not enter into the truth of this issue, they will certainly discriminate and censure people when met with this kind of issue. This type of action is precisely an expression of the nature of the great red dragon that resists and betrays God. If those who serve as leaders pursue the truth, and possess conscience and reason, they will seek the truth and handle this matter correctly" (The Fellowship From the Above). At this time, I couldn't help but think back about what had happened with the personnel transfer for watering new believers. Hadn't my behavior concerning the sister who watered new believers been oppressive and had excluded her? The work arrangement clearly emphasized that we had to take the work of watering new believers and transfer in suitable people who could water new believers well. I knew perfectly well that this sister could cooperate with this aspect of work, but because some of her behavior had been at odds with my own ideas, and because she had reported the deviations in my work to upper-level leaders, I had developed prejudices against her and had privately replaced her under the guise of implementing the work arrangement, and then arranged for someone who was to my liking to take her place. When brothers and sisters suggested that I should still let her perform the duty of watering new believers, not only did

I not listen to them but I also did all I could to push forward my own candidate. Then God created an environment in which I was forced against my will to agree to this sister regaining her duty, and yet my heart was filled with disobedience. In spite of God's urgency to save people, and without thinking about carrying out the work properly, I took advantage of the opportunity to discriminate against and censure the person who offended me. In doing so, was I not using the same contemptible method as the CCP to eradicate dissenters? The CCP often touts the words "justice" and "light" when it eradicates dissenters. I was also replacing someone who'd displeased me in the name of putting the work arrangement into practice. The CCP promotes those it trusts to create a family of like-minded people who can have sole rule over China, and I was promoting someone who I personally thought was good and who was to my liking. The CCP follows the satanic code of "Those who submit will prosper; those who resist shall perish," while I'd also used my "authority" to get revenge on the person who offended me and who had an opinion about me. The CCP twists facts; it calls black white and white black. I had also spoken relying on my emotions when I'd blindly criticized the one who wasn't to my liking, and I persistently spoke in favor of the person that I liked even to the point of exaggerating, and speaking contrary to the facts. I saw that I had been deeply corrupted by Satan and the poison of Satan was deeply rooted in me. It had already become my life, to such an extent that it affected every aspect of my behavior with other people. I had lost the conscience and reason a normal human being should have. I wasn't serving God; I was interrupting and disturbing the church's work, and I was resisting God. If it were not for God's enlightenment, I would still be living in my own corrupt disposition and would still be brooding over my failed motives. I would surely be unaware that my conduct had offended God's disposition.

I thank God for His judgment and chastisement and His revelations that have given me some knowledge of the satanic poisons within me, and of my nature and essence. From now on, I am willing to actively pursue truth. By contrasting my thoughts, words and actions with the word of God, I shall analyze myself and recognize the satanic disposition within me, so that I will come to truly hate and forsake myself, be someone who possesses truth and humanity, and perform my duty well to bring comfort to God's heart!

67. Jealousy—the Chronic Illness of the Heart

By He Jiejing, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

I performed my duty with Sister Zhang and, through the course of our acquaintance, I found that not only did she have a pure understanding of God's word and that she fellowshiped about the truth very clearly, but that she was also good at singing and dancing. She was better than me at everything. The brother and sister of our host family liked her very much and would seek her out to fellowship with her. Because of this, my heart was quite unsettled and I felt like I was being given the cold shoulder—even to the point of thinking that as long as she was there, there was no place for me. In my heart, I began to feel fed up with her and I didn't want to work with her in fulfilling our duties anymore. I hoped that she would leave so that the brothers and sisters would like me and think highly of me.

One day, a leader came to have a meeting with us. Due to her negative state, Sister Zhang requested to be transferred to a different duty. I was very happy to hear her say this, and I thought: "I had always hoped that you would go. If you go, then I can have my day in the sun." Therefore, I was eager for the leader to immediately assign her to another duty. However, things backfired on me and the leader didn't give her a new duty, and she patiently fellowshiped about the truth with her, and helped her change her state. When I saw this, I felt incredibly anxious, and my desire for her to leave became even more pressing. I thought: "When will I be able to have my day in the sun if she doesn't leave this time? No, I have to think of a way to make her leave as soon as possible." Consequently, I took the opportunity when the sister was not present to give the leader further highly colored details, saying: "Her bad state usually inhibits her from focusing on her duty. Now she has lost the work of the Holy Spirit and it has already affected the church's work. You might as well assign her to a new duty. Sister X is pretty good and is more worth cultivating. You could choose her to perform this duty..."

After I had finished saying this, the word of God came to me in reproach: "Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. ... How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?" ("The Wicked Will Surely Be Punished" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

In facing God's words of judgment, I felt as if God was reprimanding me to my face. Immediately I began to tremble with fear and couldn't help but feel afraid for my words and actions. Was I not one of the people revealed by the word of God who "oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position"? When I saw that Sister Zhang was better than me at everything, and that the brothers and sisters all liked her, I became jealous in my heart. I was fed up with her, I discriminated against her, and hoped she would leave soon so that I could have my day in the sun. In order to get this sister to leave, and for the brothers and sisters to pay attention to me and for me to have a place in their hearts, I took advantage of the sister's bad state and told tales on her to the leader under the guise of protecting the church's interests, hoping to use the leader to root her out. My conduct completely exposed my true colors and revealed my sinister and malicious satanic disposition. In order to create a dictatorship, the CCP will use any means necessary to root out dissidents; in order to be at the core of my brothers and sisters and make them like me and revolve around me, I employed crafty schemes to root out those who were of no benefit to me. The CCP is envious of those greater than itself and harms those with noble aspirations; I was jealous of this sister because she was better than me at everything and I tried to use deplorable methods to get rid of her. The CCP frames and slaughters people for its own purposes; in order to obtain my own purposes, I intentionally exaggerated the sister's faults. My conduct was exactly the same as the deplorable actions of the CCP; I truly am a loyal child of Satan! The church had arranged for us to work together so that we could help and assist each other, so that we could fulfill our duty well with one heart and mind to satisfy God. It was also so that we could use our strengths to make up for each other's weaknesses, so that we could understand and obtain more truths and have our life dispositions changed. But I didn't understand the will of God in the slightest degree. When I saw the sister was in a bad state, not only did I not support and help her with a loving heart, but on the contrary, for the sake of contending for my own position, I couldn't wait for her to be speedily replaced, to the point that I would use any means to accomplish my own purposes. If I didn't hurry and repent, I would surely be ultimately destroyed by God along with Satan.

After I'd come to a realization of my own true state, I had more appreciation for the great pains and effort God goes to to save me. God used this situation to expose me and judge me, and to make me see clearly my deplorable, ugly true face that came from Satan's corruption, and through this enabled me to generate true hatred for my satanic nature, so

that I would be able to pursue the truth and change myself. I truly give thanks to God! It was God's judgment and chastisement that awakened me in time. From this time on, I wish to forsake my satanic nature, no longer contend for anything for my own sake, and no longer be jealous of those who are better than me. I wish to work together in earnest with this sister, to use our strengths to make up for each other's weaknesses, and to fulfill our duty together to satisfy God. Even more, I wish to pursue the truth and cast off my satanic dispositions, thereby living out a true human likeness to bring comfort to God's heart!

68. Throwing off Shackles

By Momo, Anhui Province

I used to firmly believe in the saying, "Only by experiencing the hardest hardships can one rise above the ordinary," thinking that it was a way of displaying motivation. Therefore, no matter what I was doing, I never wanted to fall behind. I was willing to accept any hardship as long as it meant I could rise above everyone else. After I accepted God, my attitude remained the same. But when God revealed the truth to me, I finally realized that this perspective is incorrect, and that it was Satan's shackles that had bound and harmed me.

Not too long ago, the church sent Sister Xie who I partnered with to another area to fulfill her duty as leader. Upon hearing the news, my heart sank, thinking: "At first, we were both demoted from being leaders. Now my sister will be returning to serve God in a leadership position and her growth potential will be unlimited, but I will still be here performing my duty in obscurity. What future will there be in that?" But then I thought, "As people say, 'There are a million different paths to success.' As long as I fulfill my duty properly, will I not also be successful? If I redouble my efforts at pursuing the truth, maybe one day the leaders will see that I understand the truth. Then they'll promote me and my future will be equally bright." After this realization, the feelings of dejection and loss inside me instantly vanished, and there arose in me the strength to do my absolute best. I threw myself into my duty, and I read God's word when I was not busy, not daring to slacken for even a moment.

One day, I saw the following passage in a sermon: "Everything that restricts you from pursuing God and pursuing the truth is one of Satan's shackles. No matter which of Satan's

shackles you are bound by, you are living under its domain" ("Tasks that Servants of God Must Complete" in Sermons and Fellowship III). After reading this, I could not help but ask myself, "Which of Satan's shackles am I living under? Which of its poisons are hindering my pursuit of the truth?" As I quietly pondered these questions, I thought of my recent state. I had not been passive since Sister Xie was sent off to fulfill her duty as leader. In fact, I became even more devoted to reading God's word, praying to God, and actively fulfilling my duty. On the surface, I seemed even more diligent in pursuing the truth than before, but if I carefully dissected my motives and goals behind pursuing the truth, I would discover that my ability to accept falling behind was only because I harbored an ambition to become famous and rise above everyone else someday. My burning desire to be the best of the best was the reason I didn't become passive and instead pursued the truth more actively, but my so-called pursuit of the truth was just an illusion, an impure pursuit. In my delusion, I wished to engage in a short-lived pursuit of the truth to fulfill my own despicable aim of standing out from the crowd. Thinking back on my years spent following God, I realized that all the expending of myself was done under the domination of Satan's poison of "Only by experiencing the hardest hardships can one rise above the ordinary." This is how it bound me like an invisible shackle and drove me to strive to stand out from the crowd and become top dog. When I already had a position, I was still pursuing an even higher one. When I lost my position or failed to gain one, although I didn't become passive and on the outside was bearing hardships and paying the price to pursue the truth to my utmost, I was not bearing hardships in order to gain the truth. I simply wanted to once again gain a chance to stand out. That's when I finally understood that my stance of "Only by experiencing the hardest hardships can one rise above the ordinary" was actually one of Satan's poisons deep-rooted in me. I had been tricked; the poison had sapped me of all my humanity. I was arrogant and ambitious with an exaggerated sense of my own abilities, and I myself had been completely unaware of it all. I actually thought my ambition was a testament to my aspiration, and that my arrogant disposition of unwillingness to fall behind was a sign of my motivation. I worshiped Satan's fallacies as truth and saw them as a badge of honor instead of a scarlet letter. How stupid was I to have been tricked by Satan like that, to have failed to differentiate good from evil? I finally saw just how pathetic I was. I also learned just how insidious and despicable Satan is. Satan uses specious fallacies to deceive and corrupt us. It leads us astray, and we swear fealty to its deceitful schemes. But we live within self-deception and

lack awareness, still thinking we're pursuing the truth and suffering for the truth. Satan's poisons are harmful indeed! If it hadn't been for God's enlightenment, I would never have seen the truth that I was corrupted by Satan, and I certainly would never have seen through its deceitful schemes. If it hadn't been for God's enlightenment, I would have kept on living under Satan's shackles, until Satan eventually consumed me whole.

At that time, I thought of God's words: "If you are very glad to be a service-doer in the house of God, working diligently and conscientiously in obscurity, always giving and never taking, then I say that you are a loyal saint, because you seek no reward and are simply being an honest person" ("Three Admonitions" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words showed me the way of practice: As one of God's creations, I should love Him and satisfy Him and devoutly fulfill my duty, rather than living within a satanic corrupt disposition and striving for fame and gain. This is the conscience and sense that one of God's creations should possess. This is a pursuit that is in line with His will. From this day forward, I will do my best to pursue the truth. I will rely on truth to penetrate Satan's deceitful schemes and throw off its shackles. No longer will I seek to tower above others. Instead, I will toil in obscurity, fulfilling my duty to satisfy God. Even if I'm left with nothing in the end, I will continue on willingly with nary a regret, because I am just one of God's insignificant creations. Satisfying the Creator is my true purpose in life.

69. Satanic Philosophy Is Entrapping and Damaging

By Wu You, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Some time ago, the church arranged for me to live with a host family for work reasons. When I first had a gathering with the elderly couple who were hosting me, they said, "We are most afraid of praying in gatherings. We know what to say when we pray on our own, but when it comes to praying in gatherings, we just don't know what to say." When I heard this, I thought to myself, "Praying in gatherings is so we can better quiet our hearts before God and more easily gain the Holy Spirit's work. If we don't pray but just rely on our own fellowship, our gatherings won't achieve any results. We've got to pray!" But then I reconsidered, "If they really are afraid of praying, wouldn't they form an opinion of me if I insisted that they pray? My duty requires me to stay at their home long term—what if they

formed an unfavorable opinion of me and no longer wanted to host me because I wouldn't go along with their wishes? I guess I should just go along with it." Thus, over the course of the next month, we never prayed during gatherings. This made fellowship on God's words dull and insipid, and utterly lacking the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. We would also often go off topic. Gradually, I discovered that this brother's and sister's conditions became less and less proper, and they were not willing to have gatherings. Even when we did, they were always dozing off, and in daily life they failed to place importance on reading the word of God. They watched TV whenever they had time, and were not as warm toward me, even becoming reluctant to talk to me. Faced with this situation, I felt very upset and confused: I followed their wishes in everything, and did not offend them. Why were they like this?

Just when I had become most puzzled by this situation, God's words enlightened me: "If you do not have a proper relationship with God, then no matter what you do to maintain your relationships with other people, no matter how hard you work or how much energy you exert, it will all just pertain to a human philosophy for living. You are maintaining your position among people through a human perspective and a human philosophy so that people will praise you, but you are not following the word of God to establish proper relationships with people. If you do not focus on your relationships with people but maintain a proper relationship with God, if you are willing to give your heart to God and learn to obey Him, then naturally your relationships with all people will become proper. ... A proper relationship between people is established on the foundation of giving their hearts to God, and not through human effort" ("It Is Very Important to Establish a Proper Relationship With God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Through God's words I suddenly saw the light. As it turned out, this situation had arisen because I was blindly focused on maintaining relationships of the flesh between people, and not focused on building a proper relationship with God. Thinking back on how I had been interacting with this brother and sister over this period of time, I had been following them in everything and doing everything to accommodate them, without seeking the principles of truth or considering whether my actions would benefit them, so that they would form a favorable impression of me and be willing to host me. When I learned about their fear of praying during gatherings, I did not communicate truth with them to help them understand the meaning and importance of praying; instead, to safeguard my own interests, I went along with them and took prayer out of our gatherings. Given that there was no prayer, there was no way to receive the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and His guidance during gatherings, or to gain light and obtain sustenance of life through reading the word of God. As a result, our states became less proper, and we were unable to maintain a proper relationship. Didn't this all come about because I wasn't putting the truth into practice? I was well aware of the importance of prayer. Prayer helps people to be moved by God's Spirit, and is a way for the Holy Spirit to work. Prayer can help us to gain more enlightenment from the Holy Spirit to better understand the truth, plus by praying before gatherings we can quiet our hearts before God. It's a way to show God's place in man's heart, to show that man honors God above all else. But I was still going by Satan's philosophy of life—"Be worldlywise for the sake of personal survival"—and canceling prayer to maintain my relationships with others. This showed that I had no place for God at all in my heart and did not in the least have a heart of reverence for God. I could recall many times in the past when I had stood in opposition to God motivated by self-preservation: When I was leading the church, I saw people spreading certain notions, spreading negativity, disturbing church life, but I dared not stop them, for fear that if I said something it would jeopardize my own interests. In managing gospel work, I backed off the minute brothers and sisters complained things were too hard, and didn't dare to ask more of them, fearing I would offend them and lose my place in their hearts. In doing so, I made our gospel work ineffective. Working with my coworkers, I noticed that the sister I was partnered with was not serious about her work but I was afraid to point this out to her, for fear that she would be unhappy and develop prejudices against me that would affect our harmony. It was only at this point that I clearly understood that in everything I did, my focus was always on others' attitude toward and evaluation of me. I safeguarded my place and image in other people's hearts, and considered my own gains and losses. It could be said that I was living completely by Satan's philosophy of "Be worldly-wise for the sake of personal survival." It had become the principle of my actions, the basis of how I functioned as a person. It also became the root of my problem of believing in God yet disobeying and resisting Him. God requires that we practice the truth in all things, and that we should be people who dare to uphold the principles of the truth, have a sense of justice, and have a stance. However, this satanic philosophy made me cowardly, selfish, and despicable. I could not stand up for justice and could not practice the truth. I did not consider principles or a stance in anything that I did, but only whether it would be of benefit to me. This satanic philosophy of "Be worldly-wise for the sake of personal survival" is a negative principle totally opposed to the truth—a tool used by Satan to corrupt people. In living by this principle, people only become more deceitful, cunning, selfish, and despicable. They gradually lose those characteristics which make up a real human. Satanic philosophy is entrapping and damaging. I do not ever want to live by this philosophy again! Once I recognized all this, I shared the truth regarding prayer in fellowship with this elderly couple. After they understood the meaning and importance of prayer, they were willing to practice praying during gatherings and, with that, their states changed.

Faced with the reality of the situation, I learned that living by a satanic philosophy is harmful in every way. From now on, I vow to pursue the truth wholeheartedly, see through all manner of satanic philosophies which I have adopted, and stop living according to such philosophies. I want to let the word of God reign in my heart and take control. I want to practice the truth in all things and live by the word of God.

70. Why Have I Taken the Path of the Pharisees?

By Suxing, Shanxi Province

I am a person with an arrogant and conceited nature who cares too much about position. For many years in my faith, I have been bound by reputation and position and have not been able to free myself from it. Time and time again I have been promoted and then replaced; I have had many setbacks in my position and have had many bumps along the way. After many years of being dealt with and refined, I felt that I was no longer so preoccupied with my position. I didn't want to be like I had been in the past, thinking that as long as I was a leader I could be perfected by God and that if I was not a leader, then I had no hope. I understood that regardless of what duty I was fulfilling, I only needed to pursue the truth and I would be perfected by God, and that pursuing reputation and position is the way of the antichrist and offends God's disposition. Then I thought: Regardless of what duty I am fulfilling, I can accept and obey not having a position. At times, when the corruption of pursuing fame and position was exposed, I could resolve it by seeking the truth. No matter what difficulties I encountered while fulfilling my duty, I was willing to pay the price. Therefore, I thought that I had already stepped onto the path of pursuing the truth. I thought I had regained some humanity and reason. But through what was revealed by the facts, I saw that

I had not truly stepped onto the path of pursuing the truth. I was very far off the mark.

In late June of 2013, the leader here was replaced because he didn't do the practical work, and when leader nominations were being carried out, my brothers and sisters chose me to be the new leader. When I heard that I would be assuming such a great responsibility, I became a little concerned, feeling that I did not possess the reality of truth and that I wouldn't be able to do the work. I thought: "The scope is so big and there are so many brothers and sisters. How can I lead them? Those who are of higher caliber than I have been replaced. How can I do any better? I am afraid I will end up being replaced as well; I am no longer willing to pursue such a high position. As long as I can fulfill my duty, that's just fine." So, I declined on the spot: "No, I am not competent for this work." I came up with all kinds of reasons and excuses. I fully believed that I was being rational in doing this and that it was the truth. Later, I was able to recognize through the fellowship of my brothers and sisters that I was afraid of being exposed if I became a leader again because I was holding to the poisons of Satan inside of me; that is, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall" and "It's lonely at the top." I always felt that being a leader was a dangerous thing. Even though I knew in theory that the reason for those people being removed was that they did not pursue the truth, their natures were too wicked, and they did all kinds of evil, deep in my heart I believed that if I was not a major leader, then there would be no opportunities to do evil. I was just protecting myself. It then occurred to me that because of my faith and preaching the gospel, I was being hunted by the CCP and couldn't go back home. I had no way out. If I became a major leader and ended up offending God's disposition and being expelled because I lacked the truth and did evil, then I really wouldn't be able to go on living. I lived in darkness and torment, bound by these notions and poisons. In my pain all I could do was cry out to God: "Oh God, facing this responsibility, I know that You have exalted me. I know that refusing it is betraying You. But right now I am living bounded by Satan's poisons and am unable to free myself from it. I am deeply afraid that after bearing this great responsibility, I will be punished for doing a great evil that offends Your disposition because my nature is dangerous and I do not possess the truth. Oh God! I am in pain and bewildered. I don't know how to submit to You. I beg You, God, to help me and save me." During my prayer, God enlightened me to think of a passage of God's words: "And your knowledge of Me does not stop at these misunderstandings; even worse is your blasphemy against God's Spirit and vilification of Heaven. This is why I say that such faith as yours will only

cause you to stray further from Me and be in greater opposition against Me. Throughout many years of work, you have seen many truths, but do you know what My ears have heard? How many among you are willing to accept the truth? You all believe you are willing to pay the price for the truth, but how many of you have truly suffered for the truth? There is nothing but unrighteousness in your hearts, which makes you think that everyone, no matter who they are, is equally deceitful and crooked" ("How to Know the God on Earth" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words of judgment turned my bewilderment and pain into fear and trembling. In particular, the words "blasphemy against God's Spirit," "vilification of Heaven," and "There is nothing but unrighteousness in your hearts" were like a sword piercing my heart, making me feel the righteousness, majesty, and wrath of God's disposition. I saw that my condition at the time was truly resisting and blaspheming God, and that its nature was very grave! Only at that moment was my rebellious heart able to turn around. I prostrated myself before God to examine and dissect my corruption, seeking to submit to Him. I thought back to all those years of believing in God. I had undergone His judgment and chastisement many times. However, not only did I not recognize God's love and salvation within all of that, but I actually misunderstood and guarded against Him more and more. I blamed God for everything that was unjust as if God's work was too bothersome for man. After many years of experiencing God's work, my relationship with God had not become any closer or more proper. Rather, I was becoming more estranged and distant from God, which had become a large chasm that I couldn't cross. Was that what I had reaped after all those years? I then became able to recognize that my selfish and deplorable nature was driving me to betray my conscience. I had forgotten the price God had paid for me, His salvation and cultivation of me over the years. At that time, I was full of self-reproach and remorse, and I prayed to God again: "Oh God, I will not live by the poisons of Satan anymore; I will not wound Your heart again. I am willing to accept Your judgment and chastisement and turn away from my mistaken viewpoints and perform my duty well to comfort Your heart." Then I read a passage of a sermon: "Everyone who does not love God is on the path of the antichrist and will ultimately be exposed and eliminated. God's work of the last days is saving and perfecting people and every wicked person who is not saved will be exposed and eliminated. Therefore, each person will follow its own kind. Why are so many people exposed doing all kinds of evil with their position and power? It is not because their position hurts them. The fundamental

problem is the essence of man's nature. A position can certainly expose people, but if a good-hearted person has a high position, they will not commit various evils. Some people will not commit evil when they don't have a position, they seem to be good people on the surface, but once they do obtain a position they will do all kinds of evil" (The Fellowship From the Above). Through this fellowship, I was able to see how absurd and preposterous the notions that existed in my heart were. In fact, whether or not someone is able to walk the path of pursuing the truth is not contingent upon whether or not they have a position and it is not that having a position makes it difficult to walk that path. The key lies in whether or not the nature of a person is fond of the truth and whether or not they love God. I thought that through my many years of "being tempered," I had come to be less concerned with my position, thinking that I was like a blade of grass that would not seek to grow into a great tree, and that I was able to be honest in pursuing the truth and fulfilling my duty. I thought I wouldn't be like before, feeling pain, weakness, negativity and despair when I saw the church promoting other people instead of me. Because of these manifestations, I believed that my disposition had been transformed to some degree and that I was already walking the path of Peter. But then, in light of facts and the truth, I was able to clearly see my true colors: I was not really letting go of position, but instead I was just being cleverer and craftier; my corrupt disposition had just become more hidden. Even after being dealt with many times, I still was not giving my heart to God and honestly seeking to love God. Rather, I learned how to analyze and observe, and had become more focused on preserving myself. My future prospects were always weighing on my mind. I had planted the absurd notion in my heart that "High positions are not safe." Wasn't that misunderstanding and guarding against God? How could that be showing love for God and walking the path of Peter?

Regarding my mistaken views, I read "The Principles of Determining One's Duty and Place" as well as "The Principles of Spending for God" in "Practice and Exercises for Principled Behavior." I read Peter's prayer: "You know what I can do, and You further know what role I can play. Your wish is my command, and I will dedicate everything I have to You. Only You know what I can do for You. Although Satan fooled me so much and I rebelled against You, I believe You do not remember me for those transgressions and that You do not treat me based on them. I wish to dedicate my entire life to You. I ask for nothing, and neither do I have other hopes or plans; I only wish to act according to Your intention and to do Your will. I will drink from Your bitter

cup, and I am Yours to command" ("How Peter Came to Know Jesus" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his bounden duty and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is that doing his duty. A man who is blessed enjoys goodness upon being made perfect after judgment. A man who is cursed receives punishment when his disposition remains unchanged following chastisement and judgment, that is, he has not been made perfect. As a created being, man ought to fulfill his duty, do what he ought to do, and do what he is able to do, regardless of whether he will be blessed or cursed. This is the very basic condition for man, as one who seeks after God. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: If man is able to do his duty, it means he performs what he ought to do. If man is unable to do his duty, it shows the rebelliousness of man" ("The Difference Between the Ministry of the Incarnate God and the Duty of Man" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). It can be seen from God's words that Peter sought to truly be able to love God all his life and that he obeyed God's arrangements in everything. He didn't make his own choices or requirements. No matter how God arranged things, he always submitted. In the end, he fulfilled his duty as a creature, achieving obedience unto death and supreme love of God. Peter's success in his belief in God had nothing to do with his status. Peter was an apostle and the Lord Jesus gave him the great commission of shepherding the churches. He didn't work in his position as an apostle—he was obscure, he was industrious and conscientious in fulfilling his duties as a creature to love God, and submit to Him. He obtained God's satisfaction by fulfilling his duties with all his heart, strength and mind. This was the secret to his success. Comparing myself to Peter's prayer and the judgment and chastisement of God's word, I felt very ashamed. God's words struck my heart and allowed me to see that I was not submissive and in opposition to God. In my faith, I always maintained my own choices, requirements, and plans. All those years I had been busy rushing around for my destination, my future prospects, for fame, profit and position. When I only fulfilled some of my duties, I tried to make a deal with God and even wanted God to put His stamp of approval on it to guarantee that I would be saved. My requirements of God to do this for me revealed that my nature was too selfish. I didn't have the reason and conscience which a creature should have. I rejected the commission because of my deceitful

nature. I rejected God's call in order to preserve myself; moreover, I used a preposterous argument and looked for excuses. I reasoned with God. I was unreasonable. I then read God's words, "Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is due to his rebelliousness." My conscience felt very accused; everything I have has been given by God and whatever I am able to do, whatever I experience, is all God's arrangement. Time and time again, God's judgment and chastisement have come upon me so that I can regain my reason and conscience, turn around my erroneous thinking, and allow me to become able to truly fulfill my duties as a creature. God's kind intentions are within all of that! Regardless of what God requires of me, I should offer up myself and repay God's love. Doing anything else is treason and merits punishment! That commission had not been arranged by any one person. Rather, it was God's test of the path I had walked and my true stature of all those years. I did not possess the reality of truth and was small in stature. God gave me that responsibility but He didn't require me to be fully competent at that time; rather, He meant to allow me to improve my pursuit of the truth, to accept the training, to make up for my deficiencies, to become able to put in everything I have, and to enter into the reality of loving God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind. In the past, I was living with absurd notions. I believed I had determined my duties and position. I pondered: Although I was fulfilling my duties with that kind of attitude and backdrop and I wasn't undergoing much refinement or under much pressure, there wasn't very much progress in my life and my disposition didn't change very much. It did reveal my depraved disposition of not pursuing the truth, reveling in leisure and being satisfied with my own situation. It also exposed that the way I performed my duties in my faith was just to obtain blessings and a good destination, but not for the sake of seeking to love and satisfy God. At this time, I finally came to: After all those years, I thought I was already walking the path by which Peter pursued the truth. But that day, the facts revealed that I had attached the most importance to my future prospects. I lacked the slightest degree of love for God and I was unwilling to bear a heavy burden or offer my whole self for God. How could that be in line with Peter's pursuit?

In the course of my search, I read God's words: "As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or that which they personally long for; this is the most

correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, what you put into practice is the truth, and what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. If what you seek is the blessings of the flesh, and what you put into practice is the truth of your own conceptions, and if there is no change in your disposition, and you are not at all obedient to God in the flesh, and you still live in vagueness, then what you seek will surely take you to hell, for the path that you walk is the path of failure. Whether you will be made perfect or eliminated depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks" ("Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

God's word is the truth, the way, and the life, and has already revealed Peter's path to success as well as the path of the practice for success. Peter's path to success wasn't just not seeking a position or not picking and choosing his duties. It was not just about being conquered in his negative aspects. More importantly, it was about positively seeking to love God and fulfilling the duty of a creature. Moreover, walking on the correct path will bring about many positive and real results such as knowing God better, being increasingly submissive through pursuing the truth and putting it into practice, and no longer having your own requirements, hopes, and impurities. Your disposition will be transformed, and most importantly, you will better enter into the truth and have an increasingly genuine love for God so that you completely offer yourself to God with no other requests, and you faithfully love God for your entire life. But in the facts that were revealed, where was my expression of entering into the reality of the truth? Where was my expression of obtaining the truth and transforming my disposition? Where was my expression of truly loving God? There was nothing of the sort! If I really had entered in, then I would have been able to submit regardless of what arrangements God made and I would have been more willing to offer myself up to God and repay His love. Through these facts and the judgment and chastisement of God's words, I was able to see that I was walking on the wrong path. I was not walking the path of fulfilling my duties as a creature nor was I seeking to love God. Rather, I was on the path of seeking my own interests and personal hopes. It was the path of cheating God, following Him under duress and expending myself to a limited degree so as to preserve myself. I had always pursued the pleasures of the flesh. In order to satisfy temporary comforts, I was not willing to accept God's judgment and chastisement and obtain the truth. Deep in my heart,

my view was: "Just seek to fulfill my duties peacefully, and don't offend the disposition of God. In the end, I will obtain a good destination and that will be enough." God's word has repeatedly shown that the root cause of Paul's failure lay in his dealings with God. He worked hard for his future reward and crown but lacked the slightest submission and love for the Lord of creation. Ultimately, it resulted in him failing and bearing God's punishment. God's words clearly admonish us: "... those who work only for the sake of their destination are on the threshold of their final defeat, for failure in one's belief in God is caused by **deceit**" ("On Destination" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). It's true! This type of investment is not done in sincerity; it is just a pretense and a deception. I had truly stiffened my neck and avoided God's judgment by walking my own path. When God's work of salvation came upon me, I was unable to tell good from bad and refused to take up God's commission. I gave nothing back to God but misunderstandings, resistance and betrayal. It was then that I was able to clearly see how selfish and deplorable my nature was. I had believed in God all those years and enjoyed God yet still schemed against Him, constantly carrying out transactions with Him. I didn't have the slightest degree of love for God in my heart. That was precisely the reason I was walking down the wrong path and exactly what God was talking about: "Because man is not good at wholly devoting himself to God, because man is not willing to perform his duty to the Creator, because man has seen the truth but avoids it and walks his own path, because man always seeks by following the path of those who have failed, because man always defies Heaven, thus, man always fails, is always taken in by Satan's trickery, and ensnared in his own net" ("Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I then read the following from a sermon: "There are people who inevitably have these apprehensions: 'I am fulfilling my duty, but I am afraid of walking the path of the antichrist; I am afraid of doing something wrong and resisting God.' Are there many people with these kinds of apprehensions? Especially those who serve as workers and leaders, they have seen that such-and-such a person who sought so diligently in the past, had gifts and a good mind, and then he fell. Such-and-such a person was quite good at preaching, but in the end, he fell as well, unexpectedly. They say: 'If I do those things, will I end up like them and also fall?' If you were someone who loves God would you still be afraid of these things? If you had true love for God, would you still be controlled by your apprehensions? People who love God are always considerate of His will and will not do the wrong thing. ... If you have true

discernment on what walking the path of the antichrist is and what walking the path of pursuing the truth and being perfected is, then why are you afraid of taking the path of the antichrist? Does that fear not prove that you still want to walk it and that you are not willing to abandon the wrong path? Isn't this the problem?" ("How to Seek to Love God and Testify of God" in Sermons and Fellowship IX). From God's words and this sermon I was able to see more clearly that those who don't love God are on the path of the antichrist and that not loving God is the source of failure in faith. I also saw more clearly the satanic reasons and excuses I had hidden within me. I was not willing to accept greater responsibilities and I was afraid of walking the path of failure—that revealed that my nature was selfish, deplorable and evil. It revealed that I had too much love for myself and for Satan. I was also able to truly understand that people who had believed in God for many years but still had no love for God lacked normal humanity. You could say that they all had some evil nature; they were all selfish, deplorable and evil people. At the same time, it also led me to genuinely turn my mistaken viewpoints around, gain the release of my soul, and gain the correct direction of pursuit and path of practice. I was no longer willing to live selfishly and deplorably just for myself. I only wished to submit myself to God and obey all of His arrangements; I would pursue the truth and practice love for God while fulfilling my duties.

Praise be to God for His judgment and chastisement that turned around the goal of my pursuit and brought me back from the wrong path. It allowed me to truly recognize the essence of the nature of Satan within me and to find the source of my failure. I had believed in God all those years but I never loved God, and I felt shame and self-blame. My heart longed to develop a true love for God. Peter was perfected because he truly loved God and because he had the will and perseverance to pursue the truth. Even though I am far from that, I will no longer live so vilely and repulsively in order to preserve myself. I am willing to make loving God the goal of my pursuit—I will spare no effort and I will pay the price in fulfilling my duties. I will truly bear the burden of my responsibilities and put the truth into practice and enter into the reality of loving God while fulfilling my duties.

71. Understanding God's Heart Can Eliminate Misconceptions

By Chen Gang, Hebei Province

God's words say, "God's supremacy, greatness, holiness, tolerance, love, and so forth—all of these various aspects of God's disposition and essence are put into effect every time He does His work, embodied in His will toward man, and also fulfilled and reflected on every person. Regardless of whether you have felt it before, God is caring for every person in every possible way, using His sincere heart, wisdom, and various methods to warm each person's heart, and awaken each person's spirit. This is an indisputable fact" ("God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading God's words, I saw that everything He does is brimming with His love and mercy as well as His care for us. All of God's actions are most beneficial to us, and are what we most need; as long as we seek and experience it earnestly, we will sense this love of His. However, due to my ignorance of God's disposition and essence, I often existed in a state of misunderstanding, suspicion, and defensiveness toward God, and was unable to give my heart over to Him. Whenever there was a duty to perform, I always tried to dodge it or decline to do it, thereby losing many opportunities to gain the truth. Some time ago, being faced with real circumstances and the judgment and chastisement from God's words caused me to gain some understanding of my own satanic nature as well as some actual knowledge of God's beautiful and good essence; only then did I rid myself of a few of my misconceptions about Him.

After I started believing in God, whenever I used to see or hear of anyone being dismissed from a leadership duty and replaced—sometimes even expelled due to having committed too much evil—I would always get a feeling that was difficult to express, and could not help but think to myself, "Fulfilling one's duty in a leadership role is a huge responsibility; one could get dismissed and replaced for not handling something well enough, and might even be at risk of being expelled and eliminated. It seems that the higher one's position, the more precarious it is. There is some truth to the sayings, 'It gets lonely at the top' and 'The bigger they come, the harder they fall.' I reckon fulfilling a duty that doesn't come with a higher position is a bit safer; as long as I don't get promoted, I'll be fine. That way I can avoid doing too many evil deeds and getting exposed and eliminated for it, and

having faith to the end yet ending up with nothing." Thereupon, whenever the church wanted to promote me or arrange for me to participate in an election, I made all manner of excuses to get out of it and decline. Gradually, a great deep chasm formed between me and God. During a meeting in April of this year, my leader asked me, "Brother, our small district's annual election will be held soon. What are your thoughts on it?" Upon hearing that an election would be held soon, I felt flustered and was not sure how to respond. I thought about how some brothers and sisters in the past had been dismissed and replaced for not being able to do real work, and to this day had not been able to fulfill their duties. I was afraid that were I to be elected, I might suffer the same fate if, when the time came, I, too, were unable to complete any real work. I currently had it pretty good; not only did I have a duty to fulfill, but I did not need to worry about losing my position and getting replaced. With these thoughts in mind, I hastily replied to my leader, "I have too many shortcomings in every respect. I also tend to be extremely uptight during meetings with our brothers and sisters. It would probably be a bit more suitable for me to continue getting more practice with my current duty, so I'm not going to run in this election." Seeing that I did not look very favorably on the idea of getting elected, my leader communicated with me a few more times on the subject in the hope that I would take part in the upcoming election, but I always politely declined.

One evening a few days later, I sought out my leaders because I had something to discuss with them. They were in the middle of reading a letter from upper-level leadership regarding the election. So nervous I felt as though my heart were in my throat, I thought to myself, "I need to run away and hide, or else they'll want to communicate with me again about running for the election." I therefore hid in the bathroom and killed time, but as a result, while scratching an itch, I accidentally scratched open a sore, and got blood all over my hand. I quickly wiped it away with a paper towel and put pressure on the wound, but after a while, the paper towel was soaked through. All of a sudden, I felt dumbfounded: What would I do if I couldn't stop the blood? With one hand still putting pressure on the sore, I took quick steps and rushed back into the room to get my leaders to take a look and see what could be done to stop the bleeding. A brother glanced at it and said, "You're bleeding pretty heavily; it's not going to stop. The more you wipe at it, the more it'll bleed!" Hearing this, I felt even more uncertain: Was it really this serious? How could a little sore bleed so profusely? If I didn't stop the bleeding, would it continue on to the next day until I was bled dry? A wave of

terror, anxiety, and helplessness suddenly surged through me, and I had no idea what to do. It felt as though the very air were about to solidify. Just then, I grew conscious of the possibility that the day's abrupt occurrence had not been random at all, and that I must hurry up and reflect upon my actions so that I could know myself better! I then calmed down and pondered whether I had offended God in any way recently, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not think of anything. Then I recalled a passage of God's utterances: "When people offend God, it might not be because of one instance, or one thing they said, but it is rather due to an attitude they hold and a state they are in. This is a very frightening thing" ("God Himself, the Unique VII" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The guidance of God's words brought me before Him to seek the truth: "God! I have been so blind and foolish. I cannot fathom what I have done to offend You. Please, show me the way; reveal to me Your will, so that I might recognize my contrariness and resistance. I wish to repent before You." After I finished praying, I felt a bit more at peace, and began to reflect upon my past actions and thoughts, wondering where I might have strayed from God's will. Just then, I suddenly remembered how I had behaved and the attitude I had had with regard to the election: My leaders had repeatedly sought me out to communicate their opinion that I should take part in it, yet I had always maintained my own notions; fearing that I would get exposed if I did a poor job of fulfilling my duty, I had made up all manner of reasons and excuses to decline to participate again and again. My attitude had not been one of acceptance and submission, even in the slightest. I well knew that the democratic elections held by the church were required in work arrangements; this was an important part of the work of God's family, and it contained God's will. However, I had not at all sought the truth; in order to protect myself, I had repeatedly avoided the election and refused to run in it. This sort of attitude I had deep down—of making an enemy of God—had made me loathsome and hateful in His eyes, and even more so, had caused Him to feel hurt and disappointed. My suddenly having come up against this kind of problem had been God's way of disciplining me. Realizing this, I perceived that God's righteous disposition would not tolerate being offended by humans, so I wanted to turn this erroneous condition of mine around and repent before God. I therefore gave my leaders a thorough account of everything I had self-reflected about, from beginning to end. After listening to me, the brother fellowshiped with me about the attitude and revelations he had had when he had taken part in the elections. Thank God! This incident had taught me a lesson, and an hour later, my sore stopped bleeding. This

made me realize that while I had been existing in a state of corruption and contrariness, God had showed me His righteous, unoffendable disposition; and when I had turned back to Him with a desire to seek the truth, He had revealed His smiling face to me, and I had gotten a taste that God's disposition is vivid and lifelike.

Afterward, I could not help but reflect that every time the church had held an election, I had always sought to avoid it and make excuses to get out of it. I had not wanted to run, terrified that if I were to be elected to a leadership position and do something against God, I might be dismissed and eliminated. Why were these thoughts always running through my head? During my spiritual devotions, I consciously searched for God's words on this subject, that I might eat and drink of them. One day I read this utterance of God: "Some say, 'Believing in God in His presence—that is like walking on eggshells! It's like living on a knife's edge!' Others say, 'Believing in God is like that saying of the unbelievers, "Being in the king's company is like being near a tiger." It's so awful! If you say or do one thing wrong, then you will be eliminated; you will be cast to hell and destroyed!' Are such sayings correct? Where does the saying, 'Being in the king's company is like being near a tiger,' tend to be used? And what does 'walking on eggshells' refer to? What does 'living on a knife's edge' mean? You should all know what they mean literally; they all indicate great danger. It is like a person taming a lion or tiger: Every day is like walking on eggshells or living on a knife's edge; this is the sort of situation to which those sayings refer. That ferocious nature of tigers and lions may flare up at any moment. They are cold-blooded animals that have no affection for humans, no matter how many years they might have associated with them. If they want to eat you, they will eat you; if they want to harm you, they will harm you. Thus, is it correct to use such phrases to describe what it is like to believe in God? Do you not sometimes think in the following way? 'Believing in God really is like walking on eggshells; that anger of His can flare out in an instant. He could be infuriated at any time, and He could remove someone from their position at any time. Whomever God dislikes will be exposed and eliminated.' Is this the case? (No.) It looks like you have had experience with this and understand it, so you should not be deceived. This is a fallacy; it is an absolutely absurd thing to say" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talk). "Some people say, 'Don't be a leader, and don't have status. People are in danger the minute they gain status,

and God will expose them! Once they are exposed, they will not even be qualified to be ordinary believers, and will no longer have a chance of being saved. God is not just!' What sort of thing is that to say? At best, it represents a misunderstanding of God; at worst, it is blasphemy against God" ("To Resolve One's Corrupt Dispositions, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice" in Records of Christ's Talks). Line by line, God's words left me deeply moved, for they described my situation precisely. I had not actually bluntly voiced that believing in God was like "being near a tiger" or "living on a knife's edge," but looking at my attitude toward the church's elections, I had been completely defensive and full of misapprehensions. This showed that that was exactly the sort of situation in which I had been living. Upon seeing the suffering, tormented existence of some brothers and sisters who had been dismissed from leadership positions, some of whom had even been expelled due to having committed multiple evildoings, I had always flinched from the idea of fulfilling my duty as a leader, wishing instead to keep a respectful distance, because from my point of view, with leadership came position, and with it came the risk of being exposed and eliminated. I even went so far as to be extremely cautious, timid and hesitant when completing my own duties, and had never been keen about the elections, deeply afraid that if I were elected to serve as a leader and made a mistake, I might get dismissed and eliminated as a result. In my imagination, I had been seeing God in the same way I saw Chinese Communist Party officials who held power; I did not dare to approach too close or provoke Him. I had assumed that anyone who offended Him would necessarily suffer a great calamity, and I'd even thought that those brothers and sisters who had been dismissed and eliminated had brought it upon themselves by serving in leadership positions. I had virtually seen "leaders," a position established in the administrative structure of God's family, as a way of exposing and eliminating people. Only now, through the revelations of God's word, did I become conscious that these thoughts I had been harboring had exposed a complete lack of knowledge of God's holy essence. These conjectures I had had about God had been blasphemous in the extreme! Realizing this, I felt a lingering fear, and could not help but kneel down in prayer before God: "God! Though I have followed You for many years, I do not know You. My brothers and sisters communicated with me to take part in the elections, which were opportunities You had bestowed upon me to train me, and to purify and transform me—but not only did I not comprehend Your will, I actually refused and tried to evade them, being

altogether defensive and misunderstanding toward You. I did not at all treat You as God. That view of mine was simply that of a non-believer—a truly satanic sort! God! Had You not exposed me in this way, I would never have reflected upon my own issues, and would still be existing in a state of antagonism and misapprehension. If that had continued, I could only have been hated, detested and spurned by You. God! I now am willing to repent. Please, guide me to an understanding of the truth and of Your will. ..."

After that, I read more of God's words: "The moment people gain status—regardless of who they are—do they then become antichrists? (If they do not pursue the truth, then they will become antichrists, but if they do pursue the truth, then they will not.) Thus, it is not absolute. So, are those who walk the path of the antichrists ultimately trapped by status? That happens when people do not take the right path. They have a good path to follow, yet they do not follow it; instead, they follow an evil one. This is akin to how people eat: Some do not consume food that can keep their bodies healthy and maintain their normal lives, and take drugs instead. In the end, taking drugs makes them addicted and kills them. Is this not a choice that people make themselves?" ("To Resolve One's Corrupt Dispositions, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice" in Records of Christ's Talks). Then I read another fellowship that says, "Why are so many people exposed doing all kinds of evil with their position and power? It is not because their position hurts them. The fundamental problem is the essence of man's nature. A position can certainly expose people, but if a good-hearted person has a high position, they will not commit various evils" (The Fellowship From the Above). God's words and this fellowship allowed me to realize some things. As it turned out, those co-workers and leaders who had been dismissed and eliminated had not been dispatched due to their leadership positions, but because while fulfilling their duties, they had consistently failed to pursue the truth or walk the right path; they had therefore been exposed and gotten rid of. I couldn't help but think of those leaders and co-workers around me who had been exposed. One brother had been especially self-righteous, and had not fulfilled his duty according to principle. He had freely promoted people to fulfill leadership duties who had gifts and qualities but did not possess the reality of the truth. He had not accepted repeated reminders and assistance from brothers and sisters, and as a result, had brought disturbances into church life, obstructing brothers and sisters from attaining life entry. This brother had relied particularly heavily on his own opinions, even to the point of ignoring the advice of co-workers. He had

insisted on storing the church's money and valuables in a home that had security risks, which had led to it all being seized by the Chinese Communist Party. There was also a sister who had been excessively concerned with status, and while fulfilling her duty as a co-worker, she had not been able to accept everyone's constructive criticism. She had even fixed and retaliated against those brothers and sisters who had given her advice, and had refused to accept the fellowship and assistance from her superiors multiple times. Finally, she had been given a warning, yet she still did not reflect upon her actions to get to know herself, let alone accept the truth; she had never repented or changed, and instead stubbornly trod the path of the antichrist. ... These examples of failure made me see that the church had not dismissed or eliminated anyone without good grounds. Only after I carefully analyzed the way these dismissed and eliminated individuals had behaved all along did I see that most of them had had a rather serious contrariness in their dispositions and had never conducted the work of the church in accordance with the principles of the truth. They had all just done as they pleased, and had ended up causing interruptions and disturbances in the church's work, seriously hindering other brothers and sisters from attaining life entry. Ultimately, they had had to be dismissed and replaced. Evidently, before anyone was dismissed, God had given them ample opportunities to repent, and brothers and sisters had helped and supported them many times; it was just that those leaders had never exhibited any intent to make a turn-around, and had seriously interrupted, disturbed, and hindered the church's work before finally being dismissed and replaced. They only had themselves to blame for their failure, didn't they? Had this not been the bitter fruit of their gradual making? However, from their failures and falls, I had not discerned the erroneous path these people were on or seen clearly the source of their resistance against God, and I had not subsequently reflected upon my own actions and used their example as a warning to myself. I also had not known that God's disposition is unoffendable, so had not developed a God-fearing reverence that would have prevented me from following in their footsteps; instead, I had given rise to misapprehension and defensiveness toward God. I had taken all of unrighteousness and put it on God. I could see that I truly was ignorant and blind, despicable and pitiful, and really had hurt God to the core. I also recalled that there were now a group of people in the church who, despite never having held any high positions, had continuously failed to pursue the truth and caused interruptions and disturbances in the church and not served their purposes well; likewise, they, too, had been exposed and eliminated by God. This realization gave me

an even clearer understanding that while we are following God, whether or not we are exposed and eliminated has nothing to do with what duty we are fulfilling or what position we hold. If we do not pursue the truth or walk the path of transformation in our dispositions, then regardless of what position we may or may not hold, we are all liable to be controlled by Satan's disposition, and at any time could do things that offend or resist God and thus be exposed and eliminated. This was a precise confirmation of God's words: "To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God." I am grateful for God's enlightenment and guidance, which allowed me to gain some understanding and discernment of the erroneous views I had been holding, as well as to appreciate the importance of pursuing the truth while believing in God and of striving for a change in disposition. At the same time, I became conscious of just how preposterous and absurd I had been to live inside my misconceptions and imaginations.

Later, I read another passage in a fellowship that went like this: "I asked a brother, 'Have you made any progress over the past few years?' He said, 'The most progress I made resulted from that expulsion I experienced.' Why did he make the greatest progress from being expelled? He definitely had prayed urgently before God, and certainly had spent quite a bit of time reflecting upon his actions and getting to know himself. He also was willing to repent, and did not want to be cast away by God. Praying in earnest to God brought a good deal of enlightenment and illumination, as well as self-knowledge; he came to recognize how he had acted and behaved over the years, and what path he had been taking. By way of these negative learning experiences, he realized exactly how he should be believing in God and how he should pursue the truth. After that, he made a genuine repentance before God, and had become willing to work hard in his pursuit of the truth, submit to God's judgment and chastisement, and defer to His orchestration. In this way, his journey of believing in God was renewed, and he formally set foot upon the path of faith. So, tell me, does such an expulsion have any advantages? Isn't it actually a way of bringing people salvation?" (The Fellowship From the Above). From this fellowship, I could see the extreme mercy and salvation God brought to people. Some had been expelled by the church due to evil acts they had committed, but as long as they sincerely repented and were willing to accept and submit to God's discipline and chastening, reflect upon themselves to know themselves better, and begin to pursue the truth, then there was still hope for their salvation. At the same time, I came to understand that God's strict judgment, ways of dealing with

people, chastening, and disciplining were also forms of salvation for people who genuinely repented; their purpose was to enable people to self-reflect better and understand their satanic nature that had led them to resist God and see Him as an enemy. It was to enable them to truly loathe themselves and forsake their flesh so that they could give rise to a fearful reverence toward God and set foot upon the path of pursuing the truth. For people who sincerely have faith in God and pursue the truth, no matter what they have experienced whether they were dismissed and replaced, or expelled, or what—none of this was exposure or elimination, but rather they became turning points in their paths to believing in God! Inadvertently, I was reminded of a passage of God's words: "Having failed and fallen down multiple times is not a bad thing; nor is being exposed. Whether you have been dealt with, pruned, or been exposed, you must remember this at all times: Being exposed does not mean that you are being condemned. Being exposed is a good thing; it is the best opportunity for you to get to know yourself. It can bring your life experience a change of gears. Without it, you will possess neither the opportunity, the condition, nor the context to be able to reach an understanding of the truth of your corruption. If you can come to know the things inside you, all those aspects hidden deep within you that are hard to recognize and difficult to unearth, then this is a good thing. Becoming able to truly know yourself is the best opportunity for you to mend your ways and become a new person; it is the best opportunity for you to obtain new life. Once you truly know yourself, you will be able to see that when the truth becomes one's life, it is a precious thing indeed, and you will thirst for the truth and enter into the reality. This is such a great thing! If you can grab this opportunity and earnestly reflect upon yourself and gain a genuine knowledge of yourself whenever you fail or fall down, then in the midst of negativity and weakness, you will be able to stand back up. Once you have crossed this threshold, you will then be able to take a big step forward and enter into the reality of the truth" ("To Attain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You" in Records of Christ's Talks). When I thought about this, I gained an even deeper understanding of God's will: Whether He strikes at us, disciplines us, or dismisses and expels us, everything He does to us is decided based on our own behavior and corrupt essence. Everything God does is meant to purify and transform people; for us, these things are all salvations, and most beneficial. All along, I had looked fearfully at the duty of leadership because those people had been exposed,

dismissed, and eliminated, and had warned myself never to agree to fulfill a duty that came with a position, because that way I would not fall down or fail, nor would I live in the painful refinement. God's righteous disposition encompasses our judgment, chastisement, chastening, and disciplining, but it also includes tolerance and patience and the greatest of love for us. I had never seen these things before, instead living in a state of misunderstanding and conjecture toward God that was based on my own notions and imaginations. I had been unwilling to take part in elections, much less had I had any aspiration to fulfill the duty of leadership, and as a result, I had missed out on many opportunities to obtain the truth and know God. Only now did I see clearly that my previous notions "It is lonely at the top" and "The bigger they come, the harder they fall" were absurd views of Satan which had been extremely obstructive to my pursuit of the truth and to my seeking to know God. I thanked God for His enlightenment and guidance, which had allowed me to rid myself of certain misconceptions I'd had toward Him. At the same time, I sensed just how truly ugly, disgusting, contrary, and ignorant I had actually been!

Later on, I could not help but wonder introspectively why I had always been so defensive toward God and what nature had controlled me to do so. I read a passage of God's words, which says, "And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will, then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people. You speculate whether God can be like man: unpardonably sinful, of petty character, devoid of fairness and reason, lacking a sense of justice, given to vicious tactics, treacherous and cunning, pleased by evil and darkness, and so on. Is not the reason that people have such thoughts because they lack the slightest knowledge of God?" ("How to Know the God on Earth" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I also read a fellowship that says, "All those who are defensive toward God when faced with trials are treacherous, selfish, and mean, and they think only of themselves and do not hold God in their hearts. Such people are the ones who struggle against God. As soon as they encounter a problem, they get defensive toward God and study Him, wondering, 'What did God mean by this? Why did He allow this to happen to me?' They then try to reason with God. Are such people not evil in their intentions? Is pursuing the truth easy for such people? It is not. These are not normal people; they have a demonic nature, and are completely incapable of getting along with anyone" ("Questions & Answers" in Sermons and Fellowship XIII). God's words and this fellowship exposed the root cause of my problem of defensiveness against God and speculation about

God. Because I was by nature overly sly, every time the church had wished to cultivate me and promote me, I had not only failed to grasp the love God had for me or comprehend His painstaking intention, but I had, to the contrary, assumed that fulfilling a leadership duty would be too dangerous and that once I had a position and did evil, I would constantly be at risk of being dismissed and eliminated. I thought about how I had been enjoying heavens and earth and all the things God had created—right down to the very sunshine and rain as well as all the watering and provision from so many of God's utterances, yet I had not tried in the least to gain an appreciation of the love and salvation He had for people. I had always been defensive toward Him and done Him harm, suspecting that God was as petty as humans and devoid of mercy or love for us. I had truly been so deceitful and contemptible, and had not exhibited even the tiniest bit of the likeness of a human in my life. Just then, I felt very quilty, and again I recalled God's words: "God is quietly doing everything for man, doing it all silently through His sincerity, faithfulness, and love. But He never has any apprehension or regret for all that He does, nor does He ever need anyone to repay Him in any way or have intentions of ever obtaining anything from mankind. The only purpose of everything He has ever done is so He can receive mankind's true faith and love" ("God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "God created mankind; regardless of whether they have been corrupted or whether they follow Him, God treats human beings as His loved ones—or as human beings would say, the people dearest to Him—and not His playthings" ("God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "From the beginning until today, only man has been capable of conversing with God. That is, among all living things and creatures of God, none but man has been able to converse with God. Man has ears that enable him to hear, and eyes that let him see, he has language, and his own ideas, and free will. He is possessed of all that is required to hear God speak, and understand God's will, and accept God's commission, and so God confers all His wishes upon man, wanting to make man a companion who is of the same mind with Him and who can walk with Him. Since He began to manage, God has been waiting for man to give his heart to Him, to let God purify and equip it, to make him satisfactory to God and loved by God, to make him revere God and shun evil. God has ever looked forward to and awaited this outcome" ("God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Among the lines and

words of God's utterances were revealed a love and care for humanity, as well as hope and expectation. God treats humans as a compassionate mother treats her children, genuinely loving and taking good care of each and every one of us. In order to obtain a group of humans who are in tune with His will, God has incarnated in the flesh twice, enduring enormous humiliation and paying the ultimate price for the sake of bringing redemption and salvation to humanity. Despite the contrariness, resistance, misunderstanding, and complaining we have shown to God, He has continued, with extreme tolerance and patience, to silently do the work of salvation for humanity. God has come among us to express the truth, watering and providing for and leading us, in the hope that one day we can understand His good intentions in saving people and give our hearts over to God, submitting to His judgment and chastisement, throwing off our corrupt dispositions, and turning into people whom God has saved who revere Him and eschew evil. I could see that God's essence is so beautiful and good, and His love for humanity is so real! I, on the other hand, had been blind and foolish, lacking even the tiniest shred of knowledge of God; much less had I understood His good intentions. I had been defensive and misunderstanding toward God, heartlessly refusing His salvation again and again, avoiding and distancing myself from God as though He were an enemy, and giving Him nothing but pain and suffering. However, God had not focused on my contrariness, foolishness, and ignorance, but instead had set up an environment that would chasten and discipline me. He had also enlightened and guided me by way of His words, thereby ridding me of my defensiveness and misunderstanding toward Him and enabling me to give my heart over to Him. God's love made me feel ashamed, and I could not help but throw myself to the ground in prostration before Him and say, "God! I have claimed to have faith in You, yet I have not known You in the least. In every respect, I have been defensive toward You and misunderstood You. I really am far too treacherous; I have hurt You through and through, and am not worthy of coming before You. God! Today Your judgment and chastisement have made me realize Your intention to bring people salvation, and have rid me of my misapprehension toward You little by little. God! I do not wish to miss any more opportunities to obtain the truth and be perfected. I only wish to pursue the truth and fulfill my duty to repay Your love!" After I finished praying, in my heart I felt very close to God, and now had an aspiration to seek a way to satisfy Him.

A few days later, my leaders again fellowshiped with me about the upcoming election in the hope that I could participate. I knew that this was a God-given opportunity for

repentance, and I wished to do my very best to cherish it, so I gladly told them "yes." A few days after I turned my misconceptions around and dumped the defensiveness I had had against God, and ran in the election, my brothers and sisters chose me to fulfill a leadership duty. In that moment I felt deeply moved, and my eyes brimmed with tears of gratitude. I knew deep down that this was God's love bestowed upon me, and all I wanted to do was to work hard at pursuing the truth and fulfilling my duty and use real actions to repay God's love.

Looking back on this experience, I know it was the enlightenment and guidance of God's words that, bit by bit, rid me of my misconceptions about God and gave me an appreciation for the greatness and nobility of His disposition. While God is doing the work of salvation, no matter how much contrariness, corruption, or even resistance is revealed in us, as long as we have a little desire to make a turnaround, God will not abandon us. Rather, He will bring maximum salvation to each and every one of us. Even though God's words contain judgments and condemnation, He always grants us the truest love and salvation; this is the only way we can attain even more profound loathing at our corruption and wickedness, and work hard to pursue the truth and achieve a transformation of disposition. God's words say, "God's substance is not just for man to believe in; it is, moreover, for man to love. But many of those who believe in God are incapable of discovering this "secret." People do not dare to love God, nor do they try to love Him. They have never discovered that there is so much that is lovable about God; they have never discovered that God is the God who loves man, and that He is the God who is for man to love" ("Those Who Love God Will Forever Live Within His Light" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's essence is beautiful and good, and there are so many things to love about Him. We need to actually appreciate and realize this through experience. From now on, in the environment God has arranged for me, I wish to spend more time seeking the truth, trying to fathom God's will, discover even more of God's lovable attributes, and strive to know God so that I may shed my corrupt disposition as soon as possible and become compatible with God.

72. I Learned How to Treat Other People Appropriately

By Siyuan, France

One day, Brother Chen from our church came to me. He said he wanted to practice presenting testimony in his spare time and offer some of his strength to the gospel work. Due to my past interactions with Brother Chen, I knew that he had a very arrogant disposition, and so I had some preconceived ideas and opinions of him. Furthermore, I thought that those that present testimony must have a certain level of knowledge of the Bible. They must be able to communicate the truth clearly and be able to answer the questions asked by those we preach the gospel to. I felt that he did not possess these qualities, and so I did not agree to it. When he saw this, he said, "Based on my abilities, do you not think that I can practice presenting testimony? Wouldn't I be wasting my talent if I do not present testimony?" When I heard this, I felt very fed up and I thought, "Do you think that presenting testimony is an easy thing to do? If you do not have genuine talent, do you think that you can fulfill this duty well? You think too highly of yourself. You simply do not have an accurate measure of yourself!" Afterward, I fellowshiped about Brother Chen's situation with a few other brothers and sisters so that we might have discernment of his state. Some of the brothers and sisters, after hearing what I had said, also said how Brother Chen had manifested arrogance in his behaviors. This confirmed for me that the opinion I had of Brother Chen was indeed accurate. I was never aware that, when I commented on Brother Chen casually without seeking the truth to understand him accurately, I was basically judging him and colluding with others.

One time, I was attending a meeting with Brother Chen. As we were reading the work arrangement about how we could watch the movies of God's family as we lived the church life, he said, "I think that the leaders and co-workers do not possess the reality of the truth. They just preach letters and doctrines in meetings and they are unable to resolve the practical difficulties that our brothers and sisters face. It is great that we can watch movies in our meetings now. This will help us to understand the truth." He continued to say, "When I was fulfilling this duty in the beginning, because I did not understand the principles, I had many difficulties. However, now that I have a grasp of the principles, I feel fulfilling this duty is going much more smoothly, and the results I achieve in my work are particularly good. ..." When I heard him say this, aversion and resistance rose up in my heart. I thought, "You are really good at seizing the opportunity. You are using the fellowship of the brother from the

above to belittle us leaders and co-workers. At the same time, you haven't forgotten to bear witness to yourself and show yourself off. You are truly too arrogant and irrational. ..." Then, we began to discuss how we would work together on the five questions to be communicated at the next meeting. At this moment, Brother Chen offered to be in charge of three of the questions and he even proposed people to be responsible for the remaining two questions. When I arranged for the group leader to take charge of the next meeting, he quickly asked the group leader in a doubtful manner, "Do you think you can handle it? Can you do it?" From the tone of his voice, it seemed like he thought that only he could take charge of the meeting. Faced with his behavior, I thought, "You are very irrational. Can you do this? You just want to use this opportunity as a platform to show yourself off to the brothers and sisters. You want to get all the attention, but I won't allow it." In order to prevent him from achieving his objective, I asserted my authority to rearrange it so that he would not be in charge. Thinking about all of Brother Chen's behavior, I disliked him very much in my heart and my prejudices toward him became ever stronger. In particular, I had communicated with him several times about his arrogant behavior, but he only verbally acknowledged it and afterward I saw no clear change. I therefore felt that he had an extraordinary level of arrogance. He was excessively arrogant to the point that I felt he could never change and was beyond hope. And I sometimes even thought that as he was so arrogant, he was basically not suited for fulfilling his present duty. I'd just replace him with somebody else.

After the meeting had ended and I reflected on each of the thoughts and ideas that I had revealed during the meeting, my heart felt some reproach and great discomfort. I prayed to God, "O God! I have many thoughts and prejudices toward Brother Chen. I think he is very arrogant. Now, whenever I hear him speak, aversion and resistance arise in my heart. I even want to replace him. O God! I know that I am in a wrong state. However, I do not understand Your will and I do not know what aspect of the truth I should enter. O God, please enlighten and guide me." After I finished praying, I thought of a passage from a sermon: "Does this sort of thinking exist in your hearts? When you think of someone, you first think of their weaknesses, and first think of the ways in which they are corrupt. Is that right? If you go on thinking this way, you will never be able to get along with others normally. ... But because he genuinely believes in God and desires to pursue truth, it won't be long, therefore, before this corruption in him begins to change and disappear. This is the way we must see this issue, and we must see issues with a vision for growth. We must not fixate on a person's

weakness, then condemn him forever, saying that the person will be this way for all his life, that he is this sort of person. To do this would be to judge and delimit him! In saving people, God has not spoken this way, saying that mankind has been corrupted to this extent, and therefore it is pointless to save them, and that this is the end of the human race. God does not see it this way at all. So, we are all pursuing truth now. We all desire to pursue truth, and we believe that, at a minimum, if we keep on with our pursuit, then within a few years we will certainly be able to change somewhat, and ultimately we will be completely able to achieve change of disposition and be perfected by God. You all have this kind of faith, don't you? Since you have this sort of faith, you therefore ought to believe that other people also have this kind of faith" ("How to Establish Normal Interpersonal Relationships" in Sermons and Fellowship I). This passage of fellowship clearly showed me my state and I felt ashamed. I saw how arrogant and conceited my nature was. I acted as if I had the truth and I was able to judge a person accurately at one glance and thoroughly understand his essence. By relating the words in the sermon to myself, I realized: From my interactions with Brother Chen, I felt that he was young and proud when I saw him expressing his arrogant disposition in the words he was saying and the things that he was doing. I felt that he had absolutely no self-knowledge. I even judged in my heart that he was an arrogant person that was completely irrational and had no hope of change. That was why I could never treat him fairly or impartially. God saves people to the greatest extent possible, yet I was delimiting Brother Chen in every respect. Now, God had exposed me and caused me to see my arrogance and conceitedness clearly. I had regarded my own perspectives and beliefs as the truth and as the standards by which I judged people—I was so very irrational. Was I viewing and measuring others with principles and standards? Did my method of viewing and delimiting people accord with the truth? I was lower than a maggot. How was I qualified to judge and condemn other people? God's words say: "The people God saves are those who have corrupt dispositions by way of Satan's corruption; they are not perfect people without the slightest blemish, nor are they people who live in a vacuum" ("Life Entry Is Most Important to Believing in God" in Records of Christ's Talks). We have not yet been perfected and we are still in the process of gradual changing through our experience of God's work. Even though we may express our corrupt dispositions or commit some transgressions as we fulfill our duties, as long as we sincerely believe in God and pursue the truth, we will be able to change. However, I was not seeing others with a view toward growth. Instead, I was

delimiting others with my own perspectives and corrupt disposition. I was indeed being so very arrogant.

I then read another passage of God's words: "According to which principle should you treat the members of God's family? (Treat each and every brother and sister fairly.) How do you treat them fairly? Everyone has minor faults and shortcomings, as well as certain idiosyncrasies; people all possess self-righteousness, weakness, and areas in which they are lacking. You should help them with a loving heart, be tolerant and forbearing, and not be too harsh or make a fuss over every tiny detail. With people who are young or have not believed in God for very long, or have only recently started to perform their duties or have certain special requests, if you just grab them by the pigtails and refuse to let go, then this is what is known as being harsh. You ignore the evil done by those false leaders and antichrists, and yet upon spotting minor shortcomings and faults in your brothers and sisters, you refuse to help them, instead choosing to make a fuss over those things and judge them behind their backs, thereby causing even more people to oppose, exclude, and ostracize them. What sort of behavior is this? This is just doing things based on your personal preferences, and not being able to treat people fairly; this shows a corrupt satanic disposition! This is a transgression! When people do things, God is watching; whatever you do and however you think, He sees! If you wish to grasp the principles, then you must first understand the truth. Once you understand the truth, you can comprehend the will of God; if you do not understand the truth, you certainly will not understand God's will. The truth tells you how to treat people, and once you have understood this, you will know how to treat people in line with God's will. How you are to treat others is clearly shown and pointed out in God's words; the attitude with which God treats humanity is the attitude people should adopt in their treatment of one another. How does God treat each and every person? Some people are of immature stature, or are young, or have believed in God for only a short time. Some people's nature and essence are not bad or malicious; it is simply that they are somewhat ignorant or lacking in caliber, or that they have been polluted too much by society. They have not entered into the reality of the truth, so it is difficult for them to keep from doing some foolish things or committing some acts of ignorance. However, from God's perspective, such matters are not important; He looks at only people's hearts. If they are resolved to

enter into the reality of the truth, they are headed in the right direction, and this is their objective, then God is watching them, waiting for them, and giving them time and opportunities that allow them to enter. It is not that God knocks them down with one blow or beats them the moment they stick their heads out; God has never treated people like this. That being said, if people treat each other in such a manner, then does this not show their corrupt disposition? This is precisely their corrupt disposition. You have to look at how God treats ignorant and foolish people, how He treats those with immature stature, how He treats the normal manifestations of humanity's corrupt disposition, and how He treats those who are malicious. God has various ways of treating different people, and He also has various ways of managing different people's myriad conditions. You must understand the truth of these things. Once you have understood these truths, you can then know how to experience them" ("To Attain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words describe the principles and the path of how to treat people very clearly. They also explain that God's attitude toward antichrists and evil people is full of hatred, curses and punishment. As for those whose stature is tiny, who are of poor caliber and have all sorts of corrupt dispositions and deficiencies, as long as they truly believe in God, are willing to pursue the truth, can accept the truth and can put the truth into practice, God's attitude toward them is one of love, mercy and salvation. From God's words, I saw that God has principles and standards in regard to how He treats each person. God requires that we love those whom God loves and hate those whom God hates. We must be tolerant and forgiving to the brothers and sisters who truly believe in God and we must give them an opportunity to repent and change. We cannot just knock them down with one stroke when they have expressed their corrupt disposition, as this is not consistent with God's principles and methods of treating people, much less is it God's will. I started to think of how Brother Chen took upon himself the burden toward his duties, how he had a sense of responsibility and how he was able to do some practical work. I never fully considered his strengths and merits. Instead, I fixated on his corruption and did not let go, and I judged him and condemned him. My nature was truly malicious!

Just then, I thought of a passage of God's words: "The attitude and way in which God treated Adam and Eve is akin to how human parents show concern for their own children. It's also like how human parents love, look after, and care for their own sons

and daughters-real, visible, and tangible. Instead of putting Himself in a high and mighty position, God personally used skins to make clothing for man. It doesn't matter whether this fur coat was used to cover their modesty or to shield them from the cold. In short, this clothing used to cover man's body was personally made by God with His own hands. Rather than creating it simply through the thought or miraculous methods as people imagine, God had legitimately done something man thinks God could not and should not do. This may be a simple thing some might not even think as worthy of mentioning, but it also allows all those who follow God but were previously full of vague ideas about Him to gain an insight into His genuineness and loveliness, and to see His faithful and humble nature. It makes insufferably arrogant people who think they are high and mighty bow their conceited heads in shame in the face of God's genuineness and humbleness" ("God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Each one of God's words warmed my heart. I could feel God's concern and empathy for people and that His care and solicitude were real. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, although God hid from them and drove them out of the Garden of Eden, God still pitied them and personally made clothing out of skins for them to wear. God is truly lovely, and His disposition is truly beautiful and good. His attitude toward corrupt people and people who commit transgressions is one of patience. Due to His compassion, He is able to forgive man's ignorance, weakness and immaturity. He gives man time and the opportunity to repent. While He waits, He continuously provides man with truth for man to enter into. God's salvation of man is so real. God is faithful and His love for man is real, not false or feigned at all, but tangible and appreciable. When I thought about this, tears welled up in my eyes and began to flow. I started to reflect on all my experiences. In the work of adjusting the leaders and workers, since I had not entered into the principles, I did some things that interrupted and disturbed the work of the church. However, God did not eliminate me or punish me. Instead, He used the report that my brothers and sisters wrote to make me reflect upon myself, repent and change so that I could fulfill my duties according to principles. When I was negative and weak, God used His words to comfort and support me. He also moved the brothers and sisters who were at my side into communicating His will with me, which strengthened me greatly. During times when I committed transgressions or when I made mistakes in my work, when I harbored misunderstandings and guarded

against God and I became negative and slacking in my work, God enlightened and guided me with His words so that I could understand His will, and I saw His love and His salvation. I was then able to leave negativity and misunderstandings behind.... Hadn't God already done this on me a long time ago? When I saw God's limitless love for me, my obstinate and numb heart was melted by God's sincere love. I said a prayer of repentance to God, "O God! I have disobeyed and resisted You time and time again. However, You still treat me with love and tolerance and You show understanding for my weaknesses. Time and time again, You used words to enlighten me, guide me, support me and supply me. You have led me step by step up to today. I am not worthy of You expending so much care and effort in saving me. O God! Your love for me is inexpressible. While You wait patiently for me to change, You also give me opportunities to repent. All I wish is that, from now on, I will practice in accordance with Your will and requirements. I wish to rely on the principles of the truth in my treatment of each brother and sister that truly believes in You."

Then, I read another passage in a sermon which says: "For example, you are a leader and you should be responsible for the brothers and sisters. Suppose there is a brother or sister who does not pursue the truth and is not following the right path. What should you do? You must help this person. This help includes pruning them and dealing with them. It includes censure and criticism. This is the way to help. All of this is love. Is it necessary to coax them along or use a consulting tone? Not necessarily. If there is a need for pruning and dealing with them, do it. Expose what should be exposed. This is because you are a leader and a worker. If you don't help, who will? This is the duty that you should fulfill" ("How One Must Experience God's Work in Order to Achieve Salvation and Be Perfected" in Sermons and Fellowship VI). From this fellowship, I learned that a leader or a worker who truly has the reality of the truth treats his brothers and sisters with principles. He knows what his responsibility is and what his commission is. He is able to rely on the principles of the truth to deal with people according to their nature and essence. He is able to practically help people based on their corruptions and deficiencies. He knows when he should help them with a loving heart, when to strictly deal with and prune them and when to rebuke them. He is able to behave appropriately, have principles, and will not arbitrarily treat the brothers and sisters who have expressed corruption as enemies. I began to think again of how I treated Brother Chen. When I saw him reveal his arrogant disposition, I did not help or support him in a practical manner. I did not dissect his arrogant nature in order to help him know the

essence of his nature or help him see clearly the dangerous consequences if his arrogant disposition did not change. Instead, I arbitrarily judged, excluded and condemned him. I even spread my prejudices about him behind his back. I did not exhibit any tolerance or patience, much less treat him with a loving heart. At this moment, I saw that I didn't have the principles of the truth in the way I was treating this brother and I wasn't fulfilling my duty and obligations. I understood God's will and I found the path of practice. As a result, I went and found Brother Chen. I pointed out his problems and offered my help and support. At the same time, I also dealt with and pruned him. I dissected his incorrect perspectives on pursuit and the wrong path he was taking. I also fellowshiped with him about God's holy essence and His disposition that brooks no offense. ... Thank God for His guidance. Through my communications with him, Brother Chen gained some understanding of his own arrogant nature and the corruption that he had expressed. He said, "Even though I know that I am very arrogant, I often just verbally acknowledge it. I have never dissected my own arrogant nature in depth, much less have I truly hated it. Only by you pointing these things out to me today have I now discovered that my own condition is very terrible and dangerous. God is not within my heart and I do not respect anyone. I always feel that I am capable. Especially when the work produces results, not only do I steal God's glory, I am even more arrogant and conceited because I feel that I am an amazing person. I am on the path of the antichrist, and I am doing evil deeds and resisting God. Today, your warning and your help have given me an opportunity to reflect on myself, and to repent and change. ... "When I heard him say this, it really touched my heart. I deeply felt that I had not fulfilled my duties well and that I did not have a compassionate heart. I had not given help or support to my brother. Instead, I had seized upon his corruption and condemned him. It was the judgment and chastisement of God's words that saved me, making me see clearly that I had an arrogant and malicious nature and rectifying my absurd perspective. I read in the passage of the sermon of the above: "It can be said that those people who really love the truth and who have the will to pursue being perfected all have an arrogant and self-righteous disposition. As long as they are able to accept the truth and to accept pruning and dealing, and are able to absolutely obey the truth no matter what the circumstances, then people like this can achieve salvation and be perfected. In fact, there are no people who are truly of good caliber and really have the will who are not arrogant. This is a fact. God's chosen people must be able to differentiate. They must not delimit someone as not a good person and as someone who cannot be saved

and perfected simply because they are extremely arrogant and self-righteous. No matter how wildly arrogant the person is, as long as they are of good caliber and can pursue the truth, then they are people whom God wants to perfect. The criteria for God perfecting people are mainly that one is a good person, of good caliber and in pursuit of the truth. If a person's caliber is too poor and they are constantly unable to understand the truth, then even if their disposition is extremely meek and not at all arrogant, they are good-for-nothing and not worth perfecting. On this point, one needs to understand God's will. If a person's caliber is good, and they have the will and are not arrogant and self-righteous, then that is absolutely a guise or a sham surface appearance, for there is no such person. One must know that corrupt mankind has an arrogant and self-righteous nature. This is an undeniable fact" (The Fellowship From the Above). This fellowship helped me understand clearly how I should deal with people who have an arrogant disposition. I learned that it is possible for those who have an arrogant disposition to change, and the key is whether or not they are able to pursue the truth and accept the truth. If they are able to accept the truth, accept God's judgment and chastisement and accept dealing and pruning, they can absolutely change and be perfected by God. Now when I took another look at Brother Chen's situation, I realized that since he was young, had not believed in God for very long and had not experienced much of God's judgment and chastisement, his expressing an arrogant and conceited disposition was guite normal. We have been corrupted by Satan and we are under the control of our arrogant dispositions, so we love to seek the limelight and to show off. This is a common characteristic of corrupt humans. Haven't I also frequently expressed arrogance and conceitedness? Why do I feel that I myself can change and yet he cannot? Why are the standards I have set for myself lower than the standards that I have set for him? Doesn't this mean that I am even more arrogant than him? It is not a fair way to treat him. When I realized this, I was able to let go of my biases and prejudices that I had against Brother Chen. I felt that the essence of his nature was not bad. He had the resolve to pursue the truth, and it was just that his arrogant disposition was a little bit more severe, and I understood that I should help him with a loving heart and fulfill my responsibility.

Thank God for His enlightenment and guidance. From this experience, I learned that those who live within their corrupt dispositions and do not treat others in accordance with the principles of God's words and who are unable to take the correct approach toward the strengths and weaknesses of other people, cannot treat others in a fair manner. Not only

will they bring harm to their brothers and sisters, they will also delay their entry into life. They can even give others a hard time or punish them, taking the path of the antichrist. Thank God for the judgment and chastisement work that He performed on me during this time. When I was living in my rebellious disposition and was unable to treat my brother in accordance with the principles of the truth, God promptly exercised His judgment and chastisement to save me in time and caused me to recognize my own arrogant and malicious disposition. When I turned back to God, put myself aside and sought the truth, I gained God's guidance and leadership—I understood from God's words how to deal with people with principles. When I treated Brother Chen in accordance with God's words, I truly experienced spiritual peace and stability. Furthermore, I was able to discover and learn from the brother's strengths to make up for my own deficiencies. I tasted the sweetness of putting God's words into practice. It was God's work and guidance that allowed me to understand some truths and to gain some understanding of my own corruption and deficiencies. At the same time, I truly feel that dealing with other people in accordance with the principles of the truth is very important. I only wish to continue putting God's word into practice when I fulfill my duties, and to treat each of my brothers and sisters in accordance with the truth of God's words.

73. Only by Understanding the Truth Can You Truly Know Yourself

By Wenwen, Jilin Province

My conception had always been that as long as I did things in the right way, and that I didn't show any expressions of corruption to people, then I considered my disposition to have changed. Therefore, in everything I did, I paid special attention to whether I was doing it right or not, and as long as my outward behaviors and practices were right, I thought it was fine. For example, when faced with being pruned and dealt with, I focused on where I'd gone wrong, and so long as someone could point out the ways in which I'd gone wrong, I would be convinced, but if someone pointed out the essence of the problem and fellowshiped their understanding about my corrupt nature, then I would refuse to accept it and was unwilling to understand that aspect. Later, the sisters and brothers gave me fellowship, saying that

one could only have his disposition changed by knowing his own nature, and that I did not know my nature. After listening to the words of the sisters and brothers, I started learning to know my nature. When someone gave fellowship and said, "This display of showing off is dominated by your arrogant nature," then I said, "Yes, I am arrogant, my nature is arrogant!" Someone else said, "This dissolute and unrestrained behavior is dominated by your evil human nature." I then continued, "Oh yes, my nature is evil." I didn't think it was difficult to know my nature as long as I repeated which kinds of nature dominated each of these behaviors. If someone asked me, "By which nature is this behavior dominated?" I would say, "It is arrogance, evilness, selfishness, deceit...." This kind of questioning and answering was like filling in the blanks, and it seemed so easy. In the end, the sisters and brothers told me that my self-knowledge was too superficial and it was all doctrines. Hence, talking later about knowing myself, I said, "I am too arrogant, boundlessly arrogant. I'm too evil, and too selfish." I thought that adding the word "too" to what I'd known about myself before would make it sound like I'd deepened my understanding. In this way, because I didn't understand and wasn't clear on the significance of God's requirement for people to know their own natures, therefore, when I revealed corruption or when I read God's words which revealed the essence of man's nature, I only understood it from the perspective of following the rules; I was much like a parrot, repeating words about knowing myself without really understanding from my heart or appreciating how I was deeply corrupted by Satan. Therefore, I did not hate myself, nor did I think of how dangerous it was to carry on that way. Even in the face of the incredibly stern words of judgment of God, I did not feel shocked. Rather, it didn't bother me, which resulted in my disposition not changing at all. Even though I was ignorant, numb, and poor in caliber, God had not abandoned me, but instead, He always guided and enlightened me, leading me to know my nature and substance and walk the way to have my disposition changed.

A few days ago, I moved with a brother to a new host family. During a fellowship, the elderly sister who was hosting us spoke openly to us her prejudices and opinions about some brothers and sisters she had previously hosted. After listening, I did not take it to heart, and I didn't fellowship the truth with her. This is how the time passed. Then, another two brothers who performed duties with us came to stay for several days. After they had left, the elderly sister told us her opinions of these two brothers. At that moment, my mind reacted, and I thought: "The majority of what you say does not fit the facts; this is all conjecture. God

requires that we brothers and sisters love, help and support each other. I must practice the truth and fellowship with you the truth of being an honest person. You shouldn't speculate or surmise about others arbitrarily." Two days after my fellowship, the sister came to me and told me which things I'd said and done that had made her feel constrained. She poured out all of her thoughts, crying as she spoke. Seeing this, I thought: "You are too suspicious, and are suspicious about everyone. This time you are suspicious of me. This won't do. I need to clearly fellowship with you so you won't be prejudiced against me." Therefore, I had a frank talk with her, and pinpointed the nature she displayed as well as her behaviors of suspicion and judgment, so that she could recognize them. The sister seemed to accept it, but she was not inwardly convinced. In the days that followed, she claimed to have this kind and that kind of illness. Seeing this, I thought: "You're clearly not convinced inside, but rather you just pretend to accept it; aren't you engaging in pretense and deception? There are lessons to learn when one is sick. You should do some serious introspection, for you have been in continuous illness." In thinking this, I took on another "burden," which led me to fellowship with the elderly sister again. I told her that the illness was due to rebellion and corruption, and I asked her to examine herself and know herself. However, during this fellowship, the sister just scowled, and didn't even pretend to accept it. I was dumbfounded, and thought: "I have been so caring in helping you and have given you fellowship over and over again, but you won't accept it and are even suspicious of me. You are such a dishonest person! If you do not accept the truth, who else could possibly help you? Forget it, I can't do anything, it is up to you." I pushed all the responsibility onto the elderly sister, thinking that she was too deceitful; I believed that I was a good person who practiced the truth, who was willing to help his sisters and brothers and who cared about God's will. In this way, I became full of opinions about the elderly sister, and she would not listen to my fellowships anymore.

Faced with this awkward situation, I had to do some self-introspection: "Could I have been wrong? I was not wrong! When I saw the elderly sister's shortcomings, I helped her with a loving heart! Is it because I did not rely on God? Not really, I prayed to God every time before fellowshiping with her. I have done nothing wrong in my practices, and nothing like this has ever happened while helping others in the past. The problem must lie with the elderly sister and it is because she is not innocent." However, when thinking this way, I felt troubled, and especially when seeing the elderly sister suffering from her illness, I felt really uneasy and a feeling of guilt arose in my heart. I wanted to help her from the bottom of my heart,

but I did not know how to practice. So I had to come to God and seek for His help, and I read God's words, "Your lips are kinder than pigeons but your heart is more sinister than the ancient serpent, even your lips are as beautiful as a Lebanese woman, but your heart is not as kind as that of the Lebanese women and it certainly cannot compare to the beauty of that of Canaanites. Your heart is too deceitful!" ("You Are All So Base in Character!" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words immediately gripped my heart. I could not help but reflect on what I had done over those past few days and the thoughts that were behind it. When hearing the elderly sister talk about her opinions of other sisters and brothers, I did not respond because I thought it was none of my business and that it didn't affect me; when hearing the elderly sister speak her opinions of the two brothers whom I knew, I couldn't ignore it any longer, and I felt that I should fellowship with her in case she misunderstood them; when I heard that the elderly sister had opinions about what I had said and done, I paid even more attention, and I tried to give her fellowship so that she wouldn't have any bad opinion about me. I claimed that I was helping her out of compassion. The fact was that I wanted to convince and overpower her using the truth, to shut her mouth, prevent her from judging me and even more so prevent her from having a bad opinion of me. When the sister was unwilling to accept what I said, I would add insult to injury. I would not offer sympathy for her illness, but would pass judgment on her, and say that it was because she had been rebellious, and make her reflect on herself. Thinking of the behavior that I'd revealed, I realized that I hadn't shown the elderly sister even a shred of compassion, nor had I shown her even any understanding or forgiveness. How truly malicious my nature was! The elderly sister had started hosting duties when she began to believe in God. She had bought a house using her own money in order to better fulfill her duty and had not uttered a word of complaint. Her life entry was not as deep as it could have been due to seldom being able to attend gatherings and fellowship with others, and yet she sincerely believed in God, her heart thirsted for God's words and she read God's words every day whenever she had time. As she did not thoroughly understand the truth, she regarded judging the sisters and brothers behind their backs and speaking of their shortcomings as her bearing a burden for them and as being purely open about things. She had no discernment about which of the things she said were her own imagining and conjecture, and which of them were her exaggerating the facts, and I had not shown her any understanding or consideration, nor looked at her stature. Instead, I indiscriminately fought back whenever

something infringed upon my interests, I strong-armed her into knowing herself and I magnified and over-analyzed her faults. With such motives, methods and humanity as I had, how could she not have an opinion of me? Wasn't I only living out my satanic disposition? I then understood that the reason why my fellowship to the elderly sister had not achieved any results was because the motive behind everything I fellowshiped to her was to speak for my own sake and to protect myself. It was fine so long as I didn't lose out and my interests suffered no loss, and I simply didn't put myself in her shoes to consider what she lacked or to understand her weaknesses. Nor did I consider whether or not she was able to bear what I said, or whether or not what I said would have a negative effect on her, or whether or not it would make her feel down. I had spoken and acted by my satanic nature and all I had done was harm and attack her—how could this kind of fellowship achieve results or benefit her?

God's words said, "Anyone can use their own words and actions to represent their true face. This true face is of course their nature. If you are someone who speaks in a very roundabout manner, then you have a crooked nature. If your nature is very cunning, then the way you do things is very slick and sly, and you make it very easy for people to be tricked by you. If your nature is very sinister, your words might be pleasant to listen to, but your actions cannot cover up your sinister means. If your nature is very lazy, then everything you say is all aimed at shirking blame and responsibility for your perfunctoriness and laziness, and your actions will be very slow and perfunctory, and very good at covering up the truth. If your nature is very empathetic, then your words will be reasonable and your actions will also very much conform with the truth. If your nature is very loyal, then your words must be sincere and the way you do things must be down to earth, without much to make your master distrust you. If your nature is very lustful or greedy for money, then your heart will often be filled by these things and you will unwittingly do some deviant, immoral things that will make it hard for people to forget and moreover will disgust them" ("A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (1)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words made me realize that the ways corrupt people reveal themselves and live their lives are dominated by their natures. The kind of nature people have inside will inevitably determine what disposition is revealed on the outside. Say, for example, someone truly loves someone else. They will attentively think about and watch the other person to see what they like and,

ultimately, they will express their love for the other person, and allow them to feel it and appreciate it. If I had love within me for the elderly sister, then I would be more attentive, be more understanding of her difficulties, be more considerate of her feelings, and would employ a suitable way and method and the appropriate language and tone to fellowship with her. Even if I couldn't resolve her problems, at least I wouldn't cause her any harm. But because my satanic nature held sway within me and I had no love for her, I therefore spoke only for my own sake and I reproached and lectured the elderly sister, compelling her to reflect on herself. All that was revealed by my intentions, my words and my actions was my satanic disposition, which was selfish, crafty and malicious and so all I caused her was harm and pain. I then thought of God's love for man, and that it is precisely because God's essence is love that, no matter what He does, it is a revelation and an expression of love. Just as God's words said, "The purpose for God saying these things is to change and save people. Only by speaking this way is He able to achieve the most valuable results. You should see that the kind intentions of God are completely designed to save people and they all embody God's love. Regardless of whether you look at it from the perspective of the wisdom in God's work, from the perspective of the steps and methods in God's work, or from the perspective of the duration of the work or His precise arrangements and plans, it all contains His love. For example, people all have love for their sons and daughters; so that their children can walk the correct path, they have all put forth a great amount of effort. When they discover their children's weaknesses, the parents worry that if they speak softly, their children will not listen, and will not be able to change, and they worry that if they speak too sternly, they will hurt their children's self-esteem, and their children will not be able to bear it. This is all done out of love, and they put a great deal of effort into it. As sons and daughters yourselves, you may have experienced your parents' love. Love does not just involve gentleness and consideration; even more so, it involves strict chastening. On top of this, everything God does for mankind is done out of love. He operates under the precondition of love, which is why He does His utmost to bring salvation to corrupt humanity. He does not deal with people perfunctorily; He makes precise plans and proceeds with them step by step. In terms of when, where, with what tone of voice, with what method of speaking, and how much effort He puts forth..., it can be said that all of this reveals His love, and it all fully explains that His love for mankind is

limitless and immeasurable. Many people say rebellious things when they are in the midst of trials; they issue complaints. But God does not bicker about these things, and He certainly does not punish people for this. Because He loves people, He forgives everything. If He merely had hatred instead of love, then He would have condemned people early on. Since God has love, He does not bicker, but He tolerates, and He is able to observe people's difficulties. This is completely doing everything under the influence of love" ("Do You Understand God's Love for Mankind?" in Records of Christ's Talks). The essence of God is love, so what God expresses is also love. God's love for humans is not expressed in words, but is embodied practically in His work, in every step of His work, and in the ways of His work. How and when God works on each person, what people, things or events He arranges for him and how long He will refine him, etc., all reflect God's precise planning and painstaking effort. All God's work is permeated by His pure and flawless love for humans, without exception. God loves man to such an extent that He can tolerate all of man's corruption, rebellion and defiance, and does not split hairs with man. All these things make me see the greatness and nobility of God. In comparison, there is no love and kindness within me, my heart is too malicious, and I am an ugly and contemptible satanic ilk. In recognizing all of this, I frankly shared the corruptions I'd expressed with the elderly sister, fellowshiping all that was in my heart. Unknowingly, the estrangement between us disappeared. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart!

Before, my knowledge of myself had been nothing more than words. It was knowledge I had learned by rote, the knowledge of doctrine. I had not, based on the thoughts and mentality that were revealed in me, grasped my own perceptions and viewpoints toward every matter, and held them up to God's words to know my own nature and as a result, I had never sensed how profoundly I had been corrupted by Satan, and had not truly repented or changed. But now I understand it due to my experience. Once man had been corrupted by Satan, his nature became Satan's nature. Regardless of speech, action, motives or thoughts, they are all dominated by his satanic nature. One can seek related truths to practice and enter into, resolve one's corrupt disposition and gradually attain dispositional change, only if he knows his nature. From now on, I will change the absurd way in which I experienced things, and will no longer pay so much attention to outward practices, get entangled in their rights and wrongs. I will honestly and sincerely accept God's judgment and chastisement, and I will know the essence of my nature, and truly know myself through

the revelations of God's words in order that my disposition be changed and I attain God's salvation soon.

74. I Enjoyed a Rich Banquet

By Xinwei, Zhejiang Province

On June 25 and 26, 2013, most of the leaders and co-workers here were arrested by the CCP police. Only a few of us escaped unscathed. Faced with the destruction and disturbance caused to the church work by the CCP's mad arrests and persecution, I made a secret resolution to God: No matter how bad the CCP's persecution gets or how great the difficulties will be for our future work, I will definitely cooperate with God in earnest, and will get all items of work arranged as soon as possible. Subsequently, we started the hectic work of dealing with the aftermath. And after almost a month of hard work, all the arrangements of work were approaching completion. I unwittingly found myself in a state of self-appreciation, thinking how clever I was to have arranged the work so well just when the CCP's frenzied arrests and cruel persecution were at their height. What a capable worker I was! And it was at this time that God visited His chastisement and judgment upon me.

One evening, several of us sisters were talking. Sister Wang suggested I write to some brothers and sisters, assigned me some tasks, and added one final word: "Don't just busy yourself with external things, now is the time to hide and carry out spiritual devotions. Focus on spiritual devotions and entry into life." As soon as I heard these words my heart rejected them: "I have to write letters, I have to go out and work. When will I have the time for spiritual devotions? You're an incomer, I'm a local, I'm protecting you by not letting you go out and work, and you're criticizing me? If I sat at home carrying out spiritual devotions like you do, who'd go and do the work? Things need to be arranged in order of importance, and the situation needs to be taken into account before you start pruning me." The next morning, everyone was fellowshiping God's words and the sisters were all talking of their understanding of God's words, while I was distracted and kept silent. Sister Wang then asked me: "Why aren't you fellowshiping?" I replied huffily: "I have no insights or understanding." The sister continued: "I see you are not in a good state." I replied without thinking: "I haven't noticed any problem." But actually, my thoughts were all set to burst out

of me. In the end, I couldn't contain them any longer, and all the thoughts that had been bothering me poured out. Then, another sister said: "In saying so, Sister Wang is worried that if we only work and don't have any time for our own entry, then we will degenerate...." The more she talked like this, the more I objected in my heart, thinking: "You say I'm degenerating? I think I'm in a very good state, I'm not going to degenerate!" I simply did not agree with her fellowship. After breakfast, I went out to work, and all along the way, I felt annoyed and I thought: "I'll quit as a leader. Better to just do some routine tasks and be done with it. Seeing as other people are now all saying I'm degenerate and have no entry into life, how can I now lead other brothers and sisters?" The more I thought about it, the more my spirit fell, and in my heart I thought: When these tasks are complete, I'll resign. Then my whole body felt weak, as if I was ill. I then realized that my state was wrong, and so I came before God and prayed: "Almighty God, I am so arrogant and self-righteous. I don't love the truth, and I have not been able to accept Your chastisement and judgment, Your dealing with me and pruning. I ask that You help me and protect my heart and my spirit, make me able to submit to Your work and sincerely examine myself, and to have a real understanding of myself." Later I saw the following words of God: "The key to self-reflection and knowing yourself is this: The more you feel that in certain areas you have done well or have done the right thing, and the more you think you can satisfy God's will or are worthy of boasting in certain areas, then the more it is worth it for you to know yourself in those areas and the more it is worth it for you to dig deep into them to see what impurities exist in you, as well as what things in you cannot satisfy God's will. ... This story about Paul serves as a warning for everyone who believes in God, which is that whenever we feel we have done especially well, or believe that we are especially gifted in some respect, or think that we do not need to change or need to be dealt with in some respect, we should strive to reflect on and know ourselves better in that respect; this is crucial. This is because you certainly have not unearthed, paid attention to, or dissected the aspects of yourself in which you think you have done well, in order to see whether or not they actually contain anything that resists God" ("Only by Knowing Your Misguided Views Can You Know Yourself" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words reflected my heart as if in a bright mirror. God requires us to know ourselves by understanding where we think we do well, where we think we do right, and to understand and dissect more in those areas where we think we do not need to be dealt with.

Thinking of that time, I felt that I had been carrying a burden and that my work had been showing results, and that I had handled many major tasks well, and so I thought that I'd been putting the truth into practice, that these were all positive and active entries and my state was normal—I simply had not come before God to examine and know myself. Thanks to the enlightenment of God's words, I realized that although I had done my work well during that time, yet my arrogant nature had long been running rampant. I thought the results of my work were all due to my own efforts and that I was a capable worker—I'd been living entirely in a state of self-appreciation. When I thought back to that time, I realized I was only working, doing what I was able to do under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but while working I did not seek truth and I had no entry into life. For a time, I had no understanding of myself, I had no understanding of God, nor did my experience of God's work bring me a clearer understanding of any aspect of the truth. On the contrary, I became arrogant to the point of listening to no one, and I stole God's glory for my small part in His great work. The satanic disposition I revealed was enough for Him to name me a sinner. But when God used that sister to remind me to focus on spiritual devotions and to avoid degeneration, I did not accept it. Truly, I did not know right from wrong and was too ignorant of myself. At that time, I felt I was in great danger. If God had not moved that sister to point out my state and have me return to God to reflect upon myself in time, if I had kept being so narcissistic, then unwittingly I would have lost the work of the Holy Spirit. Eventually, I would have committed some grave offense against God, and I fear it would then have been too late to repent, and I would have been discarded. Just then, I saw how badly I was in need of God's judgment and chastisement and how I needed to be dealt with and pruned to keep me on the forward road. Although judgment and chastisement befell, and I was pruned and dealt with, and I felt I had lost face and was suffering, yet this was indeed God's salvation, and I became willing to accept more of this type of work from God.

After experiencing that chastisement and judgment, my state was turned around. My behavior and conduct became somewhat low-key, and I understood a little of God's work that was at odds with man's conceptions. But soon, God exposed me again, and enabled me to see that my understanding was still too shallow.

In early August, I was elected as a mid-level leader. At the time I secretly made a resolution: "O God! I thank You for elevating me and for giving me such an important commission. I do not want to disappoint Your expectations of me, and I want to do everything

in my power to fulfill this duty, and I ask that You guide and lead me." And so I threw myself into a busy work schedule. I was faced with all the many problems in the letters that brothers and sisters had written, and I had to respond to and provide guidance for each one. I would often stay up late, but I was happy to do so. Sometimes, I would come across a situation which I did not understand that I didn't know how to handle, so I would pray to God and rely on Him, and I would see His leadership and guidance, and all the work of the church was arranged smoothly. Unwittingly I again became arrogant, thinking: "I'm pretty good at this, I'm a very capable worker." One day, I came across many difficulties. I did not know how to solve them. So I prayed to God and pondered how to clear my mind to arrange the work well. After I'd sought and contemplated in this way, how to arrange and handle this work became gradually clearer in my mind. So I wrote to my leader to make this suggestion and to ask if it was feasible or not. While I wrote the letter, I thought the leader was sure to think I had taken on a burden and that I was a capable worker. After the letter was sent out, I was constantly waiting for the reply, hoping for their praise. A few days later I received a reply, but on opening and reading it I felt stricken. The leader hadn't just failed to praise me, but on the contrary, the leader dealt with me and pruned me, saying "You are unprincipled to do this. Now the CCP is frantically arresting God's chosen people. God's family now requires leaders of all levels to perform spiritual devotions in hiding, so if you insist on doing so, then you will interrupt God's work. If the grassroot leaders can handle their own work, then let them, and if not, then just set it aside. You should urgently carry out spiritual devotions and write articles." After I'd finished reading the letter, I felt incredibly wronged: "How can the leader be like this? Brothers and sisters have difficulties and yet they don't do anything to resolve them, and they even say that I'm unprincipled in my actions. We have encountered a problem here, and all our work has been thrown into disorder. Don't we need some organization? If we ask the grassroots leaders to handle their own work, then are we to shut our ears to all these problems?" I completely failed to examine myself and was so upset that I expressed my dissatisfaction to my host sister, and I even thought: "I'll quit. If I don't quit, I'll still interrupt God's work. What's the point in exhausting myself if no one appreciates it?"

The next day, I came before God and reflected on my own expressions, and I thought of how it says in the sermons that rejecting being pruned and dealt with shows a failure to love the truth, and people who do not love the truth have a bad humanity. So I consciously read "The Principles of Accepting Being Pruned and Dealt With," and from it I saw a passage

of God's words: "Some people become passive after being pruned and dealt with; they lose energy in performing their duties, and end up losing their loyalty. Why is this? It is partly due to their lack of awareness of the essence of their actions, and this results in a lack of receptiveness to being pruned and dealt with. This is determined by their arrogant and conceited nature, and by their nature of not loving the truth. It is also partly due to their not having understood the significance of being pruned and dealt with, and believing that it determines their outcome. As a result, people believe that if they give up their families, expend themselves for God, and have some loyalty to Him, then they should not be dealt with and pruned; and that if they are dealt with, then that is not God's love and righteousness. Why do they not accept being pruned and dealt with? To put it plainly, it is all because people are too arrogant, conceited, and self-righteous, and they do not love the truth; it is because they are overly deceitful—they do not want to suffer hardship but just want to obtain blessings the easy way. People are not remotely aware of God's righteous disposition. It is not that God has not done anything righteous; it is simply that people never believe that everything God does is righteous. In human eyes, if the work of God does not conform to the will of humanity, or if it is not in line with what they expected, then He must not be righteous. People never realize that their actions do not conform to the truth, and that they resist God" ("The Meaning Within God Determining People's Outcomes by Their Performance" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words exposed my internal state. I did not accept being pruned and dealt with because I did not understand the essence of my actions. I thought there was nothing wrong in what I did, but my work and my duty had long strayed from the work arrangements, yet I still thought I was fully devoted. I thought of how it says in the work arrangements that leaders and workers should take charge of the fundamental and crucial work. And yet my view had been that all questions sent up from below had to receive guidance and answers, regardless of how big the issue was. Only if problems were managed and organized well could I quieten my heart and carry out spiritual devotions. When faced with the facts, I saw that I had not submitted absolutely and unconditionally to the work arrangements, but instead I was walking my own path, and so I'd struggled to keep up with the current of the Holy Spirit's work. I always had too many worries I could not let go of, and had been so arrogant that I'd been completely without reason. God was moving the leader to deal with things inside me that were not in line with God's will, so I would

understand my nature of rebelling against and betraying God, and at the same time understand the current of the Holy Spirit's present work and God's will: Spiritual devotions and self-examination should come first, and I should not focus only on work. But I did not recognize that the essence of my deeds went against the work arrangements and was rebelling against and resisting God. Instead, I'd become obsessed with right and wrong, I'd really failed to understand spiritual matters, and I'd really failed to understand God's work. Then, I again remembered these words in a sermon: "It doesn't matter which person, which leader, which worker, prunes and deals with me, and it doesn't matter if it completely accords with the facts. As long as it partially accords with the facts, then I accept it and obey; as long as it partially accords with the facts, then I accept it completely. I do not make excuses to others or say I accept some of it but not the rest, and I do not make excuses. These are the expressions of one who submits to God's work. If you do not submit in this way to God's words and God's work, it will be difficult for you to acquire the truth, and it will be difficult for you to enter into the reality of God's words" ("How to Gain Results From Eating and Drinking God's Words" in Sermons and Fellowship I). Yes, even if the leader's words did not entirely match my situation, I should still accept and submit to them. For this is a matter of submitting to God and the truth, not to any one person in particular. And what's more, my fulfilling of my duty had long gone against the work arrangements and the work of the Holy Spirit. Should I not have been even guicker to accept, to submit and to turn myself around? With this understanding, I consciously corrected the errors in my duty, and when I had improved a little and quietened down to engage in spiritual devotions and to practice writing articles, I saw that God Himself was protecting His work, and that the work in the church was proceeding normally, without delay.

After experiencing these two occasions of chastisement and judgment, and of being pruned and dealt with, although I suffered some refinement and pain, they left me with some understanding of myself and my incorrect state was remedied in time. Later on, I read these words of God: "God Himself has no elements of disobedience; His substance is good. He is the expression of all beauty and goodness, as well as all love" ("The Substance of Christ Is Obedience to the Will of the Heavenly Father" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "He curses you so that you might love Him, and so that you might know the essence of the flesh; He chastises you in order that you might be awakened, to allow you to know the deficiencies within you, and to know man's utter unworthiness. Thus, God's

curses, His judgment, and His majesty and wrath—they are all in order to make man perfect. All that God does today, and the righteous disposition that He makes plain within you—it is all in order to make man perfect, and such is the love of God" ("Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Right then, I could not help but sigh with such feeling: God is the expression of all beauty and goodness. His substance is beautiful and good. His substance is love, so everything that comes from God is good and beautiful. Whether it is judgment, whether it is chastisement, or whether it is arranging the people, events and things around us to prune and deal with us, although these things may cause pain to our flesh and smite us, yet everything God does is of benefit to our lives, and it is all salvation and love. But I did not know God or His work, nor did I understand His painstaking efforts. When faced with judgment and chastisement, with being pruned and dealt with, I resisted and refused to accept it, so much so that I even resisted it by giving up my commission at every turn, as if it were people causing me trouble, and I was utterly incapable of taking this from God. By being exposed twice by God, I saw that despite reading God's word for many years and hearing so many sermons, my impulse to revolt when faced with judgment and chastisement, and when being pruned and dealt with, was still so powerful, and I rejected it entirely. I could see that despite believing in God all this time my disposition had not changed, Satan's nature was deeply rooted in me—a nature which completely resisted and betrayed God. Suddenly I realized that judgment and chastisement and to be pruned and dealt with were all things that I needed, and that they were God's best protection of me. Without experiencing this type of work by God, I would not have a true understanding of myself, and I would not have been able to see my own true colors, much less realize how deep-rooted Satan's nature was within me. Only then did I understand why God says that corrupt humanity is His enemy, and that we are the progeny of Satan. Contemplating God's words, my heart became enlightened. I saw how God carefully arranges people and events for me to experience His work, to enter into the reality of the truth, and to lead me onto the right path of life—this truly is God elevating me and gracing me. I also came to realize that everything God does for man is love, and that God's judgment and chastisement, pruning and dealing are man's greatest need and man's best salvation.

75. God's Words Lead the Way

By Xiaocheng, Shaanxi

God's words say: "God's intention in exposing people is not to eliminate them, but to make them grow" ("Only by Practicing God's Words Can There Be Changes in Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). In the past, because I misunderstood God's intention to expose people, whenever I made any errors in the fulfillment of my duty or encountered any difficulty, or I came up against failure or suffered a reverse, I would dwell in a state of negativity and misunderstanding: passively slackening off in my work, not seeking God's will, and not reflecting inwardly to know myself. This caused me to lose many opportunities to obtain the truth. Thanks to the environment God had arranged, as well as the enlightenment and guidance of His words, I later discovered the deviations in my own experience and realized that God does not expose people in order to eliminate us, but to allow our lives to grow. Upon understanding God's will, I no longer was negative or misunderstood God, and I found a path by which to practice and gain access to the truth.

At the church, the duty I fulfill is to organize documents. For some time, due to God's guidance, I had achieved some results in the fulfilling of my duty. After I revised gospel materials for my brothers and sisters to inspect, they had not discovered any problems, yet when it came to the gospel materials they had compiled themselves, not only had I been able to find some issues, but I had also been able to revise and fix these issues for them. When my brothers and sisters had not been in a good situation, I had been able to bring my own experience to bear and communicate to them based on God's words, thus enabling them to come out of their erroneous situation. As soon as this occurred to me, I had felt elated. I felt as though I had done a pretty good job of fulfilling my duty, and had actually made some progress. To my great surprise, however, with the gospel materials I have revised these past couple of days, problems have been popping up repeatedly. One day a sister said to me, "The sentences you wrote in your gospel materials always used to be more refined. How is it that there are so many mistakes in this document?" As one who had always been rather adept at revising sentences, I had a bit of a hard time accepting this. I thought to myself, "I have worked very hard on revising this gospel material, so how could there still be any problems with its sentences?" Seeing the corrections this sister had made on the document, I felt quite unhappy. However, I had not sought God's will; I had merely given this

gospel material another once-over and been done with it. The next day, while reviewing another piece of gospel material I had revised, the same sister unexpectedly said that my line of thought in my revision had been unclear and that I had failed to establish its overall argument. She even said the person in charge had also seen this material, and shared her view. Hearing this, my heart thudded loudly in my ears. I thought to myself, "How could this have happened? How could I have failed to establish a clear line of thought in my sentences, or failed to convey the meaning of the content overall? Now, not only does this sister think my work is not up to scratch, but the person in charge feels the same. Doesn't that show that there is actually a major flaw in the train of thought throughout the entire document? Now that I was unable to catch such glaring issues, have I lost the work of the Holy Spirit? Is there a problem with my caliber as a person? Am I not fit to fulfill this duty? ..." The more I thought about it, the weaker I felt; I had completely misunderstood God, and I felt that God was no longer working on me and that He disregarded me. At lunchtime, I watched my sisters talking and laughing together, but I could not get myself to cheer up.

Just then, I recalled one of God's utterances: "When people do not understand or practice the truth, they often live amid the corrupt disposition of Satan. They exist amidst various satanic snares, wracking their brains for the sake of their own future, face, status, and other self-interests. But if you apply this attitude to your duty, to seeking and pursuing the truth, then you will gain the truth" ("How to Solve the Problem of Being Careless and Perfunctory When Performing Your Duty" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words shook me awake. I calmed down, and began to think things over. Problem after problem had emerged in the documents that I had been revising over the past few days, yet even upon facing such a revelation, I had not sought God's will at all. I also had not been trying to fathom what had led to the emergence of these problems in the fulfilling of my duty, whether they had emerged because these were issues with my disposition and intention or because I had not gained mastery in my work and had not grasped certain principles very well, nor had I been trying to figure out how I could prevent such errors from arising in the future so that I could achieve better results in the fulfilling of my duty. I had not given any consideration whatsoever to these practical questions; instead, my mind had been completely occupied with wondering how others saw me, and whether God had wanted to expose and eliminate me. I had spent all my time pondering these crooked ways, not thinking about the right path at all, and as a result, the more I had

pondered, the more negative and depressed I had gotten, and I had lost interest in fulfilling my duty. Only then did I see the deviations in my experience. Upon being exposed by God, I had not focused on seeking the truth and resolving my issues, but instead had thought about my reputation and position, as well as my future and fate. I had been made a fool of by Satan, which had led me to believe in God for years without ever having attained life entry. I could not continue to be in such low spirits. I needed to seek God's will in this sort of environment, reflect inward to get to know myself, and enter the reality of God's words.

I came before God to reflect upon myself: Why was I always unable to accept the facts that were revealed? Why, every time a problem occurred in the fulfilling of my duty, did I always suffer so? Just what exactly was the reason for this? By way of prayer and seeking, I recalled God's words: "Within mankind's corrupt disposition is a practical issue of which you are not aware; it is a most serious problem, and one that is common to every single person's humanity. This is humanity's weakest point, as well as an element of the essence of human nature that is most difficult to uncover and change. People themselves are objects of creation. Can objects of creation achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in everything, come to understand everything, and accomplish everything? They cannot, right? However, within humans, there is a weakness. As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals of some sort. No matter how capable they might be, when they stand out with conspicuous talent, they wish to package themselves up, disguising themselves as important figures, and appear perfect and flawless, without a single defect; they wish to become great, powerful, fully capable, omnipotent in the eyes of others. ... With regard to weakness, shortcoming, ignorance, foolishness, or lack of understanding of normal humanity, they will wrap it up, package it, not let other people see it, and then keep on disguising themselves. Such people's heads are always stuck in the clouds, are they not? Are they not dreaming? They do not know who they themselves are, nor do they know how to live out normal humanity. They have never once acted like practical human beings. In conducting themselves, if people choose this sort of path—always having their heads in the clouds instead of their feet on the ground, always wanting to fly-then they are bound to encounter problems. To be honest with you, if you do this, then no matter

how you believe in God, you will not understand the truth, nor will you be able to obtain the truth, because this sort of path in life you choose is not right, and your starting point is wrong. You must learn how to walk on the ground, and how to walk steadily, one step at a time. If you can walk, then walk; do not try to learn how to run. If you can walk one step at a time, then do not try to take two steps at a time. You must be a person with your feet firmly on the ground. Do not try to be superhuman, great, or lofty.

Human beings, dominated by their satanic disposition, harbor some ambition and desire inside of them, which is hidden within their humanity. That is, humans never want to stay on the ground; they keep wanting to go up into the air. And for whom is the air a place to stay? That is a place for Satan, not a place for humans. When creating humans, God put them on the ground so that your daily lives could be completely normal and your lifestyles disciplined, and so that you could learn general knowledge about how to be human beings, and learn how to live your lives and how to worship God. God did not give you wings; He did not allow you to stay up in the air. Those with wings are birds, and the ones wandering around in the air are Satan and evil spirits and filthy demons. Those are not human beings! If people keep having such ambitions, always wanting to turn themselves extraordinary and superior, different from others, and special, then that is a problem! First of all, the source of your thinking is wrong. 'Extraordinary and superior'—what kind of thinking is this? 'Stand head and shoulders above the rest,' 'defy all comparison,' 'flawless and impeccable,' 'fine beyond compare,' 'forging a unique path'—when used in the goals of people's pursuits, are these phrases good or bad? 'Outstanding,' 'excellent,' 'special talent,' 'powerful presence,' 'charming personality,' 'irresistible,' 'celebrated and great,' 'idolized'—are these goals that people should be pursuing in conducting themselves? Is there even one word in all of the truth that tells you to be such a person? (No)" ("The Five Conditions People Have Before They Enter the Right Track of Believing in God" in Records of Christ's Talks). "Under normal circumstances, no one is good at everything, no one is a 'master of all trades.' No matter how developed your brain is, how extensive your insights, there will always be things you don't understand or are unaware of, trades or skills you don't know; in every line of business or every job, there will always be gaps in your own knowledge that you're

unaware of, there will always be things that you are incapable of, or that are beyond you" ("Only by Practicing God's Words Can There Be Changes in Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). Only after pondering over God's words and comparing them with my situation did I discover that I had never been able to accept being exposed by Him. The reason for this was that I had been dominated by my arrogant satanic nature; I had always sought to be a perfect, flawless, lofty, valiant person. No matter where I went or where I was fulfilling my duty, I had always wanted to become the most outstanding, top-notch person. It had felt like I had to be such a person in order to be successful, and that otherwise, I would have been a good-for-nothing and a failure. Therefore, every time a problem arose while I was fulfilling my duty, I had not calmly faced it, accepted this sort of exposure by God, and admitted my own deficiencies. Rather, I had felt flabbergasted and that I should not have made any mistakes, wondering how it could have happened—to the point that I even would live in a state of negativity and misunderstanding, unable to treat myself properly. I really did not know myself very well, and had far too high an opinion of myself! God's words made it evident that I had always sought to be a perfect, flawless, lofty person; this had completely come out of Satan's ambition and desires. It had been Satan teasing and corrupting me, when in fact I was just an object of creation, forever unable to attain perfection. God has never required us to be lofty or perfect; He would have us be down-to-earth, make steady progress, and conduct ourselves with complete honesty. Using whatever sort of level and stature I had as a foundation, I should put my function into play, learn to submit to God's work, and do my best to fulfill my duty; only then would I have the rationality befitting an object of creation. No one is perfect; all ordinary people have their own faults and ways in which they are not up to par. That deviations or problems had emerged in the fulfillment of my duty was quite normal, and by actually being exposed, I had discovered my shortcomings. Only by continuously improving and making up for those deficiencies would I be able to advance further and further and do a better and better job of fulfilling my duty. If I could not deal with my issues and shortcomings properly, and did not seek the truth to resolve them, then how could I make progress? It was only then that I realized how dominated I had been by desires and ambition. I had grown so presumptuous that I had no self-knowledge at all; my quest to be a perfect person had been completely contrary to God's will and, as such, I could not possibly obtain His blessings and guidance.

Again I read God's words: "God's intention in exposing people is not to eliminate them, but to make them grow. What's more, sometimes you think you're being exposed, but in fact you're not. Often, because people's caliber is poor and they don't understand the truth, added to which they have an arrogant disposition, they love to show off themselves, they have a rebellious disposition, they're unconscientious, careless, and indifferent, they do their work badly, and don't perform their duty properly. On the other hand, sometimes you don't remember the principles that have been imparted to you, letting them go in one ear and out the other. You do as you please, acting before fellowshiping more with others and being a law unto yourself. What you do is of little effect and runs counter to principle. In this, you should be disciplined—but how could it be said that you have been eliminated? You must approach this correctly. What is the correct way to approach it? In matters where you don't understand the truth, you must seek. It's not just seeking an understanding of doctrine, and nothing more. You must understand God's will, and understand the principle behind how God's family does certain work. What is the principle? The principle is not doctrine. It has several criteria, and you must seek what the verdict is on the work arrangements for such matters, what the above has commanded with regard to doing such work, what God's words say about performing this kind of duty, and how to satisfy God's will. What are the criteria for satisfying God's will? Acting according to the principles of the truth. The broad direction is to put the interests of God's family and the work of God's family first. More narrowly, in all aspects, there should be no major problems, and that no shame should be brought upon God. If people master these principles, will their worries gradually recede? And will their misunderstanding also recede? Once you put aside your misunderstandings and have no unreasonable ideas about God, the negative things will slowly cease to hold a dominant position within you, and you will approach such matters correctly. So it is important to seek the truth and seek to understand God's will" ("Only by Practicing God's Words Can There Be Changes in Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words made me understand that His exposure of me was not to eliminate me, but to allow me to discover the shortcomings in the fulfilling of my duty and to learn which parts of my corrupt disposition were still hindering me from fulfilling my duty, so that I could resolve these issues in a timely manner, be able to continuously raise the results of my work higher, and

have my life disposition transformed as soon as possible. After understanding God's will, I calmed myself and searched for the reason behind the problems that had occurred in both of my recent revisions of gospel materials. Thinking about it very carefully, I realized that whenever I had seen some improvement in my organizing of documents, I had dwelled in self-appreciation and self-satisfaction. I had not been striving for progress anymore, and upon subsequent handling of materials, I had done so carelessly, merely going through the motions. With regard to the details of the truth involved in the materials, I had not sought out the principles behind them even though I hadn't comprehended them; I had merely had a rough idea of what they meant, and continued on in my confused state. As such, was it any wonder that problems had emerged in the fulfillment of my duty? Mulling it over, I realized that if I were to seek the truth to resolve my own corruption and spend more effort on diligently completing my tasks, then these problems could actually be avoided. By exposing the facts, God had allowed me to recognize my own corrupt disposition and the attitude I'd had in fulfilling my duty, so that I could seek the truth to solve these issues. Was this not precisely the love God had for me? This realization made my heart bright: I recognized that I should stop misunderstanding God and that I must hurry up and adjust my situation to devote my heart to the fulfillment of my duty. After that, I got together with the person in charge to further explore the reasoning in that gospel material and, based on the principles, determine the direction in which it should be revised. The following day, while going over it again, to my surprise, some highlights had been added, and by the time I was finished revising it, I felt a lot more confident and at ease.

This experience made me realize that if deviations or problems exist in the fulfillment of my duty, I should not be afraid, nor should I be scared if God exposes me. What is frightening is that, upon being exposed, I do not seek the truth to resolve my problems, and then dwell in a state of negativity while constantly delimiting myself, thereby losing many opportunities to obtain the truth and delaying my progress in life. From now on, no matter what setbacks or failures I might face, I wish to always seek the truth before God, engage in self-reflection to get to know myself, use God's words to resolve my corrupt disposition, seek a path of entry into the truth. Only by practicing in this manner will I be able to make more and more progress in life and fulfill my duty more and more proficiently.

76. Only by Entering Into the Truth Myself May I Truly Help Others

By Du Fan, Jiangsu Province

Recently, a church held a vote. Sister Li, the church leader, went against the principles of the church, and carried out the vote in her own way. When some other brothers and sisters voiced their opinions, not only did she not acknowledge them, but insisted on upholding her own way. The church was subsequently thrown into confusion by the leader's actions. When I got the news, I totally lost my temper: How could someone be so arrogant? Carrying out the duties of a church leader without God in one's heart, looking down upon the work arrangements, refuting and rejecting brothers' and sisters' suggestions—who else is there to blame for the church's confusion but you! I immediately looked up the relevant principles and God's words in preparation to commune with her and hold her against those words, so that she would be able to obey. Later that night, I went to meet Sister Li. During communion, I spoke to her with an accusatory tone, unable to suppress my anger. To my surprise, only about ten minutes into our meeting, the sister actually got up and rushed out with tears in her eyes. I was unrelenting, thinking: "She goes against the principles of the church and doesn't allow anyone else to criticize her. How will she work in the future? What a dangerous situation! This just won't do, I can't let her just walk away from this issue. I must write her a letter." Right then and there, I sat down and wrote her a letter in which I nominally acknowledged that my attitude in communion hadn't been ideal and asked for her forgiveness. In the letter, I also brought principles to bear on her problems and gave her some communion. I thought that I had handled things quite well. I demonstrated that I was a leader who was able to gain understanding of myself and let go of my own ego, while at the same time using truth to resolve issues. Seeing how I handled things, she would definitely be convinced and gain some new understanding, I thought.

Once, when I was communing on this matter with my leader, the leader asked me how I had entered into the truth when resolving this issue. "How did I enter into the truth? Did I do a bad job? Were my actions inappropriate?" I felt slightly confused. The leader continued: "It's not a question of how well you resolved the issue, but rather, in resolving the issue, did you use your status to convince others or did you use the truth to resolve the problem, exalt and testify to God, and let others gain an understanding of themselves and God? On the

surface, it looks as though you fellowshiped about God's word, but in actuality you were just trying to get her to succumb to you. Why did the sister end up leaving? It's clear she left because she couldn't accept your fellowship, she wasn't convinced. If we're only concerned with communicating the truth with others and neglect to pay attention to our own corruption, neglect to know ourselves, and work just for the sake of work, failing to learn our lessons and change our dispositions, are we not then like Paul? Paul gave guidance to others but, in the service of God, his old corrupt disposition became ever more set in his corrupt ways. In the end, he became a man who believed in God and yet resisted God, meeting his end in perdition." The leader's fellowship was like a call stirring me from a long slumber. Indeed, just as she said, when God arranged this situation for me, I didn't seek the truth or search for God's will, didn't consider how to enter into the truth myself. Reflecting upon my own emotional response in the situation, all I did was think about solving other people's problems. In this sense, was I considering God's will to bring others before Him? Or was I rather using my status to force others to accept my point of view? I was also deeply corrupted by Satan, without truth, humanity or reason. I too was a victim. How was I any better than anyone else? However, I had no self-knowledge, I'd been hot-blooded and lectured people condescendingly, and what I'd revealed was nothing but an arrogant and conceited face of Satan! When the sister rushed off crying, I didn't reflect on myself, instead resenting her and flying into a rage. Did my behavior not resemble the tyrannical actions of the great red dragon?

Thank God for His guidance! This experience enlightened me to the importance of entering into the reality of the truth. Only by entering into the reality of the truth can we receive God's protection and not resist God. I read this in a sermon: "Many people become false leaders or antichrists because they do not really pursue the truth and, as a result, they don't have slightest reality of the truth. As soon as they gain status and have some authority they begin to act wantonly, stand high above all, lord themselves over others and covet the blessing of status. In the end, such people are abhorred and rejected by God's chosen, succumbing ultimately to utter failure. Could this possibly be a rare occurrence? Why can't people come to their senses? What use is there in believing in God just to gain authority, wield power and covet the blessing of status? This is the behavior of selfish, lowly and evil people, it is the lowly desire of those who walk the path of the antichrist" (The Fellowship From the Above). Through this sermon, I realized that for those who do not seek to enter

into the reality of the truth, once they have status, they will lord themselves over others, stand high above all and haughtily use their status to suppress, frame, and control others. They will ultimately become false leaders and antichrists. Although my behavior and expressions in this matter did not appear on the outside to be that serious, the corruption that was revealed within me and my God-defying nature and essence could not be denied—I was following the path of the antichrists. If I did not have the direction of God, I certainly would not have realized my folly and would still be living in self-righteousness. Continuing down that path, I would be exposed and phased out! When I thought how things could have panned out, it gave me the chills. What dangerous waters I was treading in, believing in God for so many years and still unable to know how to enter into the reality of the truth like Paul, who lived within his imaginings and conceptions, but continued to believe in and serve God according to his natural character and corrupted nature. If I don't reverse my current state, I may end up being punished by God. In the future, I need to place more importance on personal entry and pursuit of the truth.

Not long after all this transpired, I received a letter from a sister which started by saying that she was having trouble grasping the truth and asked for my guidance. After reading the letter, I could not help but lose my temper, thinking: "You can't cooperate well with those church leaders and your co-workers. Every time they give you suggestions you just make excuses, continuing to act arbitrarily. The gospel work you are responsible for has been unsuccessful and the churches are always reporting on your situation. Today you're writing me to ask for guidance; are you really asking for my guidance? You think that everything that you've done has been appropriate and right and that it's everyone else who is unable to practice the truth. How well do you really know yourself?" The more I thought, the angrier I became, I could feel the flames of fury raging in my heart: "Did you not ask me to give you guidance? I've been wanting to chat with you for a while now." I put aside my current assignments and did my utmost to find the corresponding words of God to hold her against and convince her. As it turned out, the more I looked for appropriate passages, the less I found—I was puzzled as to where all the passages of which I had some understanding had disappeared to. Just as I was getting agitated, I suddenly felt reproached: "Are you really still looking for God's words to solve someone else's problems? Here this person is before you, how do you enter into the truth? Why are you always just trying to solve other people's problems? What have you exposed in yourself?" God's guidance calmed my restless heart

and I started to think to myself: "Have I already forgotten what I experienced last time? I shouldn't work just for the sake of work, but should resolve my own issues before I try to resolve other people's problems." At this point, I thought of this passage of God's words: "You must first resolve all the difficulties within yourself by relying on God. Make an end to your degenerate dispositions and be able to really understand your own conditions and know how you should do things; keep fellowshiping anything you don't understand. It is unacceptable for you not to know yourself. First heal your own sickness, and by means of eating and drinking My words more, contemplating My words, live life and do things according to My words; whether you are at home or in some other place, you should allow God to wield power within you. ... Can the life of someone who cannot live by God's words mature? No, it cannot. You must live by My words at all times. In life, My words must be your code of conduct. They will cause you to feel that doing things in a certain way is what God takes joy in, and doing things in another way is what God hates; slowly, you will come to walk the right track" ("Chapter 22" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "You must have an understanding of the people with whom you fellowship and fellowship about spiritual matters in life, only then can you supply life to others and make up for their inadequacies. You should not take a lecturing tone with them, which is fundamentally the wrong position to have. In fellowship you must have an understanding of spiritual matters. You must have wisdom and be able to understand what is in the hearts of other people. You must be a correct person if you are to serve others and you must fellowship with what you have" ("Chapter 13" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Does God not hate that which I revealed of myself today? In what way were my actions today fulfilling my duties? No, I was clearly doing evil. Later, I read "The Principles of Helping Others With a Loving Heart," and the first principle said: "You must distinguish different kinds of people according to God's word. For those who truly believe in God and accept the truth, you must help them with a loving and honest heart" (Practice and Exercises for Principled Behavior). I also read these words of God, "What does God's word require as the principle for treating others? Love what God loves, hate what God hates. That is, the people loved by God who truly pursue the truth and who do God's will, are the people you should love. Those who don't do God's will, those who hate God, those who disobey God, and those who are

despised by God, are people we should despise and reject. That's what God's word requires" ("Only by Knowing Your Misguided Views Can You Know Yourself" in Records of Christ's Talks). From these words, I understood God's will: As long as any brother or sister loves the truth and practices the truth, no matter what corruptions they may reveal, you should treat them correctly and help them with a loving heart. I remembered that God loves people so much that He incarnated and came among them, and He spares no effort to save them. He hates the corrupt aspects of people, but tolerates their weakness, never addressing people in terms of their corruption. In order to purify and change us, God always encourages us with earnest admonition and tireless teaching, uses love to move us, and gives us a chance to realize the error of our ways and find a new way forward. God grants me His grace, raises me up and allows me to fulfill this duty as a leader in the hope that I will love what God loves, help and support my brothers and sisters with a loving heart when they meet trouble and treat them with an honest heart. I, however, went against this principle: When I had a little status and saw that others had exposed some corruption, I neglected to tolerate their weakness, but instead wielded God's word like a weapon to suppress them and force them to agree with me. Is this not an act of hate? At this point, I felt so embarrassed and ashamed of my arrogance and ignorance. Afterward, I read a passage of God's words: "'Sharing and communing experiences' means speaking of every thought in your heart, your state, your experiences and knowledge of God's words, as well as the corrupt disposition within you. And after that, others discern these things, and accept the positive and recognize that which is negative. Only this is sharing, and only this is truly communing" ("The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person" in Records of Christ's Talks). Through reading the words of God, I learned how to commune with that sister in a way that would be beneficial for her. This time, when I took up the pen, I felt a surge of love welling up from within me. I felt a strong desire to lay bare my heart to that sister. This time, I didn't compare God's word against her, but rather discussed my insights into my own arrogant and conceited nature and inhumane behavior—I hadn't treated brothers and sisters correctly, neglecting to display love and tolerance to them. When I actually let go of my ego, came to know and dissect myself, and was able to fellowship the true states I'd experienced with that sister, and entered into the truth with her, I felt extremely at ease and peaceful and felt that there was no distance and estrangement between us. I truly came to appreciate that God's blessings came when I practiced the truth.

It was God's guidance and enlightenment that enabled me, who could only preach letters and doctrines and not enter into the reality of the truth, to begin to improve, and they made me see the righteous disposition of God and gain some knowledge of God's holy essence. Just as a passage in a sermon said, "Wherever there is corruption, there will be judgment, wherever there is evil, there will be chastisement" (The Fellowship From the Above). Now, I perceive more and more that God's work of judgment and chastisement is just what we need, and they are also God's greatest salvation and grace for man. Only through receiving this judgment and chastisement can we be wrested from the dark influence of Satan, cast off the darkness, seek the light and pursue the truth, enter into the truth, and practice the truth. I pray that God's judgment and chastisement follow me wherever I go, so that I may soon attain purity and live as a true human being.

77. I No Longer Use Poor Caliber as an Excuse

By Lin Ran, Henan Province

In the past, every time I was faced with some difficulties when performing my duty, or did my work badly, I thought it was because my caliber was too poor. As a result, I often lived in a negative, passive state. I would frequently use my poor caliber as an excuse to offload duties I felt hard onto other people, and felt there was nothing wrong with this, that I was thinking of the church work when I asked other people to do something because my caliber was poor, and I couldn't do it well. It was only thanks to reading the words of God that I turned this erroneous view around, realizing that I was looking at things through my own conceptions and imaginings. I also learned something about my own corrupt disposition.

One day, a leader sent a document that required urgent processing. The sister I was teamed up with was busy with something else, so she asked me to handle it. I quickly started making excuses: "My caliber is too poor. I'm bad at writing and editing text. It would be better if you handle it." Thus did I automatically push anything tricky onto my partner. Later, she said to me, "Right from when we met, you've been saying your caliber is bad. But after being with you a few days I've noticed you're capable of finding some problems in the work. I don't think your caliber is that bad, but whenever you're faced with any difficulty in performing your duty, you always say your caliber's poor, and sometimes you even push your duty onto

someone else. I don't know what your motivation in always going on about how your caliber is bad is—it feels to me like you're being really fake!" Hearing her say this, I was speechless, but my heart was filled with antipathy: "When I say my caliber's bad, I'm telling the truth. You don't know the facts, and you've misunderstood me." Afterward, I mulled over why the sister had said that. I wasn't lying when I said my caliber was poor—how could she say I had motivations? In my heart, I just couldn't figure it out.

Once, during assembly with my co-workers, I opened up about my confusion to the other brothers and sisters. I went through the reasons why I thought my caliber was poor, one by one: For example, I typed really slowly, my writing style wasn't very good. When working on texts with my partner, she did most of the typing and editing, and when she read a document, she found problems really quickly, whereas I was slower, and so on. After hearing me fellowship, our leader Brother Liu said, "Sister, is it upon these things that we measure whether someone's caliber is good or bad? Is it in line with the truth? Is it in line with God's will? We all know that people in the world value gift and brain very much. Whoever are quick-witted, articulate, and proficient at handling matters of the outside world are people of good caliber, while those who are clumsy of speech, ignorant and ill-educated are seen as having no caliber; that's how the unbelievers see it. We who believe in God should look at things based on the words of God. Have we sought God's will in this matter? Upon what basis does God measure whether people's caliber is good or bad? And just what is good and bad caliber?" I was shaking my head, and Brother Liu continued fellowshiping: "Let us read a passage of sermon: 'Whether someone's caliber is good or bad chiefly refers to how well they are able to understand the words of God. If their powers of understanding are good, this means that when they read God's words, they can penetrate through the literal meaning and grasp God's will, can gain the truth through God's words, and know how to act to ensure they are after God's will. To possess such powers of understanding means they are of good caliber. Caliber is not the same as being gifted, it is not the same as being quickwitted and capable. Some people seem pretty smart on the outside but utterly inept when it comes to understanding the words of God. That is what the unbelievers mean when they speak of good caliber, but such words do not stand up in the house of God. Some people are university students or very clever, but in the house of God they're up the creek without a paddle, and are completely incapable of entering into the truth. Can you say they are of good caliber? There are some poorly educated people who only graduated from primary

school and don't have an important career in the outside world, yet they have been successful in pursuing the truth and become those who are praised by God. Only these are people of truly good caliber. Level of education is not the be-all and end-all. What's key is whether people understand the spirit' (The Fellowship From the Above). From this fellowship we see that whether someone's caliber is good or bad depends on their ability to understand God's words. This is not what the unbelievers mean when they say someone has caliber or is gifted and smart. People who are of good caliber can understand God's will when they finish reading His words, they can find a path to practice and enter into the truth, and are able to practice according to what God asks. On the other hand, there are those who seem very smart and are great at handling matters of the outside world—but they're confounded as soon as they're faced with the truths of God's words. Such people cannot be said to be of good caliber. It's like how some knowledgeable, educated people seem gifted and brainy on the outside, yet are incapable of understanding the truths of God's words. Some of them even have a ridiculous perspective on things. And so, being highly educated, quick-witted, and capable is not representative of good caliber, nor are these the standards by which someone's caliber is measured. What's key is whether people understand the spirit, whether they are capable of understanding the truth. We cannot rely on our own conceptions and imaginings to measure whether someone's caliber is good or bad!" Hearing this, I suddenly saw the light: It turned out my beliefs were nothing but my own conceptions and imaginings—they did not conform to the truth.

Next, a sister found two passages of God's words and asked me to read them. God's words say: "When one is serious, responsible, dedicated, and hard-working, the work will be done properly. ... People's cooperation is very important, their hearts are very important, and where they direct their thoughts and ideas is very important. As for what people's intentions are and how much effort they put into performing their duties, God scrutinizes and can see. It is crucial that people put all their heart and strength into what they do. Their cooperation is crucial, too. To strive to have no regrets over the duties one has completed and over one's past actions, and to get to where one does not owe God anything—this is what is meant by giving all one's heart and strength" ("How to Solve the Problem of Being Careless and Perfunctory When Performing Your Duty" in Records of Christ's Talks). "If you have a correct attitude of facing the truth, have an attitude of accepting the truth, and adopt a humble attitude, then even if you

are of poor caliber, God will still enlighten you and allow you to gain something. If you are of good caliber but are always arrogant, constantly thinking that you are right and forever unwilling to accept anything that others say, and are always resisting, then God will not work in you. God will say that your disposition is bad and you are unworthy to receive anything, and God will even take away what you once had. This is what is known as being exposed" ("Only If One Practices the Truth Can They Possess Normal Humanity" in Records of Christ's Talks). The sister said, "God's words show that our attitude when performing our duty is very important—it's crucial. If we have the right mentality, if we can give all our heart and energy to performing our duty, God will see, and will treat us according to our attitude toward our duty. Even if we are of poor caliber, God will still enlighten and guide us. If we do not have the right mentality, if we are not willing to pay a price and cooperate with God, then not only will we not perform our duty properly, but will also be rejected by God. If we look at the brothers and sisters around us through the words of God, we see that some are of ordinary caliber but have the right motivation in performing their duty; faced with difficulty, they take it upon themselves to seek the truth, and focus on entry into principles, and they become increasingly effective in performing their duty. Whereas there are some brothers and sisters who seem to us to be of especially good caliber, and who have a pure understanding of God's words, but because they are conceited, self-satisfied, don't listen to other people's advice, and take God's glory for themselves whenever they have some small success in performing their duty, they ultimately lose the work of the Holy Spirit. Some even disrupt the work of the church and are stripped of their eligibility to perform their duty; in serious cases, they are even expelled from the church. These facts show us that whether a person's caliber is good or bad doesn't determine whether they are praised by God; what's key is whether or not they pursue the truth." Next, the brothers and sisters drew upon their own experiences to talk about the dangers and consequences of defining themselves according to their own conceptions and imaginings. Only then did I realize how stupid not understanding the truth was; I had not sought the truth, and had instead defined myself to be of poor caliber by living in my conceptions and imaginings, to the point that I often pushed difficult duties onto other people. I didn't try to improve, nor did I rely on God or actually pay a price to break through these barriers, which even made me incapable of performing the duties I was capable of. I was not only incapable of actual training, or growing in the truth and the life, but this directly influenced my

effectiveness in performing my duty. I thought about how quickly the sister I worked with was able to find problems. Though this was connected to her inherent caliber, more important was that, because of her conscientious and responsible attitude toward her duty, she was able to rely on God and face difficulties head on when she came across them. Only then was she enlightened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. I, on the other hand, tried to avoid problems when I encountered them, and used poor caliber as an excuse to let myself off the hook. I didn't rely on God and take it upon myself to try and solve the problem by seeking the relevant truth, which meant I was not able to gain the Holy Spirit's work. From this, I saw that God is fair and righteous to all. Through fellowship, I also recognized that God asks of us based on what we are capable of. It is not a case of Him "herding ducks onto a perch." I should do right by myself; instead of paying attention to my caliber, I should focus only on putting all my energy into performing my duty. I should seek and contemplate the principles of the truth, learn from the strengths of others, listen to other people's advice, and incorporate it into what I actually practiced—and over time, I would be sure to benefit and grow.

Afterward, the sister's criticism of me echoed in my ears: "I don't know what your motivation in always going on about how your caliber is bad is." She was right—I was always quick to say my caliber was bad. What motivations and corrupt disposition were secretly controlling me?

One day, I read these words from a fellowship: "Those who always say to others that they are corrupt, that they are ignorant and stupid, callous and dull-witted, of poor caliber—they speak not of the real motivations and deceitfulness within their hearts; they hide these evil motivations, and use their own corruption and stupidity and ignorance as a buffer, a shield. No one is craftier than such people, no one is better at pretending, at putting on an act to make people think that they're good, that they know themselves, that they're humble, that they're guileless and open. This is a show for others; in truth, such people are treacherous and crafty hypocrites ..." (The Fellowship From the Above). Only when I read this fellowship did I realize that my always going on about my poor caliber was actually directed by my deceitful nature, and that bad motivations were hidden within me. For example, when faced with a duty I had never done before, the first thing I would do was tell the other brothers and sisters that my caliber was poor, because I was afraid they would think little of me if I did the duty badly. I did this for the sake of my own pride and status. The

implication was, it's not my fault if I do it badly; it's not that I haven't put all my energy into it, but that it's beyond my caliber. Whenever I encountered any difficulty in performing my duty, I was unwilling to suffer and pay a price to face it head on. I was afraid of responsibility, too. So I just used my poor caliber as an excuse to push my duties onto someone else, to make them think I was rational and self-aware. Almost every time I suffered hardship and had to pay a price or had to shoulder some responsibility, I'd step back. Actually, I was living by the satanic interpersonal philosophy of "Stay quiet for self-protection and seek only to escape blame." It seemed pretty smart—using my own devious means to avoid responsibility—but in actuality I had missed out on many opportunities to seek and understand the truth. In fact, the caliber that God gives each one of us is fit for purpose; yet I had not put all my heart and energy into cooperating with God based on what I was capable of achieving, in order to gain the work of the Holy Spirit and improve my caliber; instead, I always used my poor caliber as an excuse for not practicing the truth, to try to trick and deceive God. Is this not so crafty, so evil? And how could I be guided by God thus?

God's words say, "I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth; toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people" ("How to Know the God on Earth" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "On to the next line, 'Though my caliber is low, I have an honest heart.' When most people hear this line, they feel good, don't they? This matter involves God's requirements of people. What requirements? If people are lacking in caliber, it is not the end of the world, but they must possess an honest heart and, as such, will be able to receive God's praise. No matter what your situation, you must be an honest person, speak honestly, act honestly, be able to perform your duty with all your heart and mind, and be faithful, and you must not shirk your work, be sly or deceitful, be crafty, try to outwit others, or talk in circles; you must be a person who loves the truth and pursues the truth. ... You say, 'My caliber is low, but I have an honest heart.' When a duty falls to you, however, you are afraid that it might be exhausting or you cannot fulfill it well, and so you make excuses to evade it. Is this an expression of an honest person? It clearly isn't. How should an honest person behave? They should accept and obey, and then be utterly devoted in doing their duty to the best of their ability, striving to meet God's will. Why do this? There are several aspects of the expression here. One aspect is that you should accept your duty with

an honest, sincere heart, to not think of anything else and to not be in two minds, conspiring for your own sake—this is an expression of honesty. Another aspect is that you should use all your strength and all your heart, and say, 'I will reveal my all to God. This is everything I can do; I will apply all of it, and I will dedicate it completely to God.' You dedicate all you have and all you can do—this is an expression of honesty" ("Only by Being an Honest Person Can One Be Truly Happy" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words offered me a path to practice: God does not care whether people's caliber is good or bad; what's key is whether they have a heart that is honest, whether they can accept the truth, and put it into practice. Although my caliber is poor, and I'm a little slower in understanding the truth, and sometimes follow doctrine, if my heart is honest, and I constantly pursue the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition as I perform my duty, if I do all I can to carry out what God asks, then I shall receive God's guidance and blessings, and will gradually be able to understand the truth. As I enter the truth I will be able to make up for my shortcomings with regard to my poor caliber, and I will get better and better at understanding and seeing things. After understanding God's will, I began to rely on God to get better when I performed my duty. No longer did I offload the things that were not evident to me, that I didn't understand, onto other people, but tried hard to seek and work them out for myself. Thanks be to God! When I practiced as God asks, I too was able to see problems in text—and although there were times when relatively complex issues remained unclear to me, by searching for the principles of the truth with the brothers and sisters, they gradually became apparent to me, and I felt lighter and more liberated when I performed my duty.

Thanks to experiencing the environment set out for me by God, I gained some knowledge of my corruption and shortcomings, and became aware of how to face issues to do with my caliber. When I was performing my duty in the past, I did not focus on seeking the truth, nor did I try to address my corrupt disposition. I always saw things through my own conceptions and imaginings, which led me to often delineate myself, and to try to get out of things by saying my caliber was poor. My performance of duty was full of perfunctoriness, I held up the work of the church, and suffered loss in my own life. Now I understand that everyone's caliber is preordained by God and is part of God's glorious intentions. I should not be constrained by whether my caliber is good or bad. In the future, I will try to seek the truth in all things, act with principle, and be someone honest to satisfy God.

78. Tear Off the Mask and Start Life Afresh

By Chen Dan, Hunan Province

At the end of last year, the church transferred a brother from another area to take over my work because I wasn't doing practical work, leading to a lack of results in various aspects of the church's work. Prior to this I had not been informed, but rather heard indirectly through a sister I was partnering with. I was very upset. I suspected that the sister in charge hadn't informed me for fear that I would be unwilling to give up my position and would put up a fight. I formed a poor opinion of her as a result. That sister later met with me and asked how I felt about being replaced—initially I had intended to speak my mind, but I was concerned she'd get a bad impression of me and think I was angling for a position. So instead, in as relaxed a voice as possible I said, "I don't have any particular thoughts on the matter. I wasn't able to do substantive work, so it makes sense that I'd be replaced. Whatever duty the church gives me to fulfill I'll obey." In this way I hid my true thoughts while projecting an illusory version of myself to the sister. Afterward, the church arranged for me to be a deacon. At our first co-workers' meeting, our newly transferred leader laid himself bare with regard to his state. One particular phrase he used, "lost all standing and reputation" hit me like a ton of bricks: I felt as if he were talking about me. I was sitting there feeling really sad—I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes, but I choked them back fearing that others would notice. I wanted to lay bare my own state, but I also worried that my co-workers would think less of me. In order to save face, I once again concealed my true state, not wanting others to see to what degree I had suffered from this refinement. I even forced a smile to show everyone how normal my state was. Just like that, I brought my negative state into my work. Despite the fact that I worked hard every day from dawn till dusk and didn't dare drag my feet, because I was living within a negative state, did not have a proper relationship with God, and could not gain the work of the Holy Spirit, it seemed that the harder I worked the more ineffective I became. All kinds of problems arose. Various aspects of the work practically came to a grinding halt and the leader of the gospel group was arrested by the CCP police. Facing all this, I felt as if I were on the verge of collapse. I thought only that my replacement was impending. Even then, I refused to lay bare my true state, making myself out to be strong and determined in front of my brothers and sisters.

One day during spiritual devotions I heard the following passage from God's fellowship, "When interacting with their brothers and sisters, some people are afraid of them finding out the difficulties within their hearts, and that the brothers and sisters will have something to say about them or look down on them. As they speak, they always try to give the impression that they're really zealous, that they really want God, and are really keen to put the truth into practice, but in fact, in their hearts, they're extremely weak and passive. They pretend to be strong, so that no one can see through them. This is also deceit. In sum, regardless of what you do—whether it be in life, serving God, or performing your duty—if you present a false face to people and use it to mislead them, to make them think highly of you or not look down on you, then you are being deceitful" ("The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person" in Records of Christ's Talks). After hearing this passage I was utterly dumbfounded. God's judgment struck me to the core of my being. Comparing them to my own actions, I was precisely the deceitful person revealed in God's words who uses superficial illusions to mislead and deceive brothers and sisters. I thought of the fact that since being replaced, I had been incredibly weak and negative and had continuously lived within a state of misunderstanding and betraying God. But I threw myself into disguising myself and pretending to be strong so that the leader and co-workers would see me as someone who can let go of status and obey the church's arrangements. I wasn't willing to open up and shed light on my true state with brothers and sisters, or to seek the truth to resolve my own problems and come out from my negative state. As a result, not only did I harm myself, but I particularly incurred losses in the work of the church. I was so deceitful! Yet, no matter how well I disguised and hid my true state, I could not escape God's scrutiny. The Holy Spirit used my ineffectiveness in work to expose everything. How could God not hate and be disgusted by someone like me, who did not take the church's work into consideration just to protect my own face and status?

At that point, I couldn't help but ask myself: Why do I always project a false image of myself to others? Is it not because my deceitful nature commands me to always save face and protect my status? Through the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, I came to recognize that Satan's poisons expressed in the phrases, "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face" and "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies" had already rooted themselves so far in me that all my actions were deeply

influenced and orchestrated by them. I thought back to how this had manifested in the past: How many times had I behaved counter to the principle of truth in fulfilling my duties, hiding the reality of the situation to save face and for fear that, if I told others, they would have a poor appraisal of me? How many times did I cause severe damage to my life because, despite being painfully aware that I was in a very poor state and knowing I ought to lay myself bare in communion with others, I preferred instead to go through the refinement myself rather than opening up and seeking out the path of light, for fear that I would be looked down upon? In essence, whenever my face and reputation were on the line, I would deceitfully disguise myself and project a false image to fool God and confuse others. Even as God sought to save me through countless revelations, I did not reflect upon and come to know myself, and turn back toward God. I never stopped living relying upon my deceitful nature. How could all that not trigger God's wrath? How could God work on me that way? How could I possibly achieve good results in my duty? If I continued down this path, how would I come to receive salvation? Seized by fear, I prostrated myself before God and prayed to Him remorsefully: Almighty God, I do not deserve to come before You! My deceitful nature has caused such great harm to the church work, but You still gave me chances to repent. I no longer ask that You tolerate me, just that Your chastisement and judgment stay with me always. Allow me to see Your righteous disposition and come into a fuller understanding of my deceitful nature through Your chastisement and judgment, so that I may cast off my disguise and live honestly.

I later read the following passage of God's words: "Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. ... If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness. If seeking the way of the truth pleases you well, then you are someone who dwells always in the light" ("Three Admonitions" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). From God's words, I saw that those who are unwilling to share their confidences and lay bare their difficulties to seek the truth are deceitful. Because God hates and detests the deceitful,

deceitful people do not have the work of the Holy Spirit within them and no matter how many years they practice faith in God, they will never receive His salvation and will ultimately be eliminated. Thanks be to the enlightenment of God's word, which made me realize that the reason I had failed in service to God was due to my own deceitful nature. I was never willing to give my heart to God, accept God's chastisement and judgment to purify myself, nor was I willing to lay myself bare before my brothers and sisters to seek the truth and resolve my problem. As a result, I was living within an improper state; I had lost the work of the Holy Spirit and had fallen into darkness. If I had fellowshiped on my actual state with the sister in charge, she certainly would have communed the truth with me and my state would have immediately improved. If I had always simply laid myself bare, my relationship with God would be proper and I wouldn't have harbored prejudices against her or caused such great harm to the church work. I give thanks to God for revealing to me His righteous disposition. I was exposed and judged through God's words and thus came to know my deceitful nature and the root cause of my failures. God's words also showed me a path to practice and made me understand: No matter how many difficulties I meet or how much I am in a poor state, as long as I can lay myself bare and seek the truth, and go by God's words, I will be able to receive the work of the Holy Spirit. Then those problems can be resolved. Only by casting off my disguise and behaving honestly will I attain God's salvation.

In God's words I found hope and my heart was deeply moved. Even though my actions had been deeply hurtful to God, He never abandoned me, but was always there quietly saving me. Behind this seemingly stern chastisement and judgment were full of God's kind intentions. This gave me a deep understanding that God's judgment and chastisement are "love as profound as that expressed in a father's guidance of his son." Now I vow to return to God and do my utmost to pursue the truth, seek a change in my disposition, and never again disguise myself in the name of protecting my worthless status and face. In the future, no matter what sort of difficulties I face or poor state I am in, I vow to lay myself bare to my brothers and sisters in seeking the truth and live honestly to comfort God's heart!

79. Seven Years of Trials Have Revealed My True Colors

By Chen Hui, Heilongjiang Province

In 1994, along with my mother, I accepted God's work of the last days. When I learned of how God had reappeared in the flesh to do the work of salvation, I was overjoyed, and particularly honored to be a beneficiary of God's salvation. In the time that followed, I often attended meetings, sang hymns in praise of God with my brothers and sisters. When I had time, I would read God's word, and after I had gained some understanding of His will, I split my time between work and fulfilling as much as I could of my duties within the church. Sometime thereafter, I heard that God's work would be coming to a close very soon. Greatly excited, I thought to myself, "I'd better work hard in my pursuit of the truth and do more good deeds before God's work is finished. I must not miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." Thereupon, I made a resolute decision to quit my job and invest myself completely in the work of spreading the kingdom gospel. I decided to completely devote the rest of my life to God, in the belief that only by doing so could I receive His commendation and blessing. During that time, every day, I kept constantly busy from early morning until late at night despite wind or rain. Even if I had to ride my bicycle dozens of kilometers, I never felt tired or overworked. There were times when I felt pain and weakness when faced with the slander of worldly people or abandonment by loved ones, but as long as the thought occurred to me that not only would I be spared when the great calamities descended upon earth and gain eternal life, but would also enjoy God's abundant material blessings, I was infused with a feeling of exaltation, and a sense that all of my efforts were worthwhile. In this way, I felt confident that if I could expend everything for God, then this meant I was someone who loved God and was deserving of His blessings, and that there would certainly be a place for me in the kingdom. From then on, even as I continued to expend and contribute, I was restlessly awaiting the day when God's work would come to a close so that I could claim my happy lot in the kingdom as soon as possible.

One day toward the end of 1999, just as I was confidently preparing to enter the kingdom and enjoy its great blessings, a sister told me, "The person used by the Holy Spirit has fellowshiped that if we wish to receive salvation and be made perfect, we must first undergo seven years of trials." Upon hearing this, I could hardly believe my ears. Wanting to make sure I had not misheard, I asked the sister to repeat herself. Once I had confirmed

that this really was what she had said, my head reeled and I was suddenly at a loss. For the life of me, I could not bring myself to accept what she had said as fact. All at once, thoughts started racing through my head: "Why do I still have to go through seven years of trials? When they said God's work would end in the next two years, I gave up everything; how am I supposed to go on, now that there are still seven years to go? Should I get a job to make some money? In seven years, I'll be thirty; what about this matter of getting married? ..." I had originally thought I was on the cusp of entering God's kingdom, and that all my fleshly afflictions would soon come to an end. However, it now appeared that not only would I not be entering God's kingdom. I still had to undergo seven years of trials and refinements. When I thought about this, my heart sank, and an inexpressible sadness welled up within me. I subconsciously began to blame God, thinking, "God! Why did You not tell me earlier that I still have to undergo seven years of refinement? I had originally thought that no matter how difficult things might get, it will all be over in two or three years, and that I could then enter the kingdom and enjoy wondrous blessings forever. Now, though, I still have seven years of trials and refinement ahead of me. Just how am I supposed to get through them?" The more I thought, the more negative I grew. I began to regret the decisions I had made, and even contemplated returning to the secular world to get a job and make money, and just participating in the church life whenever time allowed. As such, I lived in pure misery, and was constantly in low spirits: dozing off through meetings, and only half-heartedly fulfilling my duty. I did not feel I had the same energy going forward that I had had in the past, yet I also did not dare to take a step backward; I was truly between a rock and a hard place. At about that time, there were some people who, unable to endure the hardships of seven years of trials, had turned their backs on God and lost their faith. Hearing this news, I was shocked, and it was as if an alarm had been set off in my head. Looking at my current situation, I realized that if I did not do something to turn myself around, then I, too, would be at great risk—and yet, how was I supposed to change my current circumstances to emerge from the negativity into which I had sunk?

Not long thereafter, I saw the following passage of God's words: "Every time the seven years' trials are mentioned, there are quite a few people who feel especially uncomfortable and dejected, and there are some who complain, and there are all manner of reactions. From these reactions it is evident that people now need such trials; they need this kind of adversity and refinement. In their belief in God, what

people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials. In whichever aspects you are not purified, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God's arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die and give up your schemes and desires, and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangement" ("How to Satisfy God in the Midst of Trials" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words were a perfect exposition of my current predicament. As soon as I heard that I would still have to undergo seven years of trials, I had sunk into a pit of negativity and, filled with grievances, had rebelled against God. Previously I had thought that since I had quit my job and abandoned my family life, had invested much more than the average followers, I was therefore the one who loved God more than anyone else, and the most deserving of His blessings. Only then did I realize that my pursuit was impure. God examines people's hearts and minds, and He used trials and refinements to reveal that my belief in Him was actually based on a desire for blessings. He allowed me to gain a true understanding of the erroneous viewpoint of my pursuit and cast off my desire for blessings. Later, I saw another passage of God's words: "Are you not still projecting a false facade to deceive Me for the sake of your destination, so that your destination may be perfectly beautiful and all that you desire? I am aware that your devotion is but temporary, as is your sincerity. Are not your resolve and the price you pay only for the sake of the present moment and not the future? You want only to exert one final effort to strive to secure a beautiful destination, with the sole aim of making a trade. You do not make this effort to avoid becoming indebted to the truth, and less still for the sake of repaying Me for the price I have paid. In short, you are willing only to employ clever stratagems to get what you want, but not to do open battle for it. Is this not your heartfelt wish? You must not disguise yourselves, nor rack your brains over your destination to the point where you are unable to eat or sleep. Is it not true that your outcome will have already been determined in the end?" ("On Destination" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The judgment and chastisement in God's words caused me to feel ashamed and to reflect upon my thoughts and actions, realizing that they were identical to those that God had exposed. Thinking back to when I had first entered the church and was still holding a job while fulfilling my duties. When I had

heard that God's work would soon be coming to a close, I had thought to myself that to earn His blessings and gain rewards, I only needed to invest myself completely in expending for Him for a temporary period of time. To ensure that I could enter the kingdom once God's work had concluded, I had abandoned all physical pleasures and dived headlong into fulfilling my duties. However, upon hearing that I still needed to undergo seven years of trials, I felt I had encountered an unrecoverable setback, and grew so negative that I did not even have the drive to fulfill my duties. My heart was filled with blame and resistance against God. I felt regret over everything that I had given up and all the hard work I had done; I even contemplated betraying God and turning my back on Him. I turned into a completely different person from who I had been before! It was only through the revelation of trial that I realized I had never truly worshiped God as the Creator of all created beings. I also realized that I had not expended myself or given up worldly things to fulfill my duty as a created being in order to pursue my love of God and to satisfy God. Rather, I had made all these efforts purely for the sake of my own future destination. Everything I had done was to strike a deal with God; as such, I had been deceiving Him and using Him to achieve my ultimate goal of entering the kingdom to receive abundant blessings. How selfish, despicable, and ugly I had been! It was just as God's words had revealed: "No matter how they are tried, the allegiance of those who have God in their heart remains unchanged; but for those who do not have God in their heart, once the work of God is not advantageous to their flesh, they change their view of God, and even depart from God. Such are those who will not stand fast in the end, who only seek God's blessings and have no desire to expend themselves for God and dedicate themselves to Him. Such base people will all be expelled when God's work comes to an end, and are unworthy of any sympathy. Those without humanity are incapable of truly loving God. When the environment is safe and secure, or they can get profits, they are totally obedient toward God, but once that which they desire is compromised or finally refuted, they immediately revolt. Even in the space of just one night, they may go from a smiling, 'kind-hearted' person to an ugly-looking and ferocious killer, suddenly treating their benefactor of yesterday as their mortal enemy, without rhyme or reason. If these demons are not cast out, demons that would kill in the blink of an eye, will they not become the source of further suffering?" ("God's Work and Man's Practice" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). From God's words it was evident that selfish and treacherous people lack humanity and live

purely for profit, betraying fidelity and trust for personal gain. Those who live in accordance with Satan's nature cannot possibly be compatible with God; such people are constantly resisting and betraying God, and even take God as their enemy. God hates and detests these people, and if they keep refusing to pursue the truth, they will ultimately be eliminated. I thought about how, in the two times God incarnate comes to earth to perform the work of humanity's salvation, He has suffered incredible humiliation and paid the ultimate price in order to wrest us from the Satan's influence of darkness—and yet, He has never once asked anything of us. By contrast, not only had I not recognized God's love or been the least bit grateful or genuinely devoted to Him, but I had only concerned myself with how I could obtain blessings. When God's work did not square with my conceptions and imaginations or did not involve benefiting me physically, I had instantly turned away from Him, even regretting all my efforts and all I had forsaken and wishing to abandon God altogether. I could see that I did not possess even the slightest bit of humanity; my nature was such that I had resisted and betrayed God, and such rebelliousness was only worthy of God's curses. Having realized all this, I was filled with guilt and self-blame, and pledged to never again be so unscrupulous. I knew that, as soon as possible, I must repent, strive to pursue the truth to satisfy God.

Later on, I read the following words in a sermon: "Today there are many whose hearts give rise to grievances and who show their unbelieving evil hearts when faced with the seven years of trials. This is greatly surprising, and has caused me to realize that those in the family of God are now no better than the Israelites of former days. It can be said that God's work in the present day is by far the most suitable for, and is of the greatest necessity to, corrupted humanity. If God did not act in this way, humanity would never come to know Him, acquire real faith, or truly praise Him. Humans these days are impoverished, wretched and blind. They have no true knowledge of God. Before the trials began, many people's nature of rebellion, resistance, and betrayal of God had been exposed in broad daylight for all to see. How could such people expect to enter the kingdom? How could they be deemed worthy of receiving God's promises? If man truly understood his own shortcomings, impoverishment, and wretchedness—if he could see how his nature was rebellious and resistant to God—then he would submit to the various sufferings and refinements that God has arranged, and would be ready and willing to submit to God's orchestrations and all of His work. Only the wildly arrogant, after reading just a few passages of God's word, would

presume that they have grasped the truth, possessed humanity, do not need to undergo trials and refinements, and should be directly elevated to the third heaven. Anyone with life experience will have realized that if one only reads God's word but does not undergo the refinements of all manner of trials and sufferings, such a person cannot achieve a change in disposition. Just because someone has understood many doctrines does not necessarily mean they possess true stature. Thus, in the future, man must go through many trials: This is God's grace and exaltation, and even more God's salvation, and all should thank and praise God for it" (The Fellowship From the Above). After reading this sermon, I gained an even greater understanding of God's intentions. Encountering such trials and refinements was exactly what my life needed; had I not been exposed in this manner, I would never have scrutinized the bad intentions which had motivated my faith or recognized my selfish and despicable satanic nature. I had even thought that I had true faith in God, and crowned myself as one who genuinely loved God. I had been deluding and deceiving myself. God's wondrous work had thoroughly exposed me, allowing me to clearly see the true colors of my resistance toward Him, and see my wickedness and ugliness. It had showed me that I was an opportunist and a living, breathing descendant of Satan. My faith in God had been completely impure and marked by transactions. If I went on practicing my faith in that way, I would never receive God's commendation, and would end up a failure. Experiencing judgment and chastisement helped me to realize that faith in God is not as simple as I had imagined; one does not receive God's blessings immediately after putting one's faith in God, nor does one automatically arrive at some happy destination merely because he or she has put in work and invested time and energy. If my satanic nature is not cleansed and changed, I could practice faith in God for a hundred years and still not obtain salvation. This is determined by God's righteous disposition, and no one can change that. I also realized that undergoing trials and refinements is an essential step on the path to obtaining God's salvation. Now I no longer blame or misunderstand God, but instead happily submit to His work. I have resolved to start afresh, and work hard at my pursuit of the truth, so that someday soon I may achieve a change of disposition and compatibility with God.

80. Only God's Love Is Real

By Xiaodong, Sichuan Province

God said, "The Chinese nation which has been corrupted for thousands of years has continued on until today. All sorts of 'viruses' continue to expand and are spreading everywhere like the plague; just looking at people's relationships is enough to see how many viruses are in people. It's extremely difficult for God to develop His work in such a tightly closed and virus-infected area. People's personalities, habits, the way they do things, everything they express in their lives and their interpersonal relationships are all broken beyond belief ..." ("The Path ... (6)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The revelation in God's words made me see how Satan's corruption makes all relationships between people abnormal, because all are based on Satan's philosophy of life, without containing even a shred of truth. Without God's salvation, my eyes would still be covered and I would still be entrapped by emotions, but experiencing the work of God made me understand the essence of what it means to "help one another" and showed me the truth of friendship, love, and familial affection. I saw that only God's words are the truth, and that only by living by God's words could we escape the influence of Satan, and that only by comporting oneself according to the truth could one live out a meaningful life.

My parents were both Christians, and at the time our faith in Jesus brought us a great deal of grace. Especially in business, God blessed us with much in the way of material comforts. Most of my relatives weren't as well off as our family, and my parents took good care of them financially and materially. My relatives had a great deal of respect for my parents, and naturally they looked at me with the same eye. That was the kind of advantageous environment I grew up in. I thought my friends and relatives were wonderful, and no matter what our family needed, they would be willing to help.

In 1998, my entire family accepted Almighty God's work, and because it was a difficult field, we stopped our family business. At the time, I didn't understand the truth, so my heart still yearned for this world. I spent my days eating, drinking, and carousing with my close friends and relatives, and because I spent generously, I got more and more friends, and more and more classmate reunions, parties, classmates' and friends' birthdays and weddings, and other occasions couldn't be held without inviting me, because I was too

"important." Beyond that, every Sunday I had to pick up and see off my girlfriend, and we often went out together. At that time, even though I never missed one of my three meetings a week at the church, I still had absolutely no understanding of God's words, my heart still wandered in the world outside, and my belief in God felt like a yoke of rules. But God used environments to make me understand the truth. He showed me that relationships between people are based on nothing but mutual interest, and that there is no such thing as true feeling or love in them.

After the business stopped, my parents repaired our house and had to pay tuition for my sister and me, such that our family's savings were almost gone after a few years. Just as the saying describes "Tributaries run dry when the mainstream runs low." Because I depended on them for my income, there was a reduction in my own spending. I avoided weddings and gatherings, large or small, whenever I could, so my circle of friends began to shrink, and my status in the eyes of my friends became lower and lower. As the fortunes of my poorer friends and relatives improved, they associated less with us as well. This period was refining for me, because I felt I had no status in the hearts of others. Especially my girlfriend, who became more distant because I didn't spend money as generously as I had in the past, and finally left me for someone else in 2001. When I learned of it, I couldn't accept that it was real. I didn't show it on the outside, but the knowledge was like a knife in my heart. I was loyal to her, my efforts for her were sincere, so why did I get her betrayal in return? That's how our five-year relationship ended. I didn't know how to forget her, so all I could do was bury the pain deep in my heart. After that, I hated it when others mentioned the incident. I couldn't understand how something like this could happen to me. Then one day, I saw this passage of God's word, "Most people live in the foul place of Satan and suffer its derision; it teases them this way and that until they are only half alive, enduring every vicissitude, every hardship in the human world. After toying with them, Satan puts an end to their destiny. And so people go through their whole lives in a daze of confusion, never once enjoying the good things that God has prepared for them, but instead being damaged by Satan and left in tatters. Today they have become so enervated and listless that they simply have no inclination to take notice of God's work" ("Work and Entry (1)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The revelation in God's words is a true portrayal of human life. Thinking back on how I spent my days drowning in lovesickness, living in an imaginary world of "romantic love." I was inextricably

trapped, and I had no idea at all that these things were Satan's tricks to fool people, ruses designed to trap people and make them live without any goals and without inclination to take notice of God's work. Although I called myself a believer in God, I spent my days worrying and laboring over friendship and love, and if circumstances hadn't changed for me, I would still believe in those "pledges of eternal love" and "loyal friends," and I would never have escaped it. Because of the breakup with my girlfriend, I cut off all my relationships with my classmates; without such a noisy environment I could still my heart and devote myself to my faith in God. At meetings, through fellowshiping about God's words with my brothers and sisters, I came to understand some of the truth and gained some penetration into love and friendship, and realized that only by pursuing the truth and understanding the truth, can one's viewpoints on things be changed, and they will never be fooled by Satan. Slowly, my wounded heart began to heal. I felt the long-forgotten joy, no longer lost or living in my pain. Because there were no interruptions from the outside world, I was able to still my mind and focus on meetings. I became more and more interested in faith in God, and from then on I began fulfilling my duties.

When my relatives learned I believed in God, there was no end to their disturbances. They thought I had no business believing in God at such a young age. My maternal aunt often asked me for favors, my paternal aunt asked me to do business with her, even my foster mother pushed me to get married, saying she would take care of my child after it was born (because she had no son of her own), and my grandmother cried, saying, "I have absolutely no objection to your parents believing in God, because they worked half their lifetimes and gave all they have to pave the way for you, so it's time to let them rest. You should focus on starting a family and a career." She then went on to describe how my father grew up in poverty, how he started from nothing, how much he suffered, how hard he worked, and said that I was in such a good environment, and that I had no ideals. Their sudden "concern" for me was very flattering. I was confused, because it seemed like what every one of them was saying was right, they all wanted the best for me, and since they were my closest relatives, of course they wouldn't hurt me. I was living in refinement, and even though I knew this was a spiritual battle, I didn't have the strength to fight anymore. At a meeting, a leader showed me this passage from God's word, "For thousands of years, the Chinese people have led the life of slaves, and this has so constrained their thoughts, concepts, life, language, behavior, and actions that they have been left without the

slightest freedom. Several thousand years of history have taken vital people possessed of a spirit and worn them down into something akin to corpses bereft of a spirit. Many are those who live under the butcher's knife of Satan.... On the outside, human beings appear to be higher 'animals'; in fact, they live and reside with filthy demons. Without anyone to tend to them, people live inside Satan's ambuscade, caught in its toils with no way of escape. Rather than saying that they gather with their loved ones in cozy homes, living happy and fulfilling lives, one should say that human beings live in Hades, dealing with demons and associating with devils" ("Work and Entry (5)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Through the revelation in God's word and fellowship with my brothers and sisters, I realized that while they appear to be my relatives from the outside, and their words are in accord with the needs of my flesh, their thoughts, concepts, life, language, behavior, and actions are constrained because of Satan's corruption. They are all unbelievers, all of their viewpoints and all they discuss come from Satan, and what they pursue are all the evil desires of the flesh, none of which are in accord with the truth. If I listen to them, I would fall into Satan's schemes. I have none of the truth and no discernment, and further contact with them would only make me more degenerate. I would gain nothing from it, they could only bring me to ruination. At that time, I had some understanding of God's words "All those who do not believe, along with those who do not practice truth, are demons," but I still didn't fully grasp it. Later, God arranged circumstances that showed me the true essence of family ties.

Our family had always been a host family, and one day in 2005, thanks to an evildoer's report, my parents and several brothers and sisters were arrested by the CCP police. My birth sister fortunately survived a near-drowning as she fled, only escaping with her life because God protected her. My parents and the brothers and sisters at my family's house were detained and fined, and all were tortured, all came out with injuries. When I heard the news, I couldn't control my emotions. I didn't have the heart to fulfill my duties. I thought, "At a time like this I should go home no matter what. My parents raised me, and now that they're in trouble, even if I can't do anything, I should at least be there to check up on them and comfort them." So, I took the train home and went straight to my paternal aunt's house (who also believes in God) to see my parents. At that time I saw their wounds had not healed, I felt horrible inside, and tears burst from my eyes. It felt like my parents had been humiliated. That's when my parents told me: During the escape from the police, my birth sister dove into

the river (this happened in December, after dark). The water was up to her neck, and the river currents were strong, wild plants were found caught on her pant leg, her shoes were stuck in the mud, and she didn't know how to swim, so it was an utter mystery how she got to the other side. God must have miraculously protected her, or the results would have been too terrible to contemplate (the deep water and strong currents had taken the life of a man in his 40's several days before). Later, my birth sister hid at the house of an older sister who gave my sister a change of clothes while crying as she dried her wet clothes over the fire, and otherwise took very good care of her. Several days after that she learned that this older sister's house was no longer safe, so my birth sister went to hide at my maternal aunt's home. She came out during the day to bring a letter to our church informing our leader of my family's situation, but when she returned, my maternal aunt's younger daughter said to her, "Hey cousin, why did you come back? I thought you left. We've already folded up the bed." My sister realized my maternal aunt was afraid of getting involved and didn't want to let her stay there, so crying, she left their home, and risked arrest to come home because she had nowhere else to go. After my parents were released, when they learned about my sister's near-drowning and how she was kicked out by my maternal aunt, they were very angry, but my maternal aunt, in a tone convinced she was right, answered with, "That's right, we are afraid of getting involved. You brought these arrests on yourselves. You had a perfectly good life, but you had to go and screw it up, and now you almost got someone killed!" I never imagined that my closest relatives, the people closest to me in the past, at a time when the CCP was arresting my family and their lives were in danger, at a time when comfort is needed most of all, would actually say such inhumane words or do such cruel things. To know that they could made me very sad. None of the people we helped most in the past came to check in on us or comfort us. Those who had the best relationships with us not only didn't speak to my parents when they met on the street, they moved out of my parents' path. Some who used to nod and say hello to us now turned their backs to us and gossiped. Only our brothers and sisters came to visit us and fellowship in the evenings. I never believed our family could come to such an abject state. I was again trapped in pain, with thoughts of betraying God forming in my heart. Later, after receiving a revelation from God, I experienced what my brothers and sisters had fellowshiped about, "Relationships between people are based on nothing but mutual interest, family and friends merely help one another on a foundation of mutual use." I also thought back to my parents' talk about what they gained from their experience of being arrested, for example: When the police used a leather whip to beat my father, he said he didn't feel too much pain, and that the belt broke into three pieces as they hit him. My sister said she didn't feel any fear at all during her experience, and even though it was December, she said she never felt cold coming out of the water. God gave her extra strength and confidence. Arrest by the CCP had actually made their faith more steadfast. It had made them stronger. My father said that he hadn't believed God's words concerning how God exposes the CCP's evil, hatred of the truth in the past, and that he was an admirer of the king of devils, but this incident had shown him the CCP was merely a gang of thugs, bandits who would take away anything in our house worth money and would rather arrest law-abiding believers in God than murderers and arsonists. I was ashamed when I understood that we all live under God's leadership, everything we experience is part of God's sovereignty and arrangement, no person has the power to help another, familial affection will only drive us away from God, and that the things people can help each other with only accord with the flesh, not with the truth. Thoughts like "not wanting my parents' flesh to suffer" not only bring no benefit to their life, they bring no benefit to their salvation. Only God knows what man needs, and God loves man the most. I saw a passage of God's word that said, "Ever since He created the world, God has done much work involving the vitality of life, has done much work that brings life to man, and has paid a great price so that man might gain life. This is because God Himself is eternal life, and God Himself is the way by which man is resurrected. God is never absent from the heart of man, and He lives among man at all times. He has been the driving force of man's living, the root of man's existence, and a rich deposit for man's existence after birth. He causes man to be reborn, and enables him to tenaciously live out his every role. Thanks to His power and His inextinguishable life force, man has lived for generation after generation, throughout which the power of God's life has been the mainstay of man's existence, and for which God has paid a price that no ordinary man has ever paid. God's life force can prevail over any power; moreover, it exceeds any power. His life is eternal, His power extraordinary, and His life force is not easily overwhelmed by any created being or enemy force. The life force of God exists and shines its brilliant radiance regardless of time or place. Heaven and earth may undergo great changes, but God's life is forever the same. All things may pass away, but God's life will still remain, for God is the source of the existence of all things and the root of their existence. Man's life originates from God, the existence of heaven is because of God, and the existence of earth stems from the power of God's life. No object possessed of vitality can transcend the sovereignty of God, and no thing with vigor can elude the domain of God's authority. In this way, regardless of who they are, everyone must submit under the dominion of God, everyone must live under God's command, and no one can escape from His hands" ("Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Through God's words and reality, I saw the extraordinariness and greatness of God's life force, that He lives among man at all times, at all times guides mankind and displays His power, and that every person lives in arrangements masterminded by God. Facing God's word, I saw how tiny I was and how insignificant emotional ties were. What could I have done against the difficulties my family faced? Wasn't God the One who protected them, cared for them, and led them through the crisis? Can man's love of another man be greater than God's love for man? At the same time, God's words judged me, "Who among you can truly expend wholly for Me and offer up their all for Me? You are all half-hearted, your thoughts go round and round, thinking of home, the outside world, food and clothing. Despite the fact that you are before Me doing things for Me, in your heart you still think of your wife, children and parents at home. Are all these your property? Why don't you commit them into My hands? Do you not believe in Me enough? Or is it that you're afraid I will make inappropriate arrangements for you? Why do you always miss your home? And miss other people! Do I occupy a certain position in your heart? And you still talk about letting Me have dominion within you and occupy your whole being—these are all deceptive lies! How many of you are for the church with all your hearts? And who among you think not of yourselves, but are for the kingdom of today? Think very carefully about this" ("Chapter 59" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I saw that what I cared for in my heart was still my family, because I didn't have true faith in God, I still couldn't entrust them completely to God's hands; I saw that I did not live in the truth, and even though I was performing my duties in God's house, I often worried about my family, and did not let God occupy my heart. I could not respect God above all others and faithfully perform my duties. I had been fooled and afflicted by Satan. If not for these "unfortunate" things happening to me, I never would have seen things clearly. It's just as this hymn of God's word says, "When it comes to the state of man's life, man

has yet to find the real life, he still hasn't seen through to the injustice, desolation, and miserable conditions of the world—and so, were it not for the advent of disaster, most people would still embrace Mother Nature, and would still engross themselves in the flavor of 'life.' Is this not the reality of the world? Is this not the voice of salvation that God speaks forth to man? Why, among mankind, has no one ever truly loved God? Why does man love God only in the midst of chastisement and trials, yet no one loves God under His protection?" ("People Don't Know God's Salvation" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). If not for what these circumstances revealed to me, I never would have truly understood the relationships between people, and I would still be controlled by family ties, love, and friendship, inextricably trapped in the pursuit of these things, deceived and made to suffer by them, happy in my ignorance; besides, I never would have received the truth, never would have taken the correct path of life, and it was God's salvation that allowed me to never taste the flavor of "life" again. When I understood all this, I decided that I would wholeheartedly believe in God and pursue the truth to repay God's love for me.

I have now performed my duties in God's family for several years, and in God's family I have experienced God's love. No matter where I perform my duties, God is always there to take care of me. I get along with my brothers and sisters as if they were family, we don't use each other, and there is no exchange of benefits. My brothers and sisters are so sincere that even if our corruption shows through to each other at times, through opening our hearts and communicating about our understanding of ourselves, there are no grudges or guardedness. We help each other and offer one another love, everyone is viewed equally, and no one is treated differently because they are poor or rich. I have health problems, so I often get sick, but my brothers and sisters are very considerate and take very good care of me, which made me experience that even without blood ties among my brothers and sisters, they can be even closer than relatives. I get along well with my brothers and sisters, and with God's guidance, we all pursue the truth and strive to perform our duties.

My experiences throughout these years have also helped me gradually come to understand God's will, as well as to see that the work God has done upon me is the work of salvation and love, the words expressed by God are the truth, but more so that they are the words which save our lives. These truths have become God's best care and protection for me. If I departed from these words or did not view things from the basis these words provide, I would ruin myself. I was deeply corrupted by Satan and unable to directly grasp the

meaning of God's words, so God arranged many different circumstances, people, matters, and things, designed for my needs, to benefit and perfect me, to help me understand His words. Amid my hardships and trials, I unwittingly came to see that these words expressed by God are all truth, that they are things that mankind needs. Not only can they grant mankind life and allow him to live out the life of a normal man, they also point out the correct path in life, because God is the truth, the way, and the life. It's God's words that bring me to this day. I am willing to keep His words as my motto, the road sign to advance ahead, and the guide to act. Even though there is much of the truth I don't understand, through my continuing pursuit of the truth and fulfilling my duties, God will provide me enlightenment and illumination so that I may understand His words. There is still much corruption in me that must be purified, and I need to experience much more of God's work as well as God's judgment and chastisement and the accompanying hardships and refinements. I will strive hard to pursue the truth. No matter what tribulations or hardships befall me in the future, I will follow God to the end!

81. Through the Great Tribulation, I Have Reaped Great Benefits

By Rongguang, Henan Province

God said: "Based on their different functions and testimonies, the overcomers within the kingdom will serve as priests or followers, and all those who are victorious amid tribulation will become the body of priests within the kingdom. ... In the body of priests there will be chief priests and priests, and the remainder will be the sons and people of God. This is all determined by their testimonies to God during tribulation; they are not titles that are given at whim" ("God's Work and Man's Practice" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "The time of the tribulation will not be too protracted—it will not even be a year. If it were to last for a year it would delay the next step of work, and people's stature would be inadequate. If it were too long they wouldn't be able to withstand it—their stature has its limitations" ("How You Should Walk the Final Stretch of the Path" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). When I read these words, I thought: "Position in the kingdom will be determined based on how people testify during the tribulation; these

testimonies could influence someone's fate. When the tribulation comes upon me, I will have to grit my teeth and put forth enough energy, and I will certainly offer a beautiful testimony. That way I will be able to obtain great blessings; besides, the tribulation won't last too long—it will be less than a year. No matter what happens, I'll be able to endure this period of hardship." By being dominated by thoughts of obtaining blessings I made up my mind to get ready for the tribulation; I thought that by relying on my own "faith" and "will," I would be able to be an overcomer in the tribulation.

However, God's work of saving people is so wonderful and so wise that it really is unfathomable to man. In 1996, we all entered into the great tribulation through God's arrangement. But when the tribulation came upon us, no one was aware of it; everything happened so naturally, my true face and disgraceful situation of being an opportunist came to light during the trial of the great tribulation.

In June and July of 1996, I was in another part of the country fulfilling my duty. One day, the leaders of the local church came and told us that the recent situation was not very good and that Sister so-and-so had been arrested by the CCP police. When we heard of this, we wanted to pray for this sister and didn't think of much else, because we all knew that it was a common occurrence for people to be arrested for their belief in God in China, a country that persecuted God like this. But, it wasn't many days before we heard that a few more brothers and sisters were arrested. After a few more days, we heard that a dozen or so were arrested, and many well-known believers and many church leaders were secretly listed as wanted. There were also some who had bounties for their arrests. The local leaders were also on the blacklist of the CCP government to be arrested. I sensed that things were not good: It looked like the CCP government was trying to destroy the believers in one fell swoop. A kind of terror in the atmosphere enveloped us; we didn't know what to do in this kind of situation; we wanted to contact the upper-level leaders and ask them how to proceed, but we couldn't contact them. Later we found out that the tribulation had begun a month earlier. But at that time we were numb in spirit and we didn't dare make wild guesses and define God's work. Therefore we didn't know that this was the great tribulation. All we could feel was the dark hand of the CCP government pressing close to us and the work of the church couldn't progress because of it. In facing this kind of plight, we faintly became aware that God was allowing the work to be obstructed; God was leading us to stop the work and hide ourselves and lose no time returning back to our hometowns. That way we would be

safer. Consequently, we were forced to disperse and return to our respective hometowns.

I had only been home for a week when a sister came and gave me a letter saying that a brother in our church was arrested, and I needed to immediately leave home. At this time I was just like a deer in the headlights; I didn't have any faith and I only had one thought in my heart: "Quickly hide and don't allow the police to capture me, because the CCP is too deplorable and cruel, and the vicious methods it uses to ravage believers are savage beyond compare. If I fall into the hands of the demon, the consequences would be unimaginable." Following this, a sister introduced me to the mountains to cook for the miners. I was there with two sisters and we took advantage of the times when no one was around to read the words of God, fellowship about the truth and sing hymns to praise God. Because we had a supply of God's words, each day was very enriching. However, in less than a month, the CCP police came to check up on us and I had no choice but to quickly leave. Afterward I came to a restaurant to work. Everyone I came into contact with was an unbeliever and I didn't have any common language with them; moreover, I didn't have God's word nor the sermons in this kind of environment, to the point that it was difficult to even offer a proper prayer. I felt lonely and desolate and my heart couldn't help but start complaining. I even began to have the desire to betray God, and I thought to myself: "Believing in God is really not easy and I am on edge all day; I am wandering in a world that lacks justice; when will these days be over? If I didn't believe in God, living an easy and stable lifestyle like the unbelievers, wouldn't that be wonderful?" Even though my heart thought this way, I didn't dare leave God; I also felt like I couldn't leave God, the thought of leaving God caused me pain. Yet since I didn't love reading God's words in the past, didn't pursue truth, and I didn't remember many of God's words, therefore, the moment I left the books of God's word, I was not able to remember one line of them. Without God's words of life supporting me, I was just like a fool. I didn't know what to do with myself or what to seek after. I just forced myself to get through each day. What was God's will? Why did He arrange this for me? How could I practice and satisfy God? I didn't have the inclination to ponder this. Even worse, my belief in the omnipotence and wisdom of God and in God's universal dominance was lost, all I thought about was my hardships. It got to the point that when a sister came to ask me to go visit some brothers and sisters, I declined because I was cowardly and afraid of being arrested. I relied on my mind and thoughts, thinking that this situation would not get any better. During this period of time, the CCP government will frantically suppress and arrest

everyone who sincerely believes in God. I must protect myself well. During the two and a half months that I worked in the restaurant, my heart became more and more distant from God, almost to the point that I only acknowledged God's name, but didn't have God in my heart. My heart was often attracted to the sensual pleasures; I wanted to run away from God's hand and live the life of the unbelievers. I didn't know why, but over the next few days I especially missed God and the brothers and sisters; I missed my former church life. While being by myself, I always couldn't help but cry. My heart was sorrowful: "Oh God, all day I am with the unbelievers; if I am not working, then I am eating or having a boring conversation. I feel far from You. Only You know the emptiness and pain in my heart. Oh God, when will this long night pass? When will we be set free to believe in God, gathering together, performing our duties and reading Your words normally?" At that time, my heart was tormented like it was being overrun by weeds and I couldn't stay any longer. When it was getting close to the Spring Festival, I took advantage of the opportunity to guit my job and guickly returned to my brothers and sisters. Afterward I found out that it wasn't just me who had these thoughts; there were many brothers and sisters who had avoided being arrested by the CCP government by fleeing to other areas who had experienced the same thing. They all returned home because they were thinking the same thing. This was a miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Not more than a few days after I had returned home, a sister came to notify me of a church gathering. When I heard the sister say that the tribulation was over, and that everything had returned back to normal, and that I could go and fulfill my former duty, it took a moment before I realized: "What? The tribulation is over? This was the tribulation? How could the tribulation have ended? This is not what I expected! All along these things we have been experiencing were the tribulation, now I am finished! What did I manifest during the tribulation? Besides being cowardly and afraid, I complained, escaped, and betrayed. I didn't have any components of faith, not to mention loyalty and love. This time God has tested my work and I completely failed." I hung my head in despair with all kinds of feelings in my heart. This time I was able to understand what God said before the tribulation began: "After My own work has been completed, the next step will be for people to walk the path that they should. Everyone must understand what path they should walk—this is a path of suffering and a process of suffering, and it is also a path of refining your will to love God. Which truths you should enter into, which truths you should supplement,

how you should experience, and from which aspect you should enter in—you must understand all of these things. You must equip yourself now. If you wait until the tribulation comes upon you, it will be too late" ("How You Should Walk the Final Stretch of the Path" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I really hated myself: God has already patiently told us these things, and why didn't I believe it, why didn't I take it seriously? There is no going back; there is no other choice but to diligently pursue truth on the path ahead.

When we were finished meeting, I heard a sister reveal some internal intelligence of the CCP: The government is still aggressively going about arresting believers and it is getting even more intense. When I heard this, my heart of little faith again whispered: "The environment is this tense and the brothers and sisters are all fulfilling their duties. Is this OK?" But the fact allowed me to see that: Even though the situation is tense, we are not fearful as we were during the tribulation; when we fulfill our duties, our hearts are especially steadfast and peaceful as if everyone forgot about the piece of intelligence the sister told us. The Holy Spirit is also doing great work in the church; it won't be long before the grand occasion when the gospel is extended into every land. All the brothers and sisters are fulfilling their duties with their best efforts in their respective positions and every type of work is proceeding smoothly. The scene is progressing in full swing just under the CCP government's nose, but with the work expanding this vigorously, there have not been any arrests like that in the midst of the great tribulation. These facts allowed me to see a truth clearly: The CCP is always working to resist God, persecute God and suppress God's chosen people; it has never stopped and wants to assassinate God and His chosen people. Sometimes the butcher's knife in its hand does not fall down on us, and that is God watching over and protecting us. Sometimes we don't even perceive its intention to kill, and that is God using His great power to shelter us, it is not that the CCP put its butcher's knife down and stopped its persecution. The CCP has never put down its butcher's knife, it will never put it down; it wants to resist God to the end and the closer it gets to the end, the more frantic it becomes, because the CCP is Satan, the evil spirit. It knows that the glorious day that God completes His work of salvation is its last day. Therefore, the closer death draws near, the more it struggles. However, no matter what happens, the CCP always serves as a foil to God's work, it is a serving object in God's hands, it is a tool for testing God's chosen people. Its cruelty cannot block God's work, and without God's permission, it has no power over God's chosen people. When God does not allow it to hunt, God's chosen people will be

under its nose and it won't be able to catch them. It has no other choice but to be at God's mercy. Just like God's word says: "When I formally begin My work, all people move as I move, such that people throughout the universe occupy themselves in step with Me, there is 'jubilation' across the universe, and man is spurred onward by Me. In consequence, the great red dragon itself is whipped into a state of frenzy and bewilderment by Me, and serves My work, and, despite being unwilling, is unable to follow its own desires, leaving it no choice but to submit to My control" ("Chapter 29" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). This great tribulation has befallen us with God's permission, because He wants to use the persecution of the CCP to benefit and perfect His chosen people so that we can see clearly the substance of the CCP's resistance against God. If we didn't suffer even a little bit of persecution, then we would not truly believe the words God revealed about the corrupt substance of the CCP. We would still be fooled and cheated by it; we would still believe it when it said "freedom of religion" and "legitimate rights and interests of citizens"; we wouldn't be aware of the faithfulness of God. Today, I have personally experienced the persecution and pursuit of the CCP, I have seen the atrocious countenance of the CCP's harming of God's chosen people with my own eyes. And I know now that the freedom and democracy that it proclaims is all a ruse to deceive and trick people. I now clearly see the evil and deplorable demonic substance of the CCP: It is indeed the enemy of God, it is an evil demon that harms people and devours people's spirits. My heart truly despises it; I have made up my mind to betray it and follow God to the end.

The tribulation comes from God, and the timing of its ending is surely in God's hands. When God's work produces results, God will certainly not procrastinate the time. Just like God's word says: "The time of the tribulation will not be too protracted—it will not even be a year. If it were to last for a year it would delay the next step of work, and people's stature would be inadequate. If it were too long they wouldn't be able to withstand it—their stature has its limitations." God has a thorough understanding of us, He knows our statures, He knows our states, and He is not willing to allow our lives to have losses. Therefore, God will not procrastinate even for one second, and we are capable of enduring it all. God has made exact plans for us in His work, He has thought about our lives in every way. However, in my tribulation, all I thought about was my own safety and my flesh; I didn't think about how God's heart felt at all. I was truly selfish and deplorable; I didn't have

conscience and reason and was not worthy to live in God's presence. In my tribulation, God revealed my actual stature, which caused me to have a realistic understanding of myself. I saw how poor, pitiful and blind I was; I didn't understand the truth, I had no faith or love for God, but only had rebellion and resistance to the point that I would betray at any time and any place. Only then was I able to be aware of my danger. I felt the importance of being equipped with truth. At that time, when I read the words God revealed about man's corrupt nature again, I felt that everything revealed by God's words is indeed the true state of things. God's word came alive in me like a two-edged sword piercing my joints and marrow and revealing the filth and unrighteousness in the depths of my heart. It caused me to see that I was deplorable and ugly and to see that I was deeply corrupted by Satan. I began to despise myself and have desire to change myself; I thirsted to live out the likeness of a true person. I felt the work of God's judgment and chastisement was truly cleansing people and as long as I sincerely pursued truth, I would surely be cleansed and saved. The first time I felt the preciousness of God's words and the importance of truth, my heart inwardly became gladdened: I have finally entered into my belief in God, I am striding toward a new beginning and can see the hope of obtaining salvation. Consequently, I set a resolution: No matter how bumpy the path is ahead of me, I will always be steadfast and unwavering in following God and walk in the correct path of life.

God's wonderful arrangements allowed us to unwittingly enter the tribulation and to unwittingly rise out of the tribulation. The harvest we reaped from this was clear and easy to see. Through the tribulation, I can see that God is almighty and wise, and that the CCP is incapable and foolish. Even though it is unbridled and savage, it will forever be defeated in God's hands; it can only be used by God, and can only be something which renders service to God's work and which acts as a foil to God's work. The CCP vainly attempts to scare God's chosen people through cruel persecution and disturb and dismantle God's work. It hasn't imagined that God is using this to perfect us. Even though on the outside it looks like the CCP's persecution has come upon us, in reality, it is all arranged by God. He scatters people and gathers people, He leads people into the tribulation and leads people out of the tribulation; God has always supported people by virtue of His power, led people by hand, and caused people to not be able to leave. Amidst these wonderful arrangements of God, I'm able to clearly see the true face of the CCP and to truly despise it from the bottom of my heart. I'm also able to experience God's love, almightiness and wisdom. I am more steadfast

and unwavering in following God, and can see my true stature and deficiencies; my heart has a greater thirst for God and truth. There is so much significance in God raising the great tribulation; there is so much wisdom in God's work. No one can fathom it. I was able to experience the great tribulation arranged by God; it was truly God's exaltation and abundant love and my honor in this life. Every time I reflect on this I will be overwhelmed with emotion and give my heartfelt thanks and praise to God. If I didn't experience the tribulation, I would have followed blindly and, in the end, I would have fallen and perished for not having gained the truth and not having had my corrupt disposition changed. If I didn't experience the tribulation, I wouldn't have true faith in God and wouldn't understand the difficulty of God's work and that saving people was not easy. If I didn't experience the tribulation, I would not be able to see the true face of the CCP and I would still have delusions about this dark society, I would still have a fondness for this world and would not be able to set my heart on following God. It is God's wonderful and wise work that has conquered me; it is God's omnipotence and great love that has led me to where I am today! From now on, no matter what trials and tribulations I face, I will be willing to rely on my faith and love for God to stand witness for God and comfort God's heart.

82. The Heart's Deliverance

By Zheng Xin, USA

In October 2016, my husband and I accepted Almighty God's salvation in the last days while we were abroad. After that, I started frequently attending gatherings with brothers and sisters to read God's words, share our experiences and understanding of His words, and sing hymns in praise of God. I felt that that kind of life of the church was full of joy, and I really enjoyed it.

A few months went by in the blink of an eye, and the brothers and sisters had all grown in life, to varying degrees. Especially Sister Wang, who had believed in God for the shortest period of time, experienced the fastest growth. Whether it was in prayer, or sharing her experiences and understanding of God's words, she was more practical, and possessed more of the light than the rest of us. Her fellowship was also clear and methodical. All the brothers and sisters said that she was of good caliber and that she progressed quickly. At

first, I really admired her, and I would frequently say to my brothers and sisters after a gathering: "Not only is Sister Wang's fellowship clear and methodical, but she also has a really good understanding. She's also usually able to seek God's will when she encounters an issue." But after a period of time, I started to feel disgruntled. I thought: "Why does everyone praise her, and not me? Could it be that I haven't grown at all? Is there something wrong with my fellowship?" I gradually developed a feeling of dissatisfaction with Sister Wang, and I started to secretly set myself against her. I thought: "You can fellowship on God's words, and I can too. The day will come when I'll surpass you." I even contrived schemes: "I should save the understanding and the light that I generally gain from God's words and only share it when in a gathering with everyone. That way they'll all see that I can also experience His work, and the understanding I share is also very practical." From then on, I would read God's words at every chance I had and I wrote every single thing I had gained, that I had understood from His words in a notebook. When it was time for a gathering, I would carefully sift through these enlightenments within me to see how I could share them in fellowship that would be just as clear and organized, and as methodical as Sister Wang. I had no idea why, but the more I wanted to show myself off in front of my brothers and sisters, the more I made a fool of myself. As soon as it was time for my fellowship, I couldn't clear my head. Instead, my words came out in a jumble. I couldn't clearly state the perspectives I wanted to articulate, and every gathering was very embarrassing for me. Those few days I was agitated and my mind was in a whirl. I didn't feel as close to the sister as I had before. I gradually began to feel that the gatherings had become a kind of stress for me, and I could not free my heart.

Then one day, I told my husband what was going on with me when we were chatting: "I've recently seen that in gatherings, Sister Wang's fellowship is better than mine. I've felt really uneasy. ..." But before I finished speaking, my husband opened his eyes wide and said to me very earnestly: "Sister Wang's fellowship is good, and this is edifying for us. We should thank God for this. Isn't your discomfort just jealousy?" His words were like a slap in the face. I quickly shook my head and denied it: "No, that's not it. I'm not like that." Then he said: "Our brothers and sisters have all reaped something from Sister Wang's fellowship. If you're uneasy from hearing it, isn't it jealousy that she's more capable than you?" My husband's words pierced my heart once again. I felt very upset. Could I really be so awful? I felt incredibly wronged and was on the verge of tears. I said to him: "Don't say anything

more. Let me calm down, and I'll think it over myself!" After that, surprisingly, my husband told Sister Liu, a leader in the church, about what was going on with me. He wanted Sister Liu to help me out. I reproached him for speaking to her without checking with me first. I felt, "How could I show my face to our brothers and sisters after that? If they know that I am jealous of Sister Wang, won't they look down on me?" The more I thought about it, the more upset I became, but avoiding reality wouldn't resolve anything. I prayed: "Oh God! What should I do?"

The next day, I was examining what I had revealed over that period of time. Brothers and sisters would usually share the enlightenment and understanding that they gained from reading God's words with everyone at any time, but I reserved the light that I gained to trot out during our gatherings. I wanted to talk about things that other people didn't know so that my brothers and sisters would look up to me. When I saw that other brothers and sisters fellowshiped better than I did, I was uneasy and wanted to surpass them. I used to think that I was really easygoing with others and never fussed over every little thing, that I was a good, simple person at heart. But I didn't dare believe that I could be jealous of someone, and that I could even secretly set myself against someone and compete with them. How could I be that kind of person? Around midday, I called a sister to ask her if she ever felt jealous during gatherings when she heard other brothers' and sisters' fellowship was better than her. She said she didn't. She also said: "If our brothers and sisters fellowship well, this is edifying and beneficial for us. I really enjoy it, and it makes me happy!" Hearing her say that made me feel even worse, and only then did I see how strong that jealousy was within me. I wept and prayed to God: "Oh God! I don't want to be a jealous person, but every time I hear this sister's wonderful fellowship, I can't help but be jealous of her. I've felt disturbed and bound by this all day. I really don't know what I should do. God! May You help me cast off the binds of my heart of jealousy. ..." Later, the church leader, Sister Liu, came to see me. She read a couple of passages of God's words that were relevant to my condition. "Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. ... How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?" ("The Wicked Will Surely Be Punished" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Some people are always afraid that others will steal their limelight and surpass them,

obtaining recognition while they themselves are neglected. This leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being jealous of people more capable than themselves? Is such behavior not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is malicious! Thinking only of oneself, satisfying only one's own desires, showing no consideration for the duties of others, and thinking only about one's own interests and not the interests of God's house-people like this have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). She also read a passage from Sermons and Fellowship on Entry into Life: "So are those who are jealous of others narrowminded people? ... Are there any benefits to being narrow-minded and jealous? There isn't a single benefit. They are petty, narrow-minded, and vicious, and people see them as a joke. They're not worthy of living. Narrow-mindedness is not good, and that is definite. Some people say: 'Sometimes we can't overcome it. As soon as we encounter someone better than us, we feel jealous and angry. As soon as I see that person, I even feel like I can't go on living. What can I do when I encounter this?' Can't you pray to God, and curse yourself? And how should you pray? You say: 'I can't stand to see someone else be better. What kind of a person am I? Someone like me doesn't deserve to live. I'm jealous every time I see someone better than me. What kind of heart is this? This is not normal humanity. May God discipline and prune me.' After that, make the following prayer: 'God, I beg You to save me to escape from my narrow-mindedness, to make me more generous in spirit, more magnanimous, to live like humans so that You are not ashamed of me.' This is how you should pray. Once you've prayed that way for a while, before you know it perhaps you will become just a little more generous in spirit. The next time you encounter someone who is more capable than you, you won't feel so much jealousy. You'll be able to accept it and interact with them normally. Over time, this will become proper. As soon as you have normal humanity, you will be able to live with happiness, carefree and easy. A narrow-minded person lives awkwardly, in pain and exhausted" ("Sermons and Fellowship About God's Word 'God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II' (III)" in Sermons and Fellowship X). I was cut to the heart when I heard this fellowship. That was my own state! Sister Wang's fellowship was enlightening, but I didn't find a path of practice from it. On the contrary, in order to protect my own vanity, I continued to live within that state of competing with Sister Wang. I secretly set myself against her and racked my brains trying to think of ways to share

fellowship that was better than hers. I even earnestly hoped that no one would say anything good about her or applaud her fellowship. When my own fellowship was no good, when I couldn't show off myself and disgraced myself, my mind was in a whirl, and I was in pain and upset. I spent all day living within my anxieties, my worries, deeply afraid that others would look down on me. I was so narrow-minded. All I thought of was being able to stand out, but I absolutely could not stand someone else being better than me. Isn't that jealousy. envy of those who do well? There's no normal humanity in that! Thinking back, I was also like that before I believed in God. When I was interacting with friends and relatives, neighbors, and colleagues, I was constantly thinking of having others speak well of me. Sometimes, when a colleague would praise someone else's work in front of me, I would feel uneasy and in order to have others praise me, I'd throw myself into doing my work well, and I was happy to do it no matter how difficult, how exhausting it was. Only now have I realized that those manifestations were always satanic corrupt dispositions. Once I realized that, Sister Liu once again linked this to that passage of fellowship and pointed out a path of practice for me. That was to come in front of God and pray to Him, to open up to God my own difficulties and the corruption that I reveal so that He could help me be someone who is generous in spirit. After that, I came in front of God frequently and prayed to Him about my difficulties. I also began to consciously read more of God's words of Him judging and exposing mankind's corrupt disposition. When I gained enlightenment, and light from God's words, I would share it with my brothers and sisters at any time. They also spoke about what they had gained and understood. I never would have imagined, but this kind of practice allowed me to reap even more than just reading God's words on my own. In gatherings, I shared in fellowship based on how much I understood, and focused on quieting my heart and listening to others' fellowship. It was only through this kind of practice that I found, when my brothers and sisters were able to talk about their experiences and testimonies of putting God's words into practice, I also gained great edification. After a period of this kind of practice, my jealousy became less strong than it had been, but in every gathering, when I saw that the other brothers and sisters really commended Sister Wang's fellowship, I still couldn't help but feel some jealousy. I always felt some distance between me and her, and I couldn't interact with her normally. Living within that state, I didn't dare open up to my brothers and sisters. I was afraid that if I did, they would look down on me. So, during several

gatherings, I couldn't gain release in my heart. I could only pray to God on my difficulties: "Oh God! I am once again in an improper state today. May You lead me. ..."

One evening, Sister Liu gave me a call. She inquired with concern whether I had been experiencing difficulties lately. I responded vaguely: "My corruption is so deep. Could it be that God doesn't save someone like me?" I was afraid she would look down on me, so I didn't say anything further. Sister Liu read a passage of God's words for me: "Some people say: 'It's hard being honest. Do I have to tell everything I think in my heart to others? Isn't it enough to commune the positive things? I don't need to tell others of my dark or corrupt side, do I?' If you do not speak these things, and do not dissect yourself, then you will never know yourself, will never know what kind of thing you are, and there will be no chance of others trusting you. This is fact. If you wish for others to trust you, first you must be honest. To be honest, you must first lay your heart bare so that everyone can see your heart, see all that you are thinking, and see your true face; you must not pretend or try to cover yourself up. Only then will people trust you and consider you honest. This is the most fundamental practice, and the prerequisite, of being honest" ("The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person" in Records of Christ's Talks). After reading those words from God, she shared in fellowship: "Opening up and sharing in fellowship is one way to free your heart. If we keep difficulty hidden in our hearts, we are more easily toyed with by Satan, and our life will suffer loss. Opening up and bringing it into the light is putting the truth into practice, and being an honest person. Then we can also gain help from our brothers and sisters. This allows our difficulties to be resolved more quickly. We will experience growth in our lives and our hearts will experience release. Isn't that a good thing?" After listening to Sister Liu's fellowship, I plucked up my courage and told her what I was going through. I never could have imagined that after she heard me out, not only was there no hint of belittling me or looking down on me, but she patiently shared her own experience with me. She told me about how she used to be a jealous person, and how she came out from that. I was so surprised after hearing her fellowship. I thought: "So you have also had this kind of expression of corruption!" Sister Liu read another passage of God's words related to my state: "The people God saves are those who have corrupt dispositions by way of Satan's corruption; they are not perfect people without the slightest blemish, nor are they people who live in a vacuum. For some, as soon as their corruption is revealed, they think, 'Yet again, I've resisted God; I've believed in

Him for many years, but I still haven't changed. God surely doesn't want me anymore!' How is this attitude? They have given up on themselves, and think God does not want them anymore. Is this not a case of misunderstanding God? Being so negative makes it easiest for Satan to find chinks in your armor, and once it has succeeded, the consequences are unimaginable. Therefore, no matter how much difficulty you are in or how negative you are feeling, you must never give up! In the process of life growth and while being saved, people sometimes take the wrong path or go astray. They exhibit some immaturity in their life for a while, or sometimes grow weak and negative, say the wrong things, slip and fall, or suffer a failure. From God's point of view, such things are all normal, and He would not make a fuss over them" ("Life Entry Is Most Important to Believing in God" in Records of Christ's Talks). Then, she shared in fellowship: "We are all people who have been deeply corrupted by Satan. Arrogance, deceitfulness, selfishness, jealousy of others—all of these corrupt dispositions are very deeply entrenched in people. God has now come to do the work of judgment and chastisement in order to purify and transform us. We must deal with ourselves correctly, and not live within negativity and misunderstandings. As long as we pursue the truth with intention, accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words, reflect on and understand our own corrupt essences according to God's words, and are able to forsake the flesh and put the truth into practice, the day will come when our life disposition will undergo a transformation, and we will be able to live out the likeness of a true human being." My heart felt so freed after listening to Sister Liu's fellowship, and I also understood God's will. Not only should I properly face my own corruption, and focus on knowing myself and seeking the truth to resolve my own corrupt disposition, but I also should put being an honest person into practice, and open up to my brothers and sisters about the corruption I had revealed over that period of time. This would deprive Satan of an opportunity to do its work, and it would also be shaming Satan through practicing the truth. Sister Liu came to my home again the next day, and we read a passage from God's words together: "... as soon as it touches upon position, face, or reputation, everyone's heart leaps in anticipation, and each of you always wants to stand out, be famous, and be recognized. Everyone is unwilling to yield, always instead wishing to contend—even though contending is embarrassing and not allowed in God's house. However, without contention, you still are not content. When you see someone stand out, you feel jealous, hatred, and that it is unfair. 'Why can't I stand out? Why is it

always that person who gets to stand out, and it's never my turn?' You then feel some resentment. You try to repress it, but you cannot, so you pray. After you are finished praying, you feel better for a little while, but later on, when you encounter this matter again, you cannot overcome it. Is this not a case of immature stature? Is not a person's falling into such states a trap? These are the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bind humans. ... You must learn to let go and set aside these things, to yield, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle furiously or rush to take advantage the moment you encounter an opportunity to stand out or obtain glory. You must learn to back off, but must not delay the performing of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet obscurity, and who does not show off to others while performing your duty. The more you let go and set aside, the more peaceful you will become, and the more space will open up within your heart and the more your state will improve. The more you struggle and compete, the darker your state will be. If you do not believe it, try it and see! If you want to turn this sort of state around, and not be controlled by these things, then you must first set them aside and give them up. Otherwise, the more you struggle, the more darkness will surround you, and the more jealousy and hatred you will feel, and your desire to obtain will only grow stronger. The stronger your desire to obtain, the less capable you will be to do so, and as you obtain less, your hatred will increase. As your hatred increases, you will grow darker inside. The darker you are inside, the more poorly you will perform your duty; the more poorly you perform your duty, the less useful you will be. This is an interlinked, vicious cycle. You cannot perform your duty well in such a state, so, gradually, you will be eliminated" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). After reading God's words, she then linked this to her own experience and fellowshiped on the root of people's jealousy. Only then did I realize that all of this was caused because my own desire for a name and status was too strong, and my disposition was too arrogant. Dominated by these corrupt dispositions, my ambition and aggressiveness were too great, and no matter what I did, I just wanted to be above others. I was that way when I was a part of society, and I was that way in the church as well. Even during gatherings, fellowship, and prayer, I was still thinking of being better than other people, and I was only happy if others praised me. As soon as someone else was better than me, I couldn't accept it and I became jealous. I was resistant and worked against it. When I really couldn't surpass it, I just lived within negativity and could not face myself properly. I even misunderstood God and believed that I couldn't be a target for God's salvation. I saw that Satan's corruption had made me arrogant and fragile, selfish and despicable, and my life became unspeakably miserable. I found a path of practice from within God's words. I must learn to give up, to set things aside, to forsake my own flesh according to God's requirements, and learn more from my sister's strong points, and compensate for my weaknesses. Only this is God's will. This is the only way to understand and gain more truths. After that, Sister Liu read another passage from God's words: "The functions are not the same. There is one body. Each does his duty, each in his place and doing his very best-for each spark there is one flash of light-and seeking maturity in life. Thus will I be satisfied" ("Chapter 21" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Once I had read these words from God, I understood that the caliber and the gifts that God bestows are different for each person. But no matter what these are, they should carry out the duty of a creature of God, and bear witness to and glorify God. It was ordained by God that Sister Wang is of good caliber, and that she understands the truth quickly. I should handle this properly, and I should also properly handle my own strengths and shortcomings because what God has given to each and every one of us is best. No matter what kind of caliber He has ordained for me to have, I must obey His rule, and His arrangements, and rectify my motives, and pursue the truth with all my heart. I will fellowship on what I am clear on—no more, and no less. I will practice what I understand—no more, and no less. I must do my utmost in front of God so that He can gain comfort, and be fulfilled—only this can be meaningful. It is also what I should most pursue. To this end, I set the following resolve in front of God: From now on, I am willing to put effort into pursuit of the truth, quickly cast off my satanic disposition of arrogance and selfishness, and live out the likeness of a true human being to satisfy God.

The next church gathering came around very quickly. I wanted to open up and illuminate to Sister Wang what kind of corruption I had revealed regarding my jealousy toward her over that period of time, but as soon as I thought of how she would see me after knowing I had revealed so much corruption, I didn't really dare to face it. Within myself, I quietly prayed to God: "Oh God! May You give me faith and courage. I am willing to put aside my vanity and share in fellowship openly with my sister, to dissolve the barrier between us." After praying, I felt much more at peace in my heart, and then I told everything about my state and

experiences over that period of time. As a result, not only did my brothers and sisters not look down on me, but they all admired my courage in the practice of being an honest person. They also said that from my experience, they realized that only by practicing according to God's words could they cast off their satanic corrupt dispositions, and gain release and freedom, and they then knew how to experience that kind of thing if they encountered it. In future gatherings, I earnestly listened to my sister's fellowship and I discovered many of her strengths. I saw that when she encountered issues she was able to focus on coming before God and seeking the truth, and finding a path for practice from within God's words. These were all aspects that I needed to learn from. It was only then that I really understood that being able to hear the experiences and testimonies of putting God's words into practice shared by brothers and sisters in each gathering was a wonderful opportunity for growth in life. God arranged for this sister to be near me. She shared fellowship on the things I wasn't clear on, and she perfectly made up for what I myself lack. This is a blessing from God! When I thought of it that way, I felt a complete release in my heart. Through being exposed by the facts, and the judgment and chastisement of God's words, my corrupt disposition of jealousy of others underwent some change, and I began to have a bit of a superficial understanding of God's righteous disposition. I also personally experienced that God's words truly can purify, transform, and save mankind. God's words can be man's life, and they can resolve all of our difficulties and pain as humans. I am willing to put God's words into practice more, and to obey His judgment and chastisement. May I soon be purified by God, live out the likeness of a true human being, and gain His praise.

83. I Can Finally Live Out a Bit of Human Likeness

By Xiangwang, Sichuan Province

God's words say: "Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. People act for the sake of their families, sons and daughters, for their careers, future prospects, position, vainglory, and money, for the sake of food, clothing, and the flesh. But is there anyone whose actions are truly for

the sake of God? Even among those who act for the sake of God, there are but few who know God. How many people do not act out of their own interests? How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position? And so, God has been forcibly sentenced to death innumerable times, and countless barbaric judges have condemned God and once more nailed Him to the cross" ("The Wicked Will Surely Be Punished" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I feel deeply chastised in my heart every time I see these words from God. I think back to how, in the past, I did not pursue the truth, in fulfilling my duty I competed against my working partners time and time again, and I would oppress or discriminate against others for the sake of my own reputation and benefit. Not only did I suffer losses in my own life, but I also caused the church work to suffer losses. It was God's repeated chastisement and judgment that made me awaken, and I then saw clearly the emptiness of fame and gain and its harm to me, I put aside my pursuit of reputation and status and began to live out a bit of human likeness.

I accepted God's work of the last days in 1999. At the time I fulfilled the duty of hosting others. I saw how wonderfully some brothers and sisters fellowshiped, how they were able to find words from God to resolve any issue. I was happy to engage with them, and I would communicate openly with them on any issue. I also envied them very much, thinking: "Wouldn't it be great if I could be like them one day, solving many problems that bothered my brothers and sisters, and being at the center of them all?" Thereafter, I began to read God's words, attend meetings and perform my duty more proactively. In 2007, I was assigned to perform the duty of church leader. Any wrong state or difficulty a brother or sister had, and all the various problems that cropped up in the church, were reported to me. I would then search for God's words in relation to their problems and give them fellowship to resolve their problems. After a while, I felt that I could resolve some difficulties that my brothers and sisters had through fellowshiping about the truth, and my heart felt much enjoyment; I felt like all my hard work over the past few years was paying off. I behaved in a positive manner when performing my duty so that I could hold on to the position and fulfill my own vanity. No matter what work was assigned by the upper-level leaders, I always actively catered to them, even if my co-workers felt it was difficult or were unwilling to go along with it, I never complained. Even if there were things I did not understand I played along, thus winning the praise of the leaders.

In order to gain the upper-level leaders' praise and stand out from my co-workers, I changed the way I worked: When my brothers and sisters reported any difficulties in their work, I no longer fellowshiped about the truth and patiently guided them, but instead I would often prune and deal with them. I started to micromanage and press them in work. After I began to practice in this way, work results improved very quickly, which delighted me. I thought that better results meant I was among the best of my co-workers and I became enamored with myself. Not long after Brother Wang was transferred over to partner with me. He was good-looking, and his communication of the truth was clear. The brothers and sisters in our church all praised him. This upset me. I thought: "My brothers and sisters all praised his fellowship—that must mean mine is no good! It would have been better if Brother Wang hadn't been sent here. Now that he's come, there is no place for me anymore in the hearts of my brothers and sisters." Measuring myself against him I found he really was better than me, but I was unwilling to give up. At that time I was concerned with reputation and benefit and was uninterested in the problems of the church. I started to worry about what I wore, how I spoke and acted. In gatherings I deliberately showed off my cleverness so my brothers and sisters would think highly of me. Sometimes I would belittle Brother Wang with what I said and observe the attitude our brothers and sisters had toward me. So I was living in an incorrect state that I was unable to extricate myself from. I compared myself to Brother Wang at every turn and had completely lost the work of the Holy Spirit. Not long after, I was replaced. When I heard the news it was like a knife twisting in my heart—what about my face, my status, my future? God was judging and chastising me, yet I did not reflect on or know myself. On the contrary, I was full of suspicion: "The leaders and co-workers would certainly go through the particulars of my situation and my performance in the church. How would I show my face, and what would those brothers and sisters who knew me think?" Trapped in Satan's web, I started to complain against God, regretting that I had fulfilled my duty as a leader. The more I thought about it the more I suffered. I felt like I was becoming increasingly distant from God, to the point where I felt my life to be meaningless. I knew I was in a dangerous state, but I did not have the strength to free myself. Then I came before God and prayed: "Oh God! At this moment I am living in darkness, fooled by Satan and suffering greatly. I have not been willing to accept everything that has happened to me now, I have wanted to escape Your chastisement and judgment, and I have complained against and betrayed You. Oh God! I beg You to protect my heart, to make me able to examine and

come to know myself, to take pity on me." After this I saw this sermon: "Some people God treats with particular grace and elevation. They are promoted to become leaders or workers, given important tasks. But these people do not return God's love, they live for their own flesh, for status and reputation, seeking to testify of themselves and gain respect. Are these acts good deeds? They are not. These people do not understand how to comfort God's heart, they have no consideration for God's wishes. They seek only to satisfy themselves. These are people who harm God's heart, who do only evil, who cause so much harm, too much harm, to God's heart. God promotes them as leaders, as workers, to foster them, so they will become perfect. But they have no consideration for God's wishes and work only for themselves. They do not work to bear witness to God or work so those God has chosen can enter into life. They work to testify of themselves, to achieve their own aims, to have status in God's chosen people's hearts. These are the people who are most resistant to God, who harm God's heart most. This is a betrayal of God. In man's words it is a failure to appreciate what is done for them, in spiritual terms these people are wicked individuals resisting God" ("The Important Meaning Behind Preparing Good Deeds" in Sermons and Fellowship II). This passage felt like a sword stabbing into my heart, leaving me deeply chastised. It was by God's grace and His exaltation of me that I had become a leader, and it was a God-given opportunity to be perfected. But I had no consideration for God's intent and did not know to repay His love. I lived for status and reputation, to show myself off and to give testimony for myself so that other people would think highly of me; the essence of this was resisting and betraying God. Now I had come to realize that God detested everything I did and so put an end to my service. It is God and the truth that reign in God's house. I thought back on what I had revealed in the course of fulfilling my duty: In order to gain my upper-level leaders' praise, and keep my position, I bowed and scraped to the leaders and agreed with their every word. With my brothers and sisters, I condescendingly lectured them, and I even tried to use them to achieve my aim of standing out from the crowd; I did not fulfill my responsibilities toward the lives of my brothers and sisters. I micromanaged and pressed them in my work to the point where they all feared me and avoided me, not daring to bare their hearts to me. When God had placed Brother Wang and me together, I failed to learn the lessons in this situation or learn Brother Wang's strengths, but instead intensified my struggle for reputation and benefit to satisfy my own ambitions and desires. This resulted in God becoming disgusted with me and I lost the Holy Spirit's work. And my replacement was

God's righteous disposition coming upon me: It was the judgment of me, the best salvation, and God's great love. During that time, whenever I sang the hymn "God's Mercy Brought Me Back to Life," I would cry, tears streaming down my face. I regretted that my perspective in my seeking was wrong, leading to my current failure. The hymn is: "Though God exalted me to perform my duty, I did not pursue the truth, and I always coveted the blessings of status. Filled with extravagant demands, I never considered God's will, and was unaware that I defied God. God has always supplied and shepherded me, but I didn't cherish it. I avoided judgment and chastisement, and stubbornly rebelled against God. I hurt God's heart. I missed so many chances to be perfected. I really didn't live up to God's good intention. My heart is filled with regret. How can I repay God's love and bring comfort to God's heart? Oh God, Almighty God! I wish to be a new person and start all over again. God's words of life influence my heart. God's exhortations give me limitless strength, and make me stand up once again from failures and falls. I now see hope for my life and know why I was created. Faced with God's requirement, how could I run and hide again? I wish to repay God's love with my loyalty and obedience. I will practice the truth and live by God's word, never again will I make God worry about me. Whether I am blessed or I meet with disaster, I seek only to satisfy God. I wish to give my true heart to God. Even if I have no destination, I still wish to render service to God all my life. I'll make up for all my past debts and bring comfort to God's heart." (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). This refinement was with me for over a year. Even though I was hovering between life and death during this refinement, and I felt like a layer of skin was being stripped off, unknowingly I found my desires for status and future prospects were weakened, and I saw how valuable this refinement was.

The time passed in the blink of an eye, and in 2012, the brothers and sisters in our church voted me and Brother Zhao to be in charge of the church work. Because I had not done church work for a long time, there were some difficult problems in the church that I had no idea how to deal with. But Brother Zhao had been doing church work all along and made up for what I lacked, and this was what I had to learn from him. I knew this was God's love—He did not place an unbearable burden upon me. Throughout our cooperation, Brother Zhao was responsible for reporting on our work, and he took on the lion's share of the fellowship regarding those important issues. When we held gatherings with our brothers and sisters, he was the first to share fellowship and over time it became as if I did not exist. I thought: "Your fellowship is clearer than mine, but I am better at gospel work. You talk and talk and

talk, showing off. It'd be better if we separate so I can also display my strengths. Even though I am not very good at fellowship, I'm better at practical work than you, and managing gospel work is my strength." Right at that point we received a letter from the sister in charge of our work—for operational reasons we were to separate, each taking responsibility for one area. And although the results for all types of work in the area I was responsible for were not as good as those in Brother Zhao's area, I was still delighted, and I thought: "I finally got the chance to show my talents. Although the results aren't very good right now, just wait until I've worked on that, and I'll prove how capable I am." Once we were working separately, I threw myself into my work and started to organize things, communicating the work arrangements with brothers and sisters so that they were able to grasp what we needed to do, and fellowshiping God's words to solve current issues and difficulties. After putting in some serious efforts, things did start to improve. I couldn't help but think: "How is Brother Zhao doing? Is he doing better than I am?" When we had a gathering and I learned that the results of the gospel work within the area I was responsible for really were better than his, I was secretly pleased: "Finally, I'm better than you and can feel proud." And just as I was feeling pleased, I felt self-reproach arise in my heart: "Aren't you stealing God's glory?" My heart sank. "Yes, spreading the gospel, bearing witness to God and leading even more true believers before God is the duty and responsibility of every one of God's chosen people. And it was thanks to the cooperation of my brothers and sisters, to God's blessings, that we had gained those people. What did I have to boast about? My face grew red as I thought of this. I felt that I was so contemptible and I saw that God's holiness did not permit me to contain such filth. When I realized what my state was, I was deeply grateful for God's enlightenment. I also wished to turn back to God and not pursue fame or status ever again. In the days that followed, I focused on reading more of God's words and, whenever I encountered an issue, I would focus on seeking the truth to resolve my own corruption. Imperceptibly, my inner desire to vie for fame shrank, and I was able to work together with my co-workers, drawing on each other's strengths to make up for what we lacked.

One day in August 2012, the sister in charge of our work communicated with me, assigning me to fulfill my duty in another location. At the time I eagerly agreed, but before I left she said: "When you work there, Brother Zhao will work with you, it'll be better for the work. ..." I said: "That's fine, I'm willing to work with him." And when we saw each other at a meeting, he was open with me: "I wasn't entirely happy when they chose you, as I think your

fellowship isn't as good as mine." That one off-hand statement left me in great turmoil. I couldn't help but think: "I really shouldn't have agreed to perform my duty with him. He knows all my failings. I had thought that on arrival in my new post I would benefit from the novelty of being a newcomer! But now there's nothing to be done." I forced a smile and acted as if there was nothing wrong, but I was thinking: "I'm not good at fellowship, but me being chosen proves that I'm better than you. Let's wait and see!" We traveled to our new place of work and threw ourselves into doing our duty.

Initially, when meeting our brothers and sisters, I prayed to be able to forsake the flesh, to limit myself to working harmoniously with Brother Zhao. I listened carefully to how he fellowshiped with brothers and sisters on their states and I prayed for him. And I shared fellowship on gospel work. After some time, I started to feel that his fellowship was clearer than mine. So during gatherings I didn't want to share a single word in fellowship. I was hoping for those gatherings to wrap up quickly and wanted to get away. We were responsible for a large area then, and I thought: "If we worked separately I wouldn't be so constrained." When I shared this idea to my brother he agreed: "Since the size of the area makes work difficult, it'd be ok to split up." Hearing this made me very happy and I felt that this time I'd finally be able to really bring my abilities into play. After splitting up, at every gathering I was able to speak at great length, I shared fellowship and organized work, taking on a great "burden" for my brothers' and sisters' lives. Soon I saw results in all aspects of my work, while Brother Zhao was not doing particularly well. I didn't do anything about it, as if it was none of my business. Later, our leader learned we were working separately and fellowshiped with us on the responsibilities of our work and the truth of harmonious partnership. I was willing to accept this and no longer maintain separate "households." But we continued to work apart, using the excuse that we both knew our own work better. So that my leader would not criticize me, I did go to Brother Zhao's area to give fellowship to the brothers and sisters there, but I felt that this was not within the scope of my responsibility. If they benefited from my fellowship, others would think that Brother Zhao had done a good job and would give him all the credit, and then wouldn't he seem more capable than me? And so, when I went to a meeting about things that fell under Brother Zhao's area of responsibility, I just acted perfunctorily, saying I had some administrative task to do, and rushed off. Brother Zhao continued to see no results in all aspects of his work, yet I did not blame myself or feel afraid at all, and I even ignored several communications from our leader. This continued

until we were reporting on our work, at which point I was stunned: Although my area had gained many people, when both our areas were added up the number was low. Only then did I feel afraid. In order to prove that I was better than Brother Zhao, I became dominated by the wrong motive of showing how well I could work. Although I was better than him at gospel work, the gospel work in his area had nearly come to a halt. This totally went against the work arrangement. I had become the obstacle preventing God's will being carried out. I had no choice but to look for God's words to see the root cause of these circumstances. I saw the following words from God: "Each of you, as people who serve, must be able to defend the interests of the church in all things you do, rather than looking out for your own interests. It is unacceptable to go it alone, where you undermine him and he undermines you. People acting this way are not fit to serve God! The disposition of this sort of person is so bad; not an ounce of humanity remains in them. They are one hundred percent Satan! They are beasts! Even now such things as this still occur among you, going so far as to attack each other during fellowship, intentionally seeking pretexts, getting all red in the face arguing over some little thing, neither person willing to put himself aside, each person hiding what's inside from the other, watching the other party intently and being on guard. Can this kind of disposition befit service to God? Can such work as yours give supply to the brothers and sisters? Not only are you unable to guide people onto a correct life course, you actually inject your corrupt dispositions into the brothers and sisters. Are you not hurting others? Your conscience is so bad, rotten to the core! You do not enter into reality, and do not put the truth into practice. Moreover you shamelessly expose your devilish nature to other people, you absolutely know no shame! The brothers and sisters have been entrusted to you, but you take them to hell. Aren't you a person whose conscience has gone rotten? You are utterly shameless!" ("Serve As the Israelites Did" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's harsh words exposed my nature and essence, leaving me ashamed. It was due to God's elevation and grace that I was able to fulfill that duty; God had entrusted me to bring my brothers and sisters to Him. But I did not show consideration for God's will, I did not practice the truth, and for reputation and status I ignored the interests of God's house. I fought both openly and in secret with my brother, working alone. Now is the time to spread the gospel, and God hopes those who truly believe in God will soon return to God's house. God also hopes we will bring those who seek the true way to Him. Instead,

I always sought reputation and status, which were worthless. In order to prove that I was more capable in my work than my brother, when I saw that his work was not yielding results, I didn't help him. I did not communicate with him about problems in our work, always hoping my brother would fall behind me. I was envious of him when I saw he was better than me, and even rejected him, treating our church work as a game. I was too evil and malicious, without any humanity. If I did not change how could I serve God? If I did not enter into reality how could I bring my brothers and sisters to God? In tears, I came to God and prayed: "Oh God! I was wrong. Because of my rebelliousness, my failure to show consideration for Your will, and my intention to prove myself better than my brother, I ignored my conscience and did not fulfill my responsibilities. And now the gospel work has been harmed and I have committed a transgression in front of You. But I wish to repent and change, to work harmoniously with Brother Zhao to resolve the stagnation in our gospel work. If I strive to gain status again, punish me, God. I am willing to accept Your observation, Amen!" After praying I immediately took the bus to see my brother and communicated openly with him, admitting how I had behaved rebelliously in front of God and how I planned to improve in our work. Brother Zhao also shared what he was thinking in his heart. Afterward we worked together with God as one and started to improve on the failings of our work, looking for oversights and errors, summing up the successful experiences I had, and working strictly according to the work arrangements. Our gospel work soon improved. After this experience, I felt that God is so holy and His disposition is so righteous! When I was always pursuing reputation and status. He created an environment to chastise and judge me, to strike and discipline me. This made me reflect on and know myself, freeing me from Satan's influence. When I turned back toward God, He once again had mercy on me. I saw that whether God was judging or chastising me, or whether He was merciful and loving, all of this was His love and salvation. I resolved in my heart to do better in my pursuit of the truth and to no longer rebel against God, to be fully loyal in all that God entrusted to me.

I read these words of God: "When you are working together, few of you say: 'I would like to hear you fellowship with me about this aspect of truth, because I am not clear about it.' Or to say: 'You have more experiences than I have on this matter; can you give me some direction, please?' Wouldn't this be a good way of doing it? You on the upper levels hear a lot of truth, and understand a lot about service. If you people who coordinate to work in the churches do not learn from each other, and communicate,

making up for each other's shortcomings, from where can you learn lessons? When you encounter anything, you should fellowship with each other, so that your life can benefit. And you should carefully fellowship about things of any sort before making decisions. Only by doing so are you being responsible to the church and not being perfunctory. After you visit all the churches, you should get together and fellowship about all the issues you discover and problems encountered in work, and communicate the enlightenment and illumination that you have received—this is an indispensable practice of service. You must achieve harmonious cooperation for the purpose of the work of God, for the benefit of the church, and for spurring the brothers and sisters onward. You coordinate with him and he coordinates with you, each amending the other, arriving at a better work outcome, so as to care for God's will. Only this is a true cooperation, and only such people have true entry" ("Serve As the Israelites Did" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Within God's words I found the path to practice and entering in, and I came to know how to serve alongside others to meet God's wishes. Everyone has their strengths, and God wants everyone to use those strengths to perform their duties, and in doing so everyone's weaknesses will be compensated for through working together. God arranging that brother to work with me was just what I needed. I was weaker in fellowshiping on the truth, and his strengths could compensate for my weaknesses. But I did not see this, and when I was with my brother I failed to ask for his assistance when I did not understand. Sometimes when he communicated with me I was unwilling to listen. I intrigued against him, harming both my own life as well as the gospel work. In the days that followed I started to practice entry into this aspect of the truth, consulting my brother on things I did not understand or could not see clearly. I also consulted with him on difficulties in my work. From then on, we learned from and complemented each other when we went to the churches, and when we encountered a problem we communicated with each other, finding God's words to solve the churches' problems together. Sometimes our views would differ, but as long as principles that benefited the lives of our brothers and sisters and the work of God's house were put into practice, even if we lost some face, we could set our own wishes aside. This is how we became spiritual partners in life and were able to have mutual tolerance and understanding. We worked together happily, and every aspect of our work improved.

I thank Almighty God for changing me through His judgment and chastisement, for making me see how Satan harms me through fame, gain and status, have proper pursuits, and live out a bit of human likeness. Although I still have much corruption within me that must be purified and I must go through more judgment and chastisement, I have seen God's judgment and chastisement is man's best salvation, God's truest love for man. I want to experience this more, I want God's judgment and chastisement to accompany me as I progress, until I am fit to be God's servant.

84. A Rebirth

By Yang Zheng, Heilongjiang Province

I was born into an impoverished rural family that was backward in their thinking. I was vain from a young age and my desire for status was particularly strong. Over time, through the influence of social environment and the education of traditional culture, I took all sorts of Satan's rules for survival into my heart. All kinds of fallacies nurtured my desire for fame, gain and status, such as "Fame will make you immortal," "Get ahead and bring honor to your ancestors," "People need face like a tree needs its bark," "Be the top dog," and "Build a beautiful home with your own two hands." These gradually became my life and made me firmly believe that as long as we are living in this world, we have to work to be seen highly by others. No matter what crowd we are with we must have status, we should be the most outstanding one. Only through living this way can we have integrity and dignity. Only living a life this way has value. In order to realize my desire to get ahead, I studied very diligently ever since I was in elementary school; through storms and sickness, I never missed class. Day by day, I finally made it to middle school that way. When I saw that I was getting closer and closer to my dream I didn't dare slack off. I frequently told myself that I had to persevere, that I had to present myself well to my teachers and classmates. However, just then, something unexpected happened. There was a scandal about our head teacher and the principal of the school that caused an uproar. All the teachers and students knew about it. One day in class, that teacher asked us if we had heard about it and all the other students said "No." I was the only one who honestly replied "I heard." From that time on, that teacher saw me as a thorn in her side and would frequently find excuses to make things difficult for

me, to crack down on me. My classmates started to keep their distance from me and exclude me. They made fun of me and humiliated me. Finally, I was no longer able to tolerate that kind of torment and I dropped out of school. The dream I'd yearned to realize of getting ahead and being the top dog was crushed. Thinking of my future days with my face to the earth and back to the sky, I felt an inexpressible sadness and melancholy. I thought: "Can it be that my life will be passed so unremarkably? No status, no prestige, no future. What's the point of living like this?" I really wasn't willing to accept that fact at that time but I was helpless to change my circumstances. Just as I was living in pain and hopelessness that I wasn't able to extricate myself from, Almighty God's salvation came upon me and reignited the hope in my heart that had been extinguished. From then on, I began a whole new life.

It was March 1999, and from a fortuitous opportunity I heard the gospel of the last days of Almighty God. I learned that God incarnate had come to earth to personally express the truth to judge and purify mankind, and to lead mankind out of the domain of Satan, so that they could cast off their lives of pain and degradation, and live free and liberated. And from the patient and painstaking fellowship from my brothers and sisters, I knew many truths that I had never heard of before, such as: God's six-thousand-year management plan, the mystery of God becoming flesh, that corrupt people need the salvation of God incarnate, what kind of sense creations should possess, how to worship the Lord of all creation, how to live out proper humanity, and what truly is a human life. I was profoundly drawn in by these truths and they made me firmly believe that this was the work of the true God. My brothers and sisters also sang a hymn "God Loves Us Most Deeply": "Almighty God, I confide in You. Thinking back to how I wandered through the world, I deeply feel people's fickleness and indifference. I struggled and groped about in darkness. Life's suffering is without end; washing my face with tears, I languished through the years. Devoid of hope, I could only live helplessly, in despair. Almighty God, You love us most deeply. Your words awaken me. I finally come back to You and cast away my painful life. Your words illuminate me, I see a bright life. I enjoy Your words and live in Your presence, my heart is filled with peace and joy" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). This lit up my soul which had long been in darkness like a ray of light, and I could not help but burst into tears. Many years of repression, injustices, and sadness seemed to suddenly be released. My heart felt much lighter. Aside from this excitement, I was even more grateful to God for selecting me and allowing my tired, sad soul to find a warm haven. From then on, my life changed radically. I

was no longer disconsolate and dispirited, but I put my whole mind to reading the word of God, going to meetings, and fellowshiping on the truth. Every day was full and happy.

Later I began to perform the duty of preaching the gospel in the church. Because I was quite enthusiastic and positive as well as the fact that I was of a certain caliber, my work was bearing some fruit. I gained the praise of my gospel group leader, and the brothers and sisters in the church also looked up to me. They would always come ask me to fellowship about and resolve things they didn't understand about preaching the gospel. Without realizing it I started to become a little self-satisfied, and I thought: "I have so guickly gained in the church the reputation and status I hoped for in the world for so many years. My 'hero' side has finally found its place!" Seeing my "accomplishments," I felt very fulfilled. From then on, I performed my duty even harder. No matter what duty the church arranged for me, I would obey and accomplish it to the best of my ability; no matter how great of a difficulty I faced in my duty, I would do my utmost to overcome it, and would never complain of any hardship. At times the church leader pruned and dealt with me because I hadn't performed my duty well. No matter how upset I was, on the surface I wouldn't make excuses for myself. Although I suffered quite a bit during this period of time, I thought that as long as I had status among my brothers and sisters and was looked up to by them, it was very much worth paying this price.

That was 2003, when I was elected as our gospel group leader. Along with this elevation in my status my scope of work was also expanded, and I felt even more pleased with myself, thinking: The gold shines everywhere. I must do my job well and steadily ascend so that my brothers and sisters would definitely admire and adore me more. That would be so wonderful! When I arrived where I was to perform my duty, the leader took into consideration that I had just taken on this work and I was lacking both experience and methodology, so gathered together several other gospel group leaders from nearby areas so that we could learn from each other. But over the course of fellowship, I saw that they were all older than I was and that they were of a lower caliber. When fellowshiping about God's words they also didn't communicate as clearly as I did. I couldn't help but become arrogant and I didn't think anything of them at all. I felt that I would certainly be able to do a good job relying on my own strength. After meeting I immediately went to every group to gain an understanding of their work. When I discovered some errors and omissions in their work and that some of them were unable to preach the gospel and bear witness for God, I was both anxious and

angry. I couldn't help but scold my brothers and sisters: "Can fulfilling your duty this way really be in line with God's will? You don't want to pay a price but you want to be saved by God. Do you have any sense? ... "And sometimes during fellowship I would show off, telling everyone how I had done the gospel work, how much of a price I had paid, and how good the results were that I had achieved.... When I saw envy on the faces of my brothers and sisters, I was very smug and felt that I was more capable than others. Over time, my brothers and sisters would always discuss any issues with me and no longer focused on praying to God or relying on Him. But I didn't realize that I'd already embarked upon the wrong path, and I did not feel afraid, but instead I enjoyed it. Finally, I completely lost the work of the Holy Spirit and I truly could no longer work. I was removed from my duties and sent back home for spiritual reflection. Faced with this outcome, it was as though I very quickly fell into a bottomless pit. My entire body was limp and weak from an intense feeling of frustration, and I couldn't help but think: It was so wonderful when I first started performing my duty. And now, going back in such disgrace, how can I face my family and the brothers and sisters in my hometown? What will they think of me? Will they make fun of me, look down on me? As soon as I thought of losing my image and status in other people's minds, I felt an unbearable pain, as though my entire being was about to fall apart. I was living in negativity that I couldn't extricate myself from and I couldn't even continue reading God's words. In the midst of this agony, I could only pray to God: "Oh God! I have become so weak now and my spirit is in darkness. I am unable to accept the fact that I was replaced. I'm also unwilling to obey the church's arrangements but I know that everything You do is good and contains Your benevolent will. May You enlighten me to understand Your will." After praying, these words of God brought me enlightenment: "In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. The hopes, the desire for [a] status, and the notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. ... Although you have gotten to this step today, you still have not let go of status, but are always struggling to inquire about it and observing it daily, with a deep fear that one day your status will be lost and your name will be ruined. ... You are now followers, and you have some

Footnotes:

a. The original text does not contain the phrase "desire for."

understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. Why is it that the majority of people can't get out of negativity? Isn't it always because of bleak prospects?" ("Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The judgment revealed in God's words gave me a rude awakening, and made me understand that God's work at that time was to deal with my desire for status and to make me see clearly the wrong path I was following in my belief in God, so that I would be able to know my error and turn back, and embark upon the proper path in life of pursuing the truth. Thinking back on the time since I had started performing my duty, I was very positive during the times I had status. I was extremely confident and did not fear suffering or hardships. When I was faced with someone dealing with me or pruning me I did not resist it. But then, after I was let go and had to return home I could not climb back out of my negativity. In my duty, in order to satisfy my desire for reputation and status, I did all I could to show myself off and prove myself, and I worked and expended myself sparing no pains; when I saw brothers and sisters have shortcomings in their duties, I didn't help them and support them with a loving heart, nor lead them to seek the truth and resolve their problems in God's words, but instead I lectured them from on high. I also purposefully exalted myself and bore witness to myself to make others look up to me and adore me, and I led brothers and sisters before myself. I saw that on the surface, I appeared to be doing my duty, but in reality was engaged in my own business in the name of doing my duty, and was entirely using the opportunity to do my duty to satisfy my ambition and desire to get ahead and make others look up to me. I had to ask myself: Was I not brazenly defying God? Mankind was created by God, so we should worship and look up to Him. Our hearts should only contain the status of God, but I, who was a filthy and corrupt, lowly person, always wanted to have a place in the hearts of others. Isn't this terribly arrogant? Isn't this outrageous and contrary to God? Isn't this a serious offense against God's disposition? When I thought of that, I couldn't help but tremble with fear at my own deeds. God's disposition is righteous and holy and does not tolerate mankind's offenses. How could He allow me to disobey and defy Him like this? Only then did I realize that my being let go was God's great tolerance and great love. Otherwise, I would have done more and graver things to resist Him, and when it came to the point that He was unable to forgive me, it would then be too late. The more I thought about it the more scared I was, and the more I felt that I was too indebted to God. I couldn't help but prostrate myself in front of Him and pray: "Oh God! My nature is too arrogant, too superficial. I haven't pursued the truth while fulfilling my duty, and I haven't thought of repaying Your love. I was busy running to and fro for the sake of reputation and status, I set my heart on getting ahead in the church, and I took the path of the antichrist, so how could I not stumble and fall in the course of fulfilling my duty this way? If Your judgment and chastisement, and Your dealing and pruning had not come upon me in time, I certainly would have continued along the path of the antichrist. In the end I would have ruined my chance for salvation. Oh God! I give thanks for Your mercy and Your salvation of me. From this day forward, I am willing to let go of my ambitious desires and pursue the truth, and accept more of Your judgment and chastisement, to attain change in my corrupt disposition soon." God's enlightenment and guidance led me out of my negativity and allowed me to have some knowledge of my own arrogant nature and essence of resisting God. I also gained some understanding of God's righteous disposition, and I felt a great release in my heart. I was also willing to continue to seek the truth in whatever environment God sets up for me, and to more deeply understand His will.

In my pursuits after that, I saw words from God which said: "I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact" ("Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit" ("Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words had already told people perfectly clearly and understandably what His will and requirements were so that mankind could understand a proper way of pursuit and what the wrong path is. At that time I placed reputation and status above everything, but in reality, God did not look at how high someone's status was, what kind of seniority they had, or how much they had suffered for their belief in God. He looked at whether or not they pursued the truth and had a genuine

understanding of God. Those with the truth but without a high status can also gain His praise, but those without the truth and with a high status are those that God detests and rejects. This is decided by God's righteous disposition. Status cannot determine a person's fate, nor is it a symbol of someone's salvation in their belief in God. It particularly is not a mark of someone having been perfected by God. But I had always used my status to measure my own worth and my greatest pleasure had been being looked up to and adored by others. Wasn't this entirely contrary to God's requirements? Wasn't believing in God this way completely futile? Not only would I have been unable to be saved by God, but in the end I would have suffered God's punishment due to my evil ways. God gave me a duty to allow me to enter into the truth, to be able to pursue a change in disposition, pursue obedience to and love of God, and in the end to be saved and perfected by Him. Only this was the proper path. After understanding all of this, my heart was full of gratitude toward God. Thanks to His judgment and chastisement that pulled me back from the wrong path and enabled me to understand His will, allowing me to finally see clearly the danger and consequences of pursuing reputation and status. Only then was I able to wake up and turn back in time. Through that experience I had some knowledge of my wrong views on pursuit as well as God's kind intentions, and my state recovered once again. I threw myself into fulfilling my duty again.

In July of 2004 I went to a remote area in the mountains and worked together with a brother to take charge of the gospel work. At the very beginning, I kept in mind my previous failures as lessons. I frequently reminded myself not to pursue reputation or status but to honestly fulfill my duty as a creation, so when there were issues I didn't understand or wasn't clear on, I would put myself aside and actively seek out my brother for fellowship, to discuss and resolve it. But as my work bore more and more fruit, my arrogant nature once again reared its head and I started to focus on my own image and status again. During a meeting one time, a brother of the local gospel group said to me happily: "Thanks to you coming here we've converted more believers...." My mouth said that this was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit, but in my heart I was very pleased with myself. After the meeting was over and I returned to my host family home, I sat on my bed and replayed in my mind every scene of the performance of my duty during that time. I couldn't help but become self-congratulatory, thinking: It seems I have true capability in this work. As long as I continue to work hard, I can certainly be promoted again. I saw myself then entirely as a hero, and God's status was

already gone from my heart. When performing my duty after that, I started to compete for status and compare positions with my co-workers. I started to blatantly show off in front of my brothers and sisters as if any results from our work were all because of my efforts. Just as I was sliding back into the abyss one step at a time, God once again extended a hand of salvation to me. One evening I suddenly came down with a serious flu. My temperature reached 39 degrees Celsius and even after taking medicine for several days I wasn't getting any better. I went to the hospital to get an infusion, but my condition not only didn't improve but became more serious. I couldn't keep anything down, not even water. Finally, I was bedridden and felt as if I was on the verge of death. Under the torture of that illness, I no longer thought of what kind of status I would have the next day. I quickly knelt down and prayed to God: "Oh God! This illness coming upon me is Your good will as well as Your righteous disposition. I do not want to misunderstand You or blame You; I only beg You to once again enlighten and illuminate me, so that I can understand Your will and more deeply understand my own corruption." After praying, my heart was much more at peace. Just then, these words of God suddenly came upon me: "Your arrogant and conceited natures drive you to betray your own consciences, to rebel against and resist Christ, and to reveal your ugliness, thereby bringing to light your intentions, notions, extravagant desires, and eyes full of greed" ("Are You a True Believer in God?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Every one of these words from God pierced my heart like a sword; they struck at my mortal spot. Every single type of ugliness of arrogance that I had revealed came into my mind with great clarity. My heart was in pain and I was immeasurably embarrassed and ashamed. It was then that I clearly saw that it was my own arrogant nature that caused my conscience to lose its original function so that I wasn't always able to honestly obey and worship God. This caused me to always harbor ambition and desire, and as soon as I got some opportunity I would pursue status, and I wanted to show myself off and suppress others. I couldn't just be a well-behaved person. It was clear that any fruits of my work depended on the work of the Holy Spirit; it was God's blessing. However, I shamelessly stole God's glory, exploited the opportunity to elevate myself, and enjoyed being looked to and worshiped by my brothers and sisters; I became so arrogant that I lost my sense. Only then did I realize that this arrogant nature of mine was precisely the root of my resistance to God. If I didn't resolve it, I would never achieve obedience to God or devotion to fulfilling my duty.

Under God's guidance, I once again thought of His words: "When one recognizes what one's true nature is—how ugly, how despicable, and how pitiful—then one is not overly proud of oneself, not so wildly arrogant, and not so pleased with oneself as before. Such a person feels, 'I must be earnest and down to earth, and practice some of God's word. If not, then I will not measure up to the standard of being human, and will be ashamed to live in God's presence.' One then truly sees oneself as paltry, as truly insignificant. At this time, it becomes easy for one to carry out truth, and one will appear to be somewhat like a human should be" ("Knowing Oneself Is Mainly Knowing Human Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words pointed out for me the path of practice and entering in, and that if I wanted to thoroughly let go of my thoughts of reputation and status, I had to put effort into knowing my own nature. When I could truly see how lowly, how insignificant, and how useless I was, I would no longer be arrogant. When that time came, I would be able to become a low-key person and pursue the truth with my two feet firmly on the ground. In actuality, God administering this judgment and chastisement, this blow and discipline, was for me to have a true understanding of my own corrupt essence and my inherent identity and status. It was to allow me to have selfknowledge in front of God, to recognize my own poverty of spirit, my own nothingness. It was to allow me to know that what I needed was the truth, God's salvation, from which I could fall down in front of God and be a well-behaved person. It was so that I could fulfill my duty to satisfy God and no longer pursue status, hurting His heart. Under the guidance of His words I had a way forward as well as the confidence to pursue the truth. Even though I had been deeply corrupted by Satan and my arrogant nature was deeply entrenched, as long as I was able to accept and obey God's judgment and chastisement and His trial and refinement, from that come to know my own nature and essence, and then tirelessly pursue the truth, I would certainly be able to cast off the bonds and the affliction of reputation and status, and enter the path of being saved, of being perfected. After I turned back to God, I recovered from my illness within two days. This even more made me realize that He had used that illness as a way to discipline me. It was not to intentionally make me suffer, neither was there any punishment in it—it was to awaken my numb heart, to have me let go of my erroneous pursuits as soon as possible and step onto the right path of believing in God. I was deeply moved and galvanized by God's love. I sincerely offered up my thanks and praise to God.

After I recovered from my illness I once again threw myself into work. I quietly resolved in my heart that when I encountered something having to do with reputation or status, I would certainly stand witness for God. Several months later, I learned that another gospel group was obtaining very good results and had experienced some wondrous actions of God, and had summarized some of their successful experiences and their path of practice. However, the work I was responsible for was on the decline. When I saw the disappointment on the faces of my brothers and sisters, particularly when I heard a sister say "We now enjoy such great salvation from God but we are unable to bear witness for His work. We are truly indebted to Him," and everyone couldn't stop themselves from crying, my heart was very much in pain. I didn't know how to get out of that predicament, and I repeatedly prayed to God: "Oh God! We are all weak when faced with practical difficulties, but I know that this is You trying our confidence, testing our devotion. But my stature is too small and I cannot really bear that weight. I beg You to enlighten me to understand Your will. I am willing to act according to Your guidance." After praying, a thought suddenly occurred to me: I should ask the co-worker there to come meet with us in fellowship so that we can draw on some of his strengths and experiences. That way the brothers and sisters will also be able to enjoy the enlightenment and leading of the Holy Spirit and know how to preach the gospel to achieve good results. I knew that this idea came from the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but I still had some misgivings in my heart. I thought: I used to achieve better work results than that brother in every way and when we were in meetings together I always looked down on him, but now, his performance is better than mine. If he sees me looking desperate and embarrassed now, will he laugh at me? Will the brothers and sisters look down on me? What about saving my face? ... I thought and thought, and I still couldn't let go of the idea of my own face and status, but as soon as I thought of God's urgent will to save mankind and that my brothers and sisters didn't have the guidance and leadership of the work of the Holy Spirit, I was chastised within my heart. Just as I was wavering, these words from God enlightened me: "The Holy Spirit not only works in certain people who are used by God, but, furthermore, in the church. He could be working in anyone. He may work in you during the present time, and you will experience this work. During the next period, He may work in someone else, in which case you must haste to follow; the more closely you follow the present light, the more your life can grow. No matter what manner of person someone is, if the Holy Spirit works in them, then you must follow. Take in their

experiences through your own, and you will receive even higher things. In so doing you will progress more quickly. This is the path of perfection for man and the means by which life grows. The path to being made perfect is reached through your obedience to the work of the Holy Spirit. You do not know through what kind of person God will work to perfect you, nor through what person, occurrence, or thing He will allow you to gain or see things" ("Those Who Obey God With a True Heart Shall Surely Be Gained by God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Under the leadership from God's words I understood His will and gained some understanding of how the Holy Spirit works to lead and perfect people. I realized: God's work and God's wisdom are marvelous and unfathomable. I don't know through what type of person or thing He will enlighten and guide me to understand His will, nor do I know through what type of environment He will deal with my corrupt disposition. I must learn to obey the work of the Holy Spirit, and no matter how high or low someone's status is, what their age is, or how long they have believed in God, as long as their fellowship conforms to the truth, it is God's current will, and it can point out the practical path, that comes from the work and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. I must accept, obey, and practice—this is the humanity and reason I must possess. If I don't obey the work of the Holy Spirit, then I'm willing to allow my work to be compromised in order to maintain my own vanity. I'm willing to allow my brothers and sisters to live in darkness in order to maintain my own image and status. In that case, I am a true evil servant and an antichrist! When I realized that, I couldn't help but feel afraid and I didn't dare to once again be obstinate and go against the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit. I was willing to forsake my own satanic nature and comfort God's heart through practical actions. So, I immediately wrote to that co-worker and asked him to come communicate with us. What made me feel ashamed was that after we met in person, that brother didn't remotely look down on me or laugh at me. He very genuinely shared in fellowship how they had worked together while the Holy Spirit worked among them, and how they relied on God and prayed to God when they encountered setbacks and failures, what actions they had seen from God after that, what kind of true understanding they had gained about God, and more. Seeing my brother's relaxed and joyful appearance, then seeing that my brothers and sisters appeared to be listening intently and with relish, then seeing smiles gradually appear on their faces, I felt an acute pain as if I were heartbroken. However, this time it wasn't for the sake of satisfying my own face or status, but because I was rebuked in my heart due to my

indebtedness to God. Because of this, I sincerely experienced the responsibility and the duty shouldered by a leader. If the road I personally take is not correct, it will harm and ruin the lives of so many people. It will bring spiritual suffering to so many brothers and sisters. In that case, will I not become a main culprit of resisting God? When God's work is completed, how should I give account to Him? It was at that time that I finally truly detested myself from within my heart. I hated that in the past while performing my duty I had not engaged honestly in my work but had only thought of pursuing reputation and status and reveling in the blessings of status. Not only did it interfere with my brothers' and sisters' entries into life, but even more it interfered with carrying out God's will. I had also frequently lost the work of the Holy Spirit and fallen into darkness. I saw that pursuing reputation and status did so much more harm than good. But while I was feeling guilt and regret, I also felt a shred of relief. This was because, under God's leadership, I had finally let go of personal fame, gain and status to put the truth into practice this one time. I had done something that was beneficial for the gospel work, for the life of my brothers and sisters, and for the life of mine. I had shamed Satan through practical actions and stood as a witness for God this time.

In my experience of the work of God and because of my pursuit of reputation and status, I had experienced many setbacks and failures. I had taken many false steps, and because of this had undergone being dealt with and refined. Gradually, I saw status as much less important, and what I had believed before—without status there was no future and no one would look up to you—this misguided perspective was turned around. I have now followed God for 15 years. Every time I think of God's work on me, there is always a sweet feeling that comes over me. I will never be able to forget God's love and salvation for me. If it hadn't been for God designing my environment and dealing with my desires for fame, gain and status in the early stages of my life, how would I have been willing to let go of the faith that I had been living by for many years and that had become my life? If it hadn't been for God's salvation coming upon me in time, I would still be living according to Satan's poisons, and frittering away my life for the sake of a dream that could never be realized. And if it hadn't been for God's repeated revelations and refinements, I would still be charging forward on the wrong path and I would never become aware of how serious my own vanity is and how strong my desire for status is. I particularly would not have realized that I am the enemy of God. It was God's remarkable work that made me see through much of the essence and harm of pursuing fame, gain and status. It allowed my erroneous values and perspectives

on life to undergo a change, and it allowed me to understand that only pursuing the truth and fulfilling the duty of a creation is a true human life, and that only through casting off Satan's dark influence and living based on God's words can I live with meaning and with value. It is entirely the fruit of God's judgment and chastisement that I am able to have the understanding and changes that I have today. Although undergoing God's judgment and chastisement required me to undergo the pain of refinement, I have gained some understanding of God's work, of His good essence, and of His disposition of righteousness and holiness. I am now able to clearly see, detest, and throw off Satan's poisons which harmed me for many years, and I am able to have a true human life. None of this was suffered in vain. It was the most meaningful, the most valuable thing! On the path from today forward, I am willing to accept more of the judgment and chastisement, and the trials and refinement coming from God so that every type of my corrupt disposition can be purified soon, and I can become someone who is in line with God's will.

85. The Transformation of a Fallen Man

By Tong Xin, Fujian Province

I was born in the countryside. I came from a line of honest farmers and on top of that our family was few in number, so we were often bullied. When I was 13 years old, there was a child beaten by someone from outside of our village. The villagers falsely accused my father of instigating it and they said they were going to search our house and confiscate our property, take away our pigs and beat my father. There was also a time when another villager took our fishing net and kept it as his own. When my father went to get it back, the villager actually hit my father, relying on his own power and influence. My father had to just eat humble pie as he knew that he had neither money nor power. My mother told my brothers and me that we must fight for ourselves in the future, and never live a life of oppression like this. Being young and detesting the injustice in society, I was determined that in the future I would stand out from the crowd and earn their respect, and never be oppressed. So I studied very hard, but I wasn't smart enough and I couldn't get into any universities, so I chose to seek good prospects in the army and joined easily by going through connections.

When I first joined the army, I scrambled to take on all the difficult and dirty work and to

show my proactiveness to impress my leaders so that I could be promoted in the future. However, after a few years, I could not even get a position of squad leader no matter how hard I tried. I was also constantly made fun of and bullied by my comrades because of my shabby clothes and thriftiness, which just intensified my desire to stand out. Later, based on advice from my fellow villager, I learned that evaluations and promotion in the army did not depend on hard work, but rather gift-giving. Even though I found this kind of thing was disgusting, I had to take the only path to promotion. Therefore, I determined to take all my savings to give gifts to my leaders and make connections; after that I was finally able to enroll in the military academy. But when I returned to the army after graduation, I was assigned to cook in the canteen because I didn't have enough money for gift-giving, and later I became a quartermaster, but in name only. After several years of army life, I understood such sayings as "Officials do not make things difficult for those who bear gifts," and "You can't accomplish anything without licking their boots." If you want to keep a foothold, you have to try every means to make money and give gifts, otherwise you won't achieve anything no matter how great your abilities are. In order to achieve my aspiration, I started to making money through underhanded means: I over quoted and exaggerated the quantity on purpose when buying food, getting some extra dirty money; seeing other quartermasters selling rice, I secretly sold a truck of rice from the army and made several thousand yuan, and so on. Though I had believed in Jesus since childhood and clearly knew that these things I was doing were crimes, I was also constantly worried about being found out and convicted someday, the desire to be promoted still drove me to do those things against my conscience. Once I had saved up some money, I started to flatter my leaders and give them gifts catering to their likes. Every time the leaders came to carry out inspections I would busy myself going to drink with them, sing, get in touch with prostitutes.... I did every possible thing to curry favor with them. Whenever the leaders needed some help, I was happy to offer my services. Whoever had a good relationship with the leaders, I would try to get close to him in order to get a positive recommendation. During those years, I rose quickly to the position of battalion commander by resorting to this kind of worldly philosophy. I finally stood out and I could return home gloriously! After that, every time I went back home, the villagers would crowd around me, flattering and complimenting me, which greatly satisfied my vanity. My ambitions and my desires grew then. As people say, "Officials are just looking out for number one, not the public," "Use power when you have it, because after it's gone, you can't use it," and "There's no such thing as an official who's not corrupt." So, I started to enjoy the privileges of an official. I would get things for free wherever I went, and if someone sought help from me, I would ask them for gifts and I wouldn't help them if the gifts were inadequate. I started to go after fancy food and clothing, and began to indulge in extravagance. Relying on the fact that I was like a "golden child" with important leaders such as the commander and political commissar, I even became so arrogant that I would bully people by flaunting my powerful connections, requesting gifts from my subordinates in the names of these leaders. This was how I degenerated from a simple Christian country boy into a greedy, slick, treacherous, and arrogant man.

Being corrupt and fallen, I even projected my own terrible nature onto others. I often suspected for no good reason that my beautiful wife who worked for a foreign company was having affairs; this led to more conflict between us and growing estrangement. In 2006, my wife was pushed to her limit and initiated divorce; this felt like a great disgrace to me, so I would not agree to it. Late at night I would often think about my life. I thought to myself: I have been determined to stand out since childhood and my wife and I are both successful in our careers. Conditions in our home are good in every way and other people envy us, so why am I living in such pain, and why has it gotten to the point that my wife wants to divorce me? Even our son is suffering along with us. Is my life the way I want it to be? What exactly am I living for? Just as I was feeling lost and confused, my wife accepted Almighty God's salvation in the last days. Through frequent meetings and fellowship with sisters and brothers, she became more and more optimistic, stopped arguing with me, and never mentioned divorce again. Instead, she was busy preaching the gospel and fulfilling her duty. Later, driven by my wife and mother, I also started to believe in Almighty God.

Because of the life in the church, I understood that God is holy and righteous, and that He most hates the filth and corruption of humans. I thought of the filthy ways I developed in the army and that I could not possibly be saved by God if I didn't change my old disposition, so I started to hungrily read God's words, hoping that I could find a solution in them. One day, I read these words from God: "Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for living, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart,

and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him" ("To Have an Unchanged Disposition" Is to Be in Enmity to God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words exposed the secrets in the bottom of my heart; I was badly shaken. Over those years of serving in the army, I had followed the unspoken rules of the world for the sake of standing out. I had done many things which burdened my conscience. I had become wealthy from ill-gotten gains and lived a dark and corrupted life—I constantly indulged myself in sin but felt no shame. Then, God's words not only allowed me to distinguish good from evil, but also made me see clearly the origin of my fall and my corruption. It turned out that these scourges came from Satan. It was Satan that turned this country into a morass of evil and viciousness where powerless, honest people were oppressed and struggled to get by while the powerful, influential and tyrannical prospered. In this society was full of heresies and fallacies like "Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Officials do not make things difficult for those who bear gifts," "You can't accomplish anything without licking their boots," "Officials are just looking out for number one, not the public," "Use power when you have it, because after it's gone, you can't use it," and so on. I was taken in by these terrible sayings, and because of the oppression around me I lost my way, abandoned human principles, sought high positions unscrupulously, and became entrenched in a mire of sin. I eventually became an evil person who sought nothing but wealth, abused power for personal gain, and embezzled public funds. From the judgment in God's words, I saw the intense rage and holiness of God, and understood that offending His righteous disposition was not permitted. I regretted my evil actions and my heart was filled with fear. I felt that if it had not been for God saving me in time and pulling me from the evil mire, I would have been cursed and punished by God for what I had done. Thank God for letting me see light again, and understand human principles. From then on, I never again did those things that brought shame to God's name.

As I understood more and more of the truth, I experienced more and deeper salvation from God. In 2009, I had served in the army for 20 years. According to national regulations, I was permitted to go out and look for work on my own. I determined to shun evil and do good, so I left the army and chose to be transferred to civilian work, and put my heart and soul into working for God. However, my leader tried to persuade me to stay and asked me to think it over thoroughly, and another older leader in a high position made me a promise:

"You will be promoted to deputy regimental commander if you continue to work hard." I hesitated a bit—this was the opportunity that I had longed for day and night! I couldn't let go of the idea of that position, so I sought help from God and prayed, "Oh, God, being in a high position has always been my dream. Now I have that opportunity and I don't know how to choose. May You enlighten and lead me!" Later, I thought of God's words, "If you are of high station, of honorable reputation, possessed of abundant knowledge, the owner of plentiful assets, and supported by many people, yet these things do not prevent you from coming before God to accept His calling and His commission and to do what God asks of you, then all that you do shall be the most meaningful cause on earth and the most righteous undertaking of mankind. If you reject the call of God for the sake of status and your own goals, all that you do shall be cursed and even despised by God" ("God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "People come to the earth and it is rare to encounter Me, and it is also rare to have the opportunity to seek and to gain the truth. Why would you not prize this beautiful time as the right path of pursuit in this life?" ("Words for the Young and the Old" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Every word of God struck my conscience, and I was awoken from my hesitation. I had the privilege of encountering the work on the earth of God incarnate and the precious opportunity to pursue the truth and work for God. What an exaltation and grace from God! What career in the world could be more meaningful than working for the Creator? Even if you were in the highest position and were the highest official, if you did not know God and had not made any changes in your disposition, you would eventually be punished by God. So many people in prestigious positions had fallen into disaster and died a premature death, and so many high-ranking officials had had an ignominious fall and a terrible end. As for me, I had fought and tried desperately to stand out as an official, resulting in me ruining myself to such an extent that I was tarnished and filthy, and lived the life of someone who was barely human. God had then led me back from the wrong path and clearly showed me the path for a human life. How could I still choose to take those risks and return to my old ways? The first half of my life had been subject to Satan's affliction and trickery and brought me great pain. I could not be enslaved, exploited, and corrupted by Satan for the latter half. I had to change my way of living, follow God wholeheartedly, walk the path of pursuing the truth, and live a meaningful life. So I resolutely determined to find a job on my own and leave the army completely. However, because my corruption from Satan was so

profound, its poisonous idea of standing out and being an important person had been deeply rooted in my heart and often hindered me from taking the right path of life.

After fulfilling my duty in the church for some time, I saw that some of the church leaders were quite young and one of them had been my friend, which made me feel uncomfortable. I thought: None of your positions in the earthly world were as high as mine, but your current positions in the church are higher than mine. If you are capable of being leaders, then I am even more so! So I worked hard in this pursuit; I got up at five every morning to read God's words, and set goals for myself—listening to at least two hours every day of sermons on entering into life, learning three songs every week, and planning to learn all the songs of God's word. I was even more proactive and hardworking at performing my duty. As long as it was something that I was capable of dealing with in the church, I would rush to do it regardless of how difficult or tiring it was. Meanwhile, I bragged my experience and skills in the army in front of my sisters and brothers, turned my nose up at the fellowship of the church leaders or subtly belittled how they approached issues or dealt with problems. So, I charged straight ahead, struggling to seek fame and status, hoping to get a position in the church as soon as possible. In 2011, I was finally selected to be a leader in the church as I had expected. I was very excited and I wanted to distinguish myself and accomplish a great many things in order to impress others. At that time, for various reasons, I had no choice but to resign and I recommended a sister as the leader. However, I had not reconciled myself to this in my heart. After some time, I found that the leader had some shortcomings in how she dealt with problems, and my ambition once again reared its head. I indirectly suggested to her that she take the blame and resign, which would give me the chance to be selected in the next election. However, the sisters and brothers who heard of this analyzed me, saying that I was too deceitful and ambitious, and that I always wanted to take control of the church, so they dismissed me from my post of group leader. I simply could not accept it. I was such a capable person; how could it be that I was not even fit to be a group leader! For months, I was very dissatisfied in my heart and I was not happy with my sisters and brothers, so I did not talk much in the meetings. My spirit was full of darkness and I could not find God. In the midst of this pain, I asked God to lead me out of the darkness. And one day, I read God's words, "Today, in man's experience, every single step of God's work strikes back at his conceptions, and all lies beyond man's intellect and outside his expectations. God provides everything that man needs, and in every respect this is at odds with his

conceptions. ... By striking back at your conceptions, He makes you accept the dealing of God; only in this way can you rid yourself of your corruption" ("Only Those Who Know God Can Bear Testimony to God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "If you do not obey now, in the end you will be cursed—will you be happy then? You do not pay attention to the way of life but only focus on your status and title; what is your life like? ... You don't focus on pursuing personal transformation and entering in; you always focus on those extravagant desires, and things that constrain your love for God and restrain you from getting close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?" ("Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words were like a two-edged sword cutting into my heart, making rebellious me feel ashamed and embarrassed. Not until then did I realize that all the things that had happened to me recently, while not what I wanted, did not mean that people were just giving me a hard time. Rather, they were the just judgment of me from God, and His timely salvation of me. God's work this time was meant to change people's old thoughts and perspectives, to save them from the influence of Satan, and for them to gain the truth and life from God to live a bright life. I did not take the correct path and seek to gain the truth as my life, but pursued status and fame, and I even played tricks and hatched schemes, no different than the pursuit of becoming an official and someone of importance. Wasn't this against God's work and His will to save mankind? How could I gain the truth and live a meaningful life if I continued to pursue these? If I had not turned back, wouldn't it have ruined me and made me a target for punishment by God when He completes His work? In order to prevent me from taking the wrong path and correct my flawed ideas of pursuits, God pruned me and dealt with me "ruthlessly," through those people and events around me, took away my status, and shattered my ambitions and desires, so that I could reflect on myself and turn back. I then understood the righteous and holy disposition of God, and that my intentions, motivations, and even every single thought and action were under His observation. God carried out the most genuine salvation of me at the same time that He demonstrated His majesty. After recognizing the grace of God's salvation, I no longer allowed myself to get entangled in the loss of a position, and I had the will to pursue the truth. God loved me so much that He tried to save me, so I could not let Him down. I had to obey God's arrangements, and no matter whether I was a leader or just a regular believer, I should pursue the truth and do my duty as well as possible.

Half a year later, the leader in my church arranged for me to continue my church life at another church. Its church leaders were being selected at that time. When I learned that I had believed in God longer than all the sisters and brothers there, I felt very happy and I thought: "Now comes my chance. I can finally show my abilities as a leader. After all, I have more life experience and I believed in God earlier than they did. I am the best person for the position." As I was about to present myself well to them, one of the sisters from my previous church was transferred to join the election. I was afraid that she would reveal my previous scandal of jostling for position, which would be an embarrassment to me, so I had to give up my initial plan. I decided to try to get elected as a group leader, then work my way up step by step after that. I hadn't imagined that I would not be elected as a group leader, but I would instead be arranged to deliver books of God's words to sisters and brothers. I really hadn't expected that I, a dignified battalion commander, would be running around doing little errands. I found this difficult to accept. However, after undergoing the judgment and chastisement of God, I understood that this was from the rule of God and His arrangements. God was dealing with my desire to pursue status, so I forsook myself and obeyed. However, before long the place where I attended meetings was spotted by the police, so the church arranged for me to meet with another two elderly sisters somewhere else. As for the leader of the church, she could not come very often to perform her watering duty for us as she was being persecuted by the Communist Party of China. At that time, I could not bear it any longer: "Aside from having me do petty work, I have to meet with those elders with poor caliber. How did I get to this situation?" The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. I even felt that life was not worth living. In pain, I earnestly prayed unto God and asked for His enlightenment. One day, I read God's words, "What's the most appropriate method of pursuit on today's path? What kind of figure should you see yourself as in your pursuit? You should know how to handle everything that is befalling you now, be it trials or suffering, merciless chastisement or curses—you should give careful consideration to all of this" ("Those Who Do Not Learn and Know Nothing: Are They Not Beasts?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). From God's words, I understood that I was driven by my arrogant satanic nature, deviated from God's will, and walked on the wrong path of pursuing fame and positions. As a result, I only regarded those duties with "official titles" as important and despised other duties, and even detested those sisters and brothers of low caliber in the sense that I felt my status was lowered by being with them. The status

and fame had gone to my head. However, I did not know that in the house of God, all duties were equal, and my sisters and brothers as well as I were all creatures with equal status. Thinking of this, I felt greatly relieved. However, I knew that fame and status were my fatal weaknesses and I couldn't just easily let go of them, so I prayed unto God to seek more truth to resolve this issue. Later, I heard a sermon, saying: "In your opinion, is it meaningful for people to hold positions and cherish them? You should see clearly status and fame and be indifferent to them. They are empty and meaningless. A high position does not guarantee blessings. If you don't have a good disposition, a high position may bring you misfortune. If you do not pursue the truth, that position will be a source of great evil for you. Without the truth, you cannot see things clearly, and might easily be ruined by positions. ... You cannot be a leader without pursuing the truth; it can only ruin you. If you pursue the truth, leadership can make you perfect" ("The Differentiations of and Solutions to the False Leaders, Antichrists and the Wicked" in Sermons and Fellowship VII). "People appear to be good when they don't have power but as soon as they have it, they will show their true colors. How can power expose people? When someone is an ordinary person, they seem decent and appear to be dignified and upright. Once they hold some power, they become perverse. What sort of problem is this? Humans who have been corrupted by Satan are all of the same nature" ("How People Should Cooperate With God's Work of Perfecting Man" in Sermons and Fellowship on Entry Into Life III). These words suddenly opened my eyes and I saw the void and meaninglessness of pursuing status. Valuing status and failing to pursue the truth can only lead to people's ruin. Take my experience in the army as an example—I hated those corrupt officials when I was a soldier. However, as my status continued to grow, I started to become perverse and in the end I became a truly corrupt official. Those who were in high positions seemed to be good and honest when they didn't have high status. However, as soon as they held power, they started to behave tyrannically and commit countless crimes. These facts were enough to illustrate that after people had been corrupted by Satan, they would without exception be subject to its affliction and trickery; if they did not pursue the truth and have a change in disposition, they could only become perverse and do evil once they held power and status, be it in the earthly world or in God's house, with an end result of being punished justly by God. Thinking of this, I felt both fear and gratitude. It turned out that my repeated frustrations were my salvation, done out of love for me! Because I struggled to ascend in the world of officialdom for many years, I had been sullied with the poisons of Satan. It could be said that I was a combination of arrogance, deceit, selfishness and greed. After believing in God, I valued status too much and did not really pursue the truth. As a result, even by then I had gained little of the truth, and I had little fear of God. If I had actually been in a high position, I would only have become ambitious and behaved tyrannically as I did in the army, and I would end up being punished for offending God's disposition. Thanks be to God's enlightenment, I could see clearly the essence and the outcome of pursuing fame and status, and more than that, I could see the importance of pursuing the truth.

After that I started to concentrate my efforts on God's words. I deeply longed for God's words to be my life and paid no attention to duties with "official titles," and never belittled other duties. I felt that every duty had its meaning, that it was all ruled and preordained by God, and that my duty was the responsibility I should bear. When I longed for God's words with all of my heart and tried to complete my duties, I not only understood many truths which I had not understood before, but also enjoyed God's presence quite often. I received the enlightenment and leadership of the Holy Spirit, which made me feel grounded and unspeakably joyful. After a period of time, I found myself keeping a low profile when interacting with others, and I no longer boasted about my old positions in the army or used them to show off. No matter who pointed out my shortcomings, I would obey first and reflect on myself later. I could treat the sisters and brothers in the church with poor education and low caliber equally, and I no longer regarded myself as superior to them. Before I knew it my opinions on pursuit changed a lot, and I became indifferent to status and fame and was not so constrained and controlled by these. When I saw sisters and brothers who had believed in God for less time than me get elected as leaders of the church, I felt a little bit of jealousy. However, I was able to let it go through prayer. I felt embarrassed thinking of the fact that I used to struggle for fame and gain; I felt it was ugly and inhumane. Now, my wife and I fulfill our duties at home together. Though they are not significant, I feel very content and I experience enjoyment. My son now also believes in Almighty God, which makes our family a true Christian family where God's words rule in our daily life. No matter who speaks in line with the truth, we will listen to that person. Even if there is revelation of corrupt dispositions, we can forbear and forgive each other, and know ourselves according to God's words, which has made our family happier and happier. I strongly feel that it is Almighty God who has changed me and my wife, who has saved my marriage and family, and what's more, has

saved me from extreme corruption and transformed me from an arrogant, evil and filthy seeker of fame into a person who pursues light and justice, who has real life goals. When I read these words of God, all sorts of feelings well up in me: "From the creation of the world until now, all that God has done in His work is love, without any hatred for man. Even the chastisement and judgment you have seen are also love, a truer and more real love; this love leads people onto the right way of human life. ... All the work He has done is for the purpose of leading people to the right way of human life, so that they can have the normal life of mankind, because man does not know how to lead a life. Without such leading, you would only be able to live an empty life, would only be able to live a worthless and meaningless life, and would not know at all how to be a normal person" ("The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (4)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Yes, without God's salvation, I would not have taken the right path in life; I would only have become more and more degenerate, and would have become filthy scum who would be cursed by God in the end. It is the just judgment of God that has saved me, and ruthless refinement that has changed me. This allows me to understand what is ugly and what is holy as well as God's greatness, beauty and goodness, and Satan's meanness and evilness. I will never follow Satan again, and will only pursue the truth wholeheartedly, rid myself of Satan's corruption, and live out a real human likeness. Although I have experienced the suffering of many chastisements and refinements, I have gained the most precious way of life, allowing me to be reborn and enter a true path in life.

This year, I went back to my former workplace to take care of some procedural tasks. I saw that my previous colleagues and my previous leaders had all been promoted. When my previous colleagues saw me, they said, "If you had not left the army, you would have been promoted by now." I remained unmoved, and thought: "Of what use is a high position? If you live without any goal, direction or meaning as a person but just churn in that mire of evil, isn't it the most degrading kind of life? Aren't you just Satan's slaves, its toys? You will suffer God's just punishment and retribution in the end! Though I do not have a high position, I never regret my choice, because I have truly experienced peace and ease in my heart, which is true happiness. Only being the creature you should be, obeying and worshiping God is a true human life, and only through this can you have a bright future!"

86. An Arrogant Believer's Process of Transformation

By Zhang Yitao, Henan Province

"O God! Your judgment is so real, full of righteousness and holiness. Your revelations about the truth of mankind's corruption have left me thoroughly exposed. I think of how I expended myself and busied myself for years solely to gain Your blessing. I imitated Paul, toiling and working, so that I could stand out from the crowd. Your words of judgment made me see how selfish and contemptible I was. I fall to the ground feeling ashamed and abashed, too unworthy to look upon Your face. So many times I have looked back at the path I have walked. It was You who watched over me and protected me, leading me each step of the way up to now. I see how much it costs You to save me, it's all Your love. O God! By experiencing Your judgment, I have tasted Your true love. It is Your judgment that allows me to know myself and truly repent. I am so corrupt that I really need You to judge and cleanse me. Without Your judgment, I would only flounder in darkness. It is Your words which have led me onto life's path of light. I feel that loving You and living for You is the most meaningful pursuit. So many times I have looked back at the path I have walked. Your judgment and chastisement are Your blessings and true love. I will understand the truth and achieve a purer love for You. I'm willing no matter how much I suffer" ("God Has Given Me So Much Love" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). Every time I sing this hymn, I think of God's salvation for me through all these years, and I am full of gratitude for Him. It was God's judgment and chastisement that changed me. It made me—an arrogant, ambitious, rebellious son—appear a bit more like a human being. I sincerely give thanks for God's salvation of me!

I was born in the countryside. Because my family was poor and my parents were guileless, they were often cheated. From the time I was little people looked down on me, and being beaten and bullied became a common occurrence. This frequently made me sad to the point of tears. I put everything I had into my studies so that I would no longer have to lead that type of life, so that in the future I could have a position as a government official, be someone in charge, and everyone would look up to me. But when I was preparing for the high school entrance examination, the Cultural Revolution started. The Red Guards revolted, workers went on strike, students walked out. Every day was caught up in the revolution. It was pandemonium, the people were in a panic, and the college entrance

examination system was banned. So, I lost the opportunity to test into a school. I was devastated—I felt as terrible as if I had become seriously ill. Later, I thought: Even though I can't test into school or become a government official, I'll work hard to earn money. As long as I have money people will think highly of me. From then on, I was looking everywhere for ways to make money. Since my family was poor, I didn't have any funding to start doing business. Through relatives and friends, I managed to borrow 500 yuan to start a shop selling braised pork. In order to lead a better life than others, I worked late every day without taking a break and endured many hardships. After several years of hard work, my skills became more and more refined, and my business was booming more and more. My family quickly became more well-off, and many people looked at me with envy.

In the spring of 1990, someone in my village preached to me about the Lord Jesus, and I came to believe in Him. After that, I worked hard to study the Bible, seeking knowledge of the Bible, focusing on memorizing some passages, and before long I had learned many famous chapters and verses by heart. I read Matthew 16:26 where the Lord Jesus said: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Then I also read about the Lord Jesus calling upon Peter, and he immediately forsook his fishing nets and followed Christ. I thought to myself: Having enough money to get by is fine; if I earn more, what use is it when I die? If I want to gain the praise of the Lord, I have to follow the example of Peter. So I gave up my business, and began busying myself in the church full time. I was very passionate at the time, and through my relatives and friends I had evangelized to 19 people before long, and then that was expanded to more than 230 people through those 19. Then, I read the words of the Lord Jesus: "Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Mat 7:21). I felt even more self-satisfied, thinking that based on what I had given up and what I had expended and how I had proclaimed the Lord Jesus' salvation, I was already following the Lord's way. I thought that I was on the road of following the will of the heavenly Father, and in the next age when the kingdom of God is realized, I would reign as a king on the earth. Under the domination of this ambition, my enthusiasm became even greater. I set my determination that I absolutely had to follow the Lord Jesus' words to "love your neighbor as yourself" and "be tolerant and patient," as well as to lead by example, and to be unafraid of enduring hardship. Sometimes when I went to the homes of my brothers and sisters, I would

help them carry water, light fires, and do farm work. When they were sick, I'd go visit them. When they didn't have enough money, I'd help them from my own savings; I would go help whoever was experiencing difficulties. I quickly gained the praise of all of my brothers and sisters as well as the trust of the upper leaders in the church. A year later I was promoted to be a church leader, to shepherd 30 churches. I was managing about 400 believers. Once I had obtained this position, I felt great. I felt that all my hard work and effort had finally paid off, but at the same time I formed an even loftier ideal in my heart: to pursue a higher position, to gain the praise and adoration of even more people. Through another year of hard work, I became a high-level church leader, leading co-workers in five counties, shepherding 420 churches. After that I was more afraid to slack off, so I paid particular attention to my good behavior on the surface, and to establishing my image among my co-workers and brothers and sisters. For the approval of my co-workers and so my brothers and sisters would look up to me, I opposed extravagant meals in the church, and I prohibited all contact between members of the opposite sex and unhealthy practices. My "uprightness and sense of justice" gained support and approval from my co-workers and other brothers and sisters. My arrogant nature also swelled and became more out of control. On top of that, I knew some of the more common passages of the Bible backward and forward, and when meeting with and preaching to some of the lower-level church leaders and co-workers, I could recite passages without looking at my Bible. My brothers and sisters really admired me, so I always had the final say in the church. They all listened to me. I always thought that what I said was correct, that I had an elevated understanding. Therefore, whether it was church governance, sectioning out churches, or promoting people to church leaders and co-workers, I never discussed things with others. What I said always counted; I truly did "have the reign of a king." At that time I particularly enjoyed standing at the pulpit, speaking eloquently and endlessly, and when everyone was gazing at me with admiration, that feeling of being on top of the world was enchanting to me and made me forget about everything. I particularly felt this when I read John 3:34: "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure to Him." I really basked in this, and I shamelessly believed that I had been sent by God, that God had imparted me with the Holy Spirit, and God's will was expressed through me. I believed that because I could interpret the scriptures, I could understand "mysteries" that others couldn't, and I could see "connotations" that others couldn't. I only cared about immersing myself in the pleasure brought about by my

position, and I had entirely forgotten that I was just a creation, that I was merely a vessel of the grace of the Lord.

As the church continued to grow, my reputation also grew, and everywhere I went I was pursued by the police. I was caught by the police one time when I went back to get some clothing. I was sentenced to three years of reeducation through labor. During those three years I underwent every kind of cruel persecution and torture. It was as if a layer of skin had been peeled off from head to toe, and every day truly did feel like a year. But after I got out, I still continued to preach the gospel with the utmost confidence, just the same as ever, and I was also reinstated to my original position. After another six months, I was once again arrested by the local government and sentenced to another three years of reeducation through labor. During that time, they tortured me in every possible way, and then put me in a detention house for another 70 days. After that, I was put into a labor camp where I was carrying bricks. At the time it was the seventh lunar month and the weather was sweltering. The temperature in the kiln was around 70 degrees centigrade and I had to carry more than 10,000 bricks every day. My hunger combined with the previous cruel torture had made my body extremely weak. I could not physically tolerate that type of labor in the heat, but the vicious guards didn't care about any of that. When I couldn't complete my tasks they handcuffed my hands behind my back, made me kneel down, and placed bottles in my armpits and behind my knees. Then they beat me with electric prods until the handcuffs dug deep into my flesh. It was unimaginably painful. Subjected to this type of cruel torture, I had only completed seven days of labor when I passed out inside of the kiln. I wasn't rescued until 52 hours later, but I had nearly become a vegetable. Aside from being conscious and being able to see and hear, I couldn't do anything. I couldn't eat, talk, or walk. I wasn't even aware of my own bodily functions. After being ravaged this way by the CCP government, my arrogant nature had been largely defeated. That feeling of power and arrogance that I had in the church had just vanished. I had become dark and pessimistic; I was living in the midst of boundless suffering and helplessness. Later the people in the labor camp came up with a warped idea and found a doctor to create falsified records saying that I had a "genetic disorder." They called my wife and had her pick me up and bring me home. In order to treat my condition, everything in our home was sold, and when my relatives came to see me they were sarcastic, rude and ridiculing. Faced with this situation, I was disheartened and felt that the world was too dark, that there was no familial affection or love between people, that there was only cruel persecution and slander. Facing the torture of this painful illness and the hopelessness of my life, I didn't know how I could continue on.

Just as I was sinking into desperation, Almighty God extended a hand of salvation to me. After I had been back at home for over a month, two brothers came to preach God's gospel of the last days to me and that He was working on a new stage of work, His second incarnation to save mankind. At the time I didn't believe it at all, but because I couldn't speak, I found some passages in the Bible to show them. This was how I refuted them. They gently replied to me: "Brother, when we believe in God we should hold a heart of humble seeking. God's work is always new; it is always moving forward, and His wisdom cannot be comprehended by mankind, so we cannot be too caught up in the past. If you hold on to God's work in the Age of Grace will you be able to enter into the Age of Kingdom? Not to mention, what the Lord Jesus said in the Bible all has its own meaning and context." Then, they opened up a book of the words of Almighty God for me to read, and after that found many prophecies in the Bible for me to read regarding God's work in the last days. Through God's words and the fellowship with my brothers, I came to understand the meaning of the name of God, the inner truth in His three stages of work, His purpose in His management of mankind, the mysteries of His incarnation, the inner truth in the Bible, and more. These were things I had never heard of in my life, and they were also mysteries and truths that I had not been able to understand when I had been working so hard on studying the Bible for years. I listened to it with relish; I was utterly convinced. After that, my brothers gave me a book of the words of God, saying: "After you're better, you can preach the gospel to your co-workers and brothers and sisters." I very happily accepted the book of God's words. At that time, I was only able to lie in bed all day and read God's words. As I read it, I prayed. I felt a longing and enjoyment that was like a fish returning to water. I was so happy and gratified. Before long, my health was gradually improving. I could get out of bed and walk around a bit, and I was able to be more independent in my life. After that I was living the life of the church in my home, and I had meetings twice every week.

One time the church arranged for a young girl of 17 or 18 to come meet with me. She was the daughter of a brother from my original denomination, and before when I was the church leader I had gone to her home frequently. I thought to myself: What's wrong with the church leader's arrangements? Having a child come guide me—do they look down on me? Under the rule of my arrogant nature, I said with disdain: "I've believed in God for more years

than you've been alive. When I used to go to your house you were just a few years old. I would play with you then, but now you're coming to guide me...." My little sister turned red from what I had said, and she didn't dare to come again. The church had no choice but get another sister to come give me fellowship. Seeing that she was also quite young, I didn't say anything, but I thought: Whether it's number of years or qualifications of believing in the Lord, knowledge of the Bible, or experience in church governance, I am so much better than you in every regard! From your age, I can see that you've been a believer for three or four years at the most. I've believed for 21 years. How can you possibly be qualified to come guide me? But who could know that this sister was actually very articulate—she spoke frankly and sharply. When meeting, right away she opened God's words and read out loud: "[S]ome people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to meet together and speak; they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and surrounding them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value their images. ... If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is a classic image of Satan. The aspects of their natures that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their natures" ("How to Know Man's Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words pierced my heart like a two-edged sword, making a direct hit on me. It was an incisive revelation of my despicable intentions and ugly performance in my actions of believing in God, as well as the true essence of my nature. I was full of shame and wanted nothing more than to just disappear. As for what was exposed in God's words, when I thought of what I revealed, only then did I realize that my nature was too arrogant and that in essence I was being hostile to God. In the past, in order for people to look up to me and admire me, to be someone in charge of others, to be on a higher level, I worked hard at reading the Bible and put everything into equipping myself with knowledge of the Bible. Because of this, I attained a status and title that I had only dreamed of as well as the support of everyone. I gained enjoyment from others' admiration, and I preached in order to satisfy my own vanity. Through my monopoly on power, I revealed myself and showed off. I was always happy to enjoy the feeling of being on top of the world when

standing at the pulpit, and I even shamelessly used passages from the Bible to bear witness to and exalt myself. I believed that I had been sent by God. I was overbearingly arrogant. That day, I looked down on that sister, using my many years of preaching as capital. I believed that because I had believed in God for more years and I had greater knowledge of the Bible, greater experience in church governance, I was better than everyone. I didn't think much of anyone, and I underestimated and scorned those two sisters. My words were targeted and hurtful, and I arrogantly forfeited my sense and humanity. Only then did I realize that my pursuits were in resistance to God and opposed Him. I was struggling with God for His chosen people. What I lived out was the classic image of Satan. Facing the words of God, I couldn't not be convinced. I prayed to God, saying: "Oh God, I am too arrogant. When I had status I was high and mighty, and when I didn't have status I still didn't listen to anyone. I used my old credentials and authority to rule over people, to look down on them. I am so shameless! Today I received Your salvation. I am willing to accept the revelation and judgment in Your words."

After that, the sister opened to another passage of God's words for me to read. They were: "Man's sense has lost its original function, and that man's conscience, too, has lost its original function. The man that I look upon is a beast in human attire, he is a venomous snake, and no matter how pitiable he tries to appear before My eyes, I will never be merciful toward him, for man has no grasp of the difference between black and white, of the difference between truth and non-truth. Man's sense is so benumbed, yet still he wishes to gain blessings; his humanity is so ignoble yet still he wishes to possess the sovereignty of a king. Who could he be the king of, with sense such as that? How could be with such a humanity sit atop a throne? Man truly has no shame! He is a conceited wretch! For those of you who wish to gain blessings, I suggest you first find a mirror and look at your own ugly reflection—do you have what it takes to be a king? Do you have the face of one who could gain blessings? There has not been the slightest change in your disposition and you have not put any of the truth into practice, yet still you wish for a wonderful tomorrow. You are deluding yourself!" ("To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading God's words, I couldn't stop the tears flowing down my face. I felt that every sentence of God's words pierced my heart, I keenly felt His judgment, and I felt particularly ashamed. Scene after scene of my disgraceful pursuit of reigning like

a king in my former church appeared in front of me: Among my brothers and sisters I was always high and mighty, I ordered people around, I wanted control of everything, and not only did I not bring my brothers and sisters in front of God and help them know Him, but I led them to treat me as if I were so high up, so great. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that my actions disgusted God, that I was sickening, undeserving, and that I had let my brothers and sisters down. At that time I felt ashamed beyond measure. I saw that the price I had paid for my own ambitions and desires was worth nothing. My desperate pursuit of status and being looked up to by others was absurd. I was rushing around day and night; I endured hardships, worked hard, and went to prison. I was persecuted and tortured, and was half dead. It did not make me have an understanding of God; on the contrary, my arrogant nature swelled up more and more, I had less and less regard for God to the point that I delusionally thought that I could reign as a king when the kingdom of God is realized. At the same time, I also realized that when I had been persecuted by the CCP in my former church, God was using that to make me better able to accept His work in the last days. Otherwise, based on my prestige and status in my former church, based on the fact that I didn't have regard for God and my overbearingly arrogant disposition, I absolutely would not have been able to easily let go of my position and accept Almighty God. I definitely would have become an evil servant who hindered others' return to God, who opposed God and in the end would suffer His punishment! I couldn't help but thank God from the bottom of my heart for His salvation, and His great forgiveness of me. So I became much more low-key because of what was revealed through God's words, and I no longer dared to be so impudent and unreasonable with my brothers and sisters.

Under God's care and protection, my illness gradually improved. One day, the church leader arranged for me to take on hosting duties. After hearing this I felt very unwilling to do it. I believed that acting as a host was a waste of my abilities, but I also couldn't refuse, so I grudgingly agreed. While I was hosting, some brothers and sisters were meeting at my house and they asked me to be outside the door to keep watch. Once again my inner thoughts arose: Just acting as a host, keeping an eye on the door—what will I get out of this? In the past I stood behind the pulpit and I was so haughty, but in my duty today I don't have any face or any status. My rank is so low! So after a period of time, my internal resistance became greater and greater, I felt more and more wronged, and I was no longer willing to fulfill that duty. Later I could no longer hold myself back and said to the church

leader: "You need to give me another duty to perform. All of you are preaching the gospel and caring for the church, but I'm at home acting as a host and guarding the door—what will I get in the future?" That sister smiled and said: "You're mistaken. In front of God, there is no major or minor duty, there is no greater or lesser status. No matter what duty we're performing, we each perform our own function. The church is a whole unit with different functions, but it is one body. Let's look at a passage of God's words." Then she read this passage to me: "In the current stream, all those who truly love God have the opportunity to be perfected by Him. Whether they are young or old, as long as they keep an obedience to God in their hearts and revere Him, they can be perfected by Him. God perfects people according to their different functions. So long as you exert all of your strength, and submit to the work of God, you can be perfected by Him. At present, none of you is perfect. Sometimes you are capable of performing one type of function, and other times you can perform two. Just as long as you do your utmost to expend yourself for God, you will ultimately be perfected by Him" ("On Everyone Performing Their Function" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After listening to these words of God and the sister's fellowship, my heart settled and brightened. I thought: So, God's perfection of people does not depend on whether or not they have status, or what duty they do; what God makes perfect is people's hearts, their obedience, and their loyalty. What He looks at is whether they end up having a change in disposition. No matter what duty they perform, as long as they can give it their all and are utterly devout, and if they can also focus on pursuing the truth and cast off their corrupt disposition, then they can be perfected by God. Even though different people perform different functions in the church, the goal is always to satisfy God. They are all fulfilling the duty of a creation. If we really fulfill our duty as created beings for the sake of satisfying God without personal intentions or impurities, even if others look down on the duty we are performing and think it's not worth much, in God's eyes it is cherished and treasured. If we perform our duty only to satisfy our own intentions and desires, no matter how great our work and what duty we perform, it will not please God. After that, I saw these words from God: "But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the very least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed" ("The Difference Between the

Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I understood from these words of God that as a creation, fulfillment of my duty is right and proper. I should not have my own choice, and I definitely should not discuss conditions or conduct transactions with God. If my belief in God and the fulfillment of my duty are to gain blessings or a crown, then they are from an improper perspective, and are without good conscience and reason. I was reluctant to do "small work" and to fulfill "small duties"—didn't that mean that I was being dominated by the intent to gain blessings and the ambition to pursue status? In my mind, I believed that God would like me if I had status and power and could do great work and lead others, and I believed that the more I worked, the more I would receive God's praise, and the more I would be rewarded by Him. So I would not let go of status, and I was always seeking to do great work and perform great duties so that in the end I would receive a great crown. It was precisely because I harbored such an erroneous viewpoint that I felt dissatisfied with the duty the church had arranged for me, so much so that I misunderstood God's will. I complained about it and believed that fulfilling the duty of a host was making little use of my great skills, that it was a way of looking down on me. I was so arrogant and ignorant! Under the judgment of God's words, I once again felt ashamed. And also because of the enlightenment from God's words, I understood His will. I knew what type of person God likes, what type of person He perfects, and what type of person disgusts Him. I gained a heart of obedience for God. After that I set my will in front of God and was willing to be the smallest, most unassuming person in the church, to complete my duty as a host, to safeguard our surroundings, to allow my brothers and sisters to meet at my house in peace without being disturbed. I would use practical actions to comfort God's heart.

Through this experience, I realized how great God's words are, that He has expressed the truth and all of His will to save mankind. We only need to diligently read His words to understand the truth in all things, to understand His will, to resolve our own notions and beliefs. From then on, I developed more of a thirst for His words, and I started getting up at four or five every morning to read His words. After some time, I was able to remember a portion of His words, I gained a small grasp of His will, and I truly enjoyed it in my heart. Later on, there was a brother responsible for the work of the gospel who frequently stayed at my home. Several times when he was preaching the gospel and encountered difficulties, he asked me to look for God's words to resolve them. He saw that I could find them very

quickly, and after that as soon as he ran into problems he would ask me to help find some words from God. He really admired me. Unintentionally, my arrogant nature once again started acting up. I thought to myself: Despite the fact that you're responsible for preaching the gospel, I still have to help you resolve issues. You haven't read the word of God as much as I have, and you don't understand as much of it as I do. I have already gained the truth. If I were in charge of preaching the gospel, I would definitely be better at it than you are. So in my heart I began to look down on my brother, and after a while I even started to give him the cold shoulder. One day, the church leader came to my house and asked me: "How have you been doing recently?" Full of confidence, I replied: "I've been fine. I read God's words and pray every day. That brother has seen that I understand quite a bit of God's word, so he's always having me help him find words from God to resolve issues...." The church leader heard the arrogance in what I said, and picked up a book of God's words and said: "Let's read a few passages of His words. God says: 'Because the greater their status, the greater their ambition; the more they understand of the doctrines, the more arrogant their dispositions become. If, in your belief in God, you do not pursue the truth, and instead pursue status, then you're in danger' ("People Make Too Many Demands of God" in Records of Christ's Talks). 'Regardless of which aspect of the reality of truth you have heard, if you hold yourself up against it, if you carry out these words in your own life, and incorporate them into your own practice, you will definitely gain something, and will definitely change. If you stuff these words into your belly, and memorize them in your brain, then you will never change. ... you must lay a good foundation. If, at the very beginning, you lay a foundation of letters and doctrines, then you'll be in trouble. It's like when people build a house on a beach: The house will be in danger of collapse no matter how high you build it, and won't last for long' ("The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person" in Records of Christ's Talks)." After hearing these words of God, I was utterly ashamed. I realized that my own arrogant satanic nature was coming out again. In my belief in the Lord Jesus in the past, I had focused on gaining deep knowledge and understanding theories in the Bible, and I used that as a basis for being high and mighty, for becoming more and more arrogant. Now I was fortunate that I could read so much truth in God's words, but I had gone back onto my old path and was relying on my own intellect. I had memorized some sentences from His words and believed that I had gained the truth; I once again became arrogant and wouldn't listen to

anyone. I vied for status with others and competed with them. It really was so shameful! I saw that equipping oneself with literal theories can only make one more and more arrogant, and that only understanding the truth from God's words can change people's disposition and enable them to live as human beings. That brother had believed in God longer than I had and he understood more than I did, but he was able to humbly seek my help. This really was a strength of his, and it was a fruit born of his experience of God's work and word, and of his understanding of the truth. Not only did I not learn from him and focus on putting the word of God into practice in my life, and live out proper humanity, but I looked down on him and gave him the cold shoulder. I truly was arrogant, blind, and ignorant! My heart at that time was in so much pain. I felt that this arrogant nature of mine was truly shameful and ugly. It was too disgusting! And this type of arrogance to the point that lacked all reason very easily offends God's disposition. Without changing myself, without genuinely pursuing the truth I only could have ruined myself. When I realized all of this, I truly felt that the judgment and chastisement in God's words really were His love and salvation for me. This caused me to feel some hatred for my own arrogant nature, and I understood that in my belief in God, I should pursue the truth and pursue a change in disposition.

After that had passed, I began to look for the root of my arrogance and lack of reason, for what was guiding my thinking, what made me frequently expose my satanic nature of arrogance. One day, I saw these words from God: "Everything Satan does is for itself. It wishes to surpass God, break free of Him, and wield power itself, and to possess all of the things that God has created; therefore, man's nature is Satan's nature. ... Man's satanic nature contains a great deal of philosophy. Sometimes you yourself are not even aware of that and do not understand it, yet every moment of your life is based on it. Moreover, you think that this philosophy is quite correct, reasonable, and not mistaken. Satan's philosophy has become people's truth, and they are living in complete accordance with Satan's philosophy, without rebelling against it in the slightest. Therefore, they are constantly revealing their satanic nature, and in all aspects, they constantly live by their satanic philosophy. Satan's nature is man's life" ("How to Take the Path of Peter" in Records of Christ's Talks). Pondering these words of God, my heart brightened more and more. I thought: It turns out that after mankind was corrupted by Satan, our nature also became as arrogant, as unruly, and without worship of God as Satan itself, and we pursue others thinking highly of us and worshiping ourselves as

if we were God. Through societal influence and the words from famous people, Satan has instilled its thinking, its philosophy of life and its laws of survival into the human heart, becoming something that people rely on in their lives; these are guiding mankind's thinking, dominating their actions, and causing them to become more and more arrogant and unreasonable. I reflected on the fact that since I was a child I was bullied and discriminated against and I began to envy those who had power and status. In addition, the satanic laws of survival of "One should rise above others and bring honor to his ancestors," "People struggle to go upward, but water flows downward," and "I am my own lord throughout heaven and earth" had been firmly implanted in my heart from an early age, dominating my life. So, whether it was out in the world or in the church, I was doing my utmost to pursue status and reputation; I was seeking to rank higher than others, to be in charge of others. Poisoned by these toxins from Satan, I saw myself very highly; I saw myself as really great. I would always put my qualifications of being a longtime believer in the face of my brothers and sisters and compare my strengths to other people's weaknesses. Everything was beneath my notice and I always had the final say, and I was so arrogant that I even believed myself sent from God, and I wanted to reign as king together with God. These poisons of Satan had made me so arrogant that I had lost my human reason. Just like Satan, I wanted to seize power in everything, and I wanted an elevated position to rule over mankind. What I was living out was entirely the image of Satan, the devil. These poisons of Satan harmed me so terribly, so deeply. I prayed to God, saying: "Oh God, I am no longer willing to live based on these things. I have suffered terribly for them, I have been living in unbearable ugliness and have disgusted You. Oh God, I am willing to do my utmost to pursue the truth, to become a proper person who truly has a conscience and reason, to live out the likeness of a true person, to comfort Your heart. Oh God, I beg You not to take Your judgment and chastisement away from me, I beg for Your work to purify me. As long as it is possible for me to change my disposition and live out the likeness of a true person and be gained by You soon, I am willing to accept even more severe judgment, chastisement, smiting, and discipline from You."

One day, I read God's words saying: "God possesses no elements of self-righteousness or self-importance, or those of conceit and arrogance; He possesses no elements of crookedness. Everything that disobeys God comes from Satan; Satan is the source of all ugliness and wickedness. The reason that man has qualities similar to those of Satan is because man has been corrupted and worked on by Satan.

Christ has not been corrupted by Satan, hence He possesses only the characteristics of God, and none of the characteristics of Satan" ("The Substance of Christ Is Obedience to the Will of the Heavenly Father" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). My heart was once again moved by God's words. God is so lofty and great, yet so humble and hidden. In His work amongst man, He has never testified that He Himself is God, nor has He publicized His identity or position, much less style Himself as God. Instead, He lives, unknown and unrecognized, amongst man, expressing the truth to supply and guide man, and performing His work to save mankind. God is so great, so holy, and in His life there are no elements of self-rightness and self-importance, because Christ Himself is the truth, the way, and the life. He is supreme as well as humble and lovely. Seeing what Christ has and is, I felt even more how shameless and ignorant my arrogance is. I longed to follow the example of Christ, and I was willing to pursue living out the likeness of a true person to satisfy God. After that, following Christ's example and living out the likeness of a true person became the goal that I pursued.

Once, I read a passage of God's words and I could not understand it. I didn't know what it meant, but for the sake of saving face, I was unwilling to put myself aside and seek fellowship with my brothers and sisters. I was afraid they would look down on me because I had always resolved other people's issues and had never brought up any of my own problems to seek help from others. Afterward, I realized that my unwillingness to open up to fellowship was still the domination of my arrogant nature and not wanting to be looked down on by others. I rebelled against the flesh to seek fellowship with my brothers and sisters. I had never imagined that not only did they not look down on me, but they patiently communicated God's will with me, and my difficulty was very quickly resolved. There was another time that a brother had me deliver a letter related to the work of the church. Because of my arrogance and that I completed the task based on my own ideas, it wasn't delivered on time. When he saw that it was going to hold up the work, this brother became very anxious. He dealt with me and exposed me. At the time I was very uncomfortable and felt embarrassed, but I also knew that this was God dealing with me and pruning aspects of me. It was God testing whether or not I had obedience, and whether or not I could put the truth into practice. I prayed to God: "Oh God, today I was dealt with by my brother, I felt uncomfortable. I also wanted to resist it because I was always in the higher position and scolding others, and I had never submitted to the truth. I was always living out the image of Satan. Now, I have experienced so much of Your work and I understand that a person who is able to accept being dealt with and pruned is the most reasonable. This is a person who is obedient to God and fearful of God. Only this type of person has integrity and a human likeness. Now I am willing to forsake my own flesh with a heart of loving God. I am willing for You to move my heart, to realize my resolution." After this prayer, I felt much peace and enjoyment in my heart. I was able to put aside my own face and status and was happy to accept being pruned and dealt with by my brother. After that happened, my brother was concerned that I would be unwilling to accept all this, so he communicated with me on God's will. I talked about my understanding about my own experiences. We laughed about it together, and from my heart I gave thanks for God's salvation, for Him changing me.

So, through time after time of Almighty God's judgment and chastisement, my arrogant disposition was gradually changed. I could become a low-key person, I was no longer so arrogant and unwilling to listen to others. Whatever came up, I no longer had to have the final say. I could solicit the opinions of my brothers and sisters on some issues, and I could collaborate harmoniously with them. I had finally had a little bit of human likeness. Since then, I feel that I have become a much simpler person. I live so easily, so happily. I give thanks to Almighty God's salvation of me. Without His salvation, I would still be struggling bitterly in the midst of darkness and sin without ever being able to escape from corruption. Without God's salvation, my nature would only have become more and more arrogant, even having people worship me like God, to the point of offending God's disposition and suffering His punishment yet being oblivious to it. Through time after time of God's judgment and chastisement, I saw that His love is so real, and that He has always used His love to move me, waiting for me to turn myself around. No matter how rebellious I was, no matter how hard I was to deal with, how many complaints and misunderstandings I had of God, He had never made an issue of it. He had still painstakingly set up every type of environment to wake up my heart, to awaken my spirit, to rescue me from the affliction of Satan, to let me live in the light of God and walk the true path of human life. God was patient and waited more than 20 years, paying an immeasurable price for me. God's love truly is vast and immense! Now, God's judgment and chastisement have become my treasure; they are also a precious source of wealth from my experiences and something I will never be able to forget. This suffering has value and meaning. Although I still fall far short of God's requirements, I am confidently pursuing a change in disposition, and I'm willing to more

deeply experience God's judgments and chastisements. I believe that He can surely turn me into a true person who can be compatible with Him.

87. I Have Only Just Begun Walking the Right Path of Life

By Shi Han, Hebei Province

I was born to a poor peasant family. I have been sensible since childhood, in that I never fought with other kids and I obeyed my parents, which made me a good girl in the eyes of adults. People around us were all very envious of my parents, saying that they were lucky to have such a good daughter. And just like this, I grew up listening to compliments from the people around me. When I was in the elementary school, my academic record was especially good, and I always achieved first place in exams. One time, I received full marks in an essay contest held by my town, winning honor for my school. The headmaster not only awarded me a prize and certificate, but also complimented me in front of the entire school and called upon the students to learn from me. I suddenly became the "celebrity" of the school, and my classmates even nicknamed me "ever-victorious general." The compliments from my teachers, the envy of my classmates, and the doting of my parents gave me a sense of superiority in my heart, and I really enjoyed the feeling of being admired by everyone. Accordingly, I firmly believed that the greatest joy in life was the admiration of others, and that the feeling of happiness came from the praise of others. I secretly told myself: No matter how difficult and exhausting it is, I must become someone with fame and status, and never be looked down upon by others. From then on, dictums such as "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies" and "Men should always strive to be better than their contemporaries" became my life mottos.

However, when I was 13 years old, my father fell seriously ill and was admitted to the hospital, which placed our already poor family under serious debt. When I saw my father moaning in pain from illness and my mother exhausting herself for the sake of our livelihoods, I felt so bad that I wished I would grow up quickly so I could share their sorrow and pain. So I made the painful decision to drop out of school, thinking: "Even if I do not go to school, I cannot perform worse than others. I will be a strong and successful woman when

I grow up, and then I will still be able to live a great life!" Due to my academic excellence, I was kind of a "little celebrity" in my neighborhood. Therefore, when news of me dropping out of school spread, the villagers all started talking about it, saying: "This girl is so foolish! Dropping out of school will destroy her future!" and "No one will respect people without an education. She will suffer from hardship and poverty all her life!" As someone used to receiving compliments since childhood, the dreary feeling that "The fallen phoenix is inferior to the chicken" suddenly came over me. I was afraid to go out, afraid to meet people, afraid of the feeling of being looked down on. To avoid such pain, I barely stepped foot outside my home for two entire years, and I was taciturn all the time. At the same time, my desire of becoming a strong and successful woman grew even stronger, so when I was a little older, I went out to start working. I worked in a lot of jobs, but I would give up shortly each time because I felt the job was either too tiring and stressful, or the salary was too low, or the boss was not nice. After having failed over and over again, I became thoroughly discouraged and felt that my dream of becoming a strong and successful woman had gotten so very far away from reality.

In 2005, I had the privilege of accepting Almighty God's work of the last days. I saw in the word of God: "The fate of man is controlled by the hands of God. You are incapable of controlling yourself: Despite always rushing and busying about for himself, man remains incapable of controlling himself. If you could know your own prospects, if you could control your own fate, would you still be a creature?" ("Restoring the Proper Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's powerful words deeply touched my heart, making me understand that everyone's fate is in His hands and not at all controlled by people themselves, and that no matter what time it is, people cannot escape God's sovereignty and plans, and should be obedient under the authority of God. This is the only way people will have a good fate. Through the guidance of God's words, I realized that what kind of family I was born into, how cultured I am, whether my life is poor or rich—all of these things are predetermined by God. It is not something my mind or abilities can change. I had single-mindedly pursued being a strong woman, believing that I could rely on my own efforts to alter my fate. But after suffering much hardship, enduring much misery, I hadn't ultimately gotten what I wanted. Now I thought of all the pain I'd gone through; did it not result from not knowing God's sovereignty and stubbornly struggling against fate? Now I knew that only by coming before God and accepting and

submitting to His orchestrations and arrangements could I gradually escape all this pain. After understanding God's will, I was no longer frustrated by my experiences, and I no longer cared about what other people said. Instead, I became determined to believe in God and pursue the truth properly, and live a meaningful life. After that, I persisted in reading God's words every day, and prayed, sang hymns, and attended meetings with brothers and sisters. Due to my relatively fast comprehension of the truth and my passionate pursuit, I won the appreciation of the sister who was watering me, which made me feel all flattered inside. Later, I heard church leaders say I should be a focus of their cultivation, which made me more difficult to restrain the glee in my heart and even gave me an extra spring in my step. So I told myself: I must pursue with all my heart and soul! I cannot let the church leaders down. Even if it is just for my good reputation, I should work hard so I can win back here the fame and status that had eluded me in the outside world. At the time, I did not care about God's will at all. The only thing on my mind was fame, fortune, and status right in front of me, like dazzling halos waving at me.

Shortly after, I performed the duty of watering the new believers in the church. In order to win high praise from brothers and sisters, and live up to the title "focus of cultivation," I made up my mind to perform my duty to the best of my ability. Due to my "hard work and efforts," I finally managed to fulfill my wish after a period of time, earning the praise and encouragement of brothers and sisters. I could not help but think: "That so many brothers and sisters have approved of me must mean I am better than other people. When it comes time to vote, the brothers and sisters will certainly vote for me and I will surely be put in an important position within the church. Then, my future will be filled with unlimited potential, and God will praise me as a matter of course." Because I lived in complacency and selfsatisfaction, I subconsciously began performing my duty in a perfunctory manner and stopped watering new believers with diligence. As a result, some of the new believers were unable to receive real watering and lived in negativity and weakness. I felt very upset in the face of this situation and thought: I have come a long way to acquire the "honor" I have today. How could I let things continue on like this? If the church leaders find out, they will surely say that I am not capable and might even stop my duty as well. Wouldn't it be all over for me then? I must do something to turn this situation around. In the days that followed, I went outside every day to support the new believers. Sometimes, for the sake of one meeting, I would climb several hills and take three to four hours to walk to and back, but I

did not feel bitter at all. After a month, I was exhausted, but because I did not have the work of the Holy Spirit, my communication of God's word was dull and dry, and as a result the states of the new believers did not turn around. I felt so tortured over this that I got a headache, but I still did not realize that I should come before God to self-reflect. Due to the long-term ineffectiveness of my work, which caused harm to the life of the new believers, I was eventually replaced. The moment I arrived back home was like falling from the sky to the ground. My whole body felt limp and weak. I thought back to how so many brothers and sisters looked up to me in the past, and yet now I had fallen to such an extent. How would brothers and sisters look at me if they found out? The more I thought about it the more I felt unable to face brothers and sisters, so I refused to go out for meetings and instead stayed at home every day in tears. I was in agony on the inside. One day, I saw the following words of God: "In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. The hopes, the desire for [a] status, and the notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. ... For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don't have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People's thoughts and lives are rotten, their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably ugly, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, as well as fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them" ("Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). It was only through the trenchant revelation of God's words that I realized my view on belief in God had been wrong from the very start. I wanted to use my belief in God to achieve the fame, fortune, and status I failed to obtain in the world, and absurdly thought: I would be selected and put in an

Footnotes:

a. The original text does not contain the phrase "desire for."

important position as long as I earned the praise of brothers and sisters, and then God would also like me and praise me. Under the dominion of these thoughts, I became weak and despicable. When brothers and sisters praised me, I would become full of confidence, but once I lost these things, I immediately became discouraged and depressed, negative and in retreat. How was this believing in God? All I believed in was fame, fortune, and status! God's intention was not to train me to become a wonderful working talent, and moreover it was not to let me take advantage of fulfilling my duty to satisfy personal desires. Rather, He hoped I could, through the process of fulfilling my duty, discover my deficiencies and experience God's words and work, and thus understand and acquire more truth, and ultimately receive God's salvation. At the same time, it was also so I could use my own experiences and the truth I had understood to supply brothers and sisters who were new believers in God, and help them lay the foundation in the true way so they might enter the right path of believing in God as soon as possible. However, I never sought God's intentions as I had always strived for fame and status, and for my own personal ambitions. And the result? I lost the work of the Holy Spirit; I could no longer feel the presence of God, there was darkness in my spirit, everything I said and did was ineffective, and the church suspended my duties. It was at this time that I suddenly recalled God's words: "I do not care how meritorious your hard work is, how impressive your qualifications, how closely you follow Me, how renowned you are, or how improved your attitude; so long as you have not done what I have demanded, you will never be able to win My praise" ("Transgressions Will Lead Man to Hell" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Whether one seeks sincerely is not determined by how others judge them or how the people around view them, but by whether the Holy Spirit works upon them and whether they have the presence of the Holy Spirit, and it is all the more determined by whether their disposition changes and whether they have knowledge of God after undergoing the Holy Spirit's work over a certain period ..." ("God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). In God's words I understood His intentions and requirements. It turned out that my previous belief that a higher status meant a more promising future and more praise from God was measuring God's work from an earthly viewpoint, which could not have been more wrong. How God measures and determines one's end is not based on their status, seniority, or the amount of work they did, but whether they gain the truth and whether they achieve dispositional change. If one has not gained the truth or achieved dispositional change

through God's work, then no matter how high their status is or how many people endorse them, all becomes meaningless. Not only will they not receive God's approval, they will also be detested, rejected, and condemned by God. Only by paying attention to pursuing the truth and knowing themselves and God while fulfilling their duty, and using their real experiences to water and support brothers and sisters, will they be able to resolve the actual problems, find a path to guide brothers and sisters, and make their own work effective, and only by performing their duty in this way can they be after God's heart. Someone like me, who did not pursue their own entry and change at all while working, but instead blindly pursued fame, fortune, and status, ultimately only inflicted harm on more and more brothers and sisters, and would personally be eliminated in the end. When I thought about this, I understood that the stopping of my duty by the church was an environment set up by God targeting my wrong intentions and desires, as well as my corrupt nature, so that I might selfreflect and get to know myself, change my wrong views on pursuit, and follow the right path of pursuing the truth as soon as possible. In that moment, I truly felt God's love, care, and thought, and could not help but pray to God: "Oh God! Thank You for bestowing Your great love upon me. I used to not understand Your intentions and thought that the possession of fame, fortune, and status would guarantee Your appreciation. This made me not care at all about pursuing the truth during my work. All I did was blindly pursue fame and fortune, which is completely at odds with Your requirements. By the enlightenment of Your word, I now understand Your intentions. I will no longer act in direct contravention to Your work as I had in the past. I will pursue dispositional change and follow the right path of pursuing the truth."

Shortly after, the church again arranged for me to water the new believers, and also had me live together with a young sister. The young sister usually went to work. Seeing her so busy all the time, I decided to undertake all the household chores to leave her with a good impression. I never expected that several months later, our relationship actually became more and more strained, which I found especially depressing and painful. One day, when the sister came back from work and saw me doing the chores, she said bluntly that I was just doing this out of zealousness. Upon hearing this, I could no longer stop my tears of grievance from bursting out. At that moment, I really wanted to leave and never come back. But I then thought of how the sister was younger than me, and that she had not believed in God for a long time. If I could not put myself aside, and continued to hold a grudge against her, then how would the leaders of church and other brothers and sisters see me? They

would say I showed no love for the young sister and that I was irresponsible. How would I be able to face them then? Facing such a situation, I really had no idea what to do. In pain, I came before God to pray: "Oh God! I am in so much pain. It's as if there are heavy boulders pressing down on me, making it impossible for me to have the strength to escape. But I believe Your good intentions must lie in this situation that has befallen me. I only beg that You enlighten me so I can understand Your intentions and learn the lesson I should learn." Soon after the prayer, a sister came find me, so I opened my heart and communicated with her about my state. After listening to it, the sister said: "All of God's work is for the sake of saving mankind, and all the situations that befall us are all meant to teach us lessons. If we have these negative things inside us, it means we still have some satanic toxins inside us that are despised by God. God will cleanse us and change us through these situations." After the sister left, I tossed and turned in bed and could not fall asleep, thinking: What does God cleanse and change in me? Therefore, I got up and read God's word: "You can discern a person's nature and to whom he belongs from his views of life and values. Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of the national governments and the famous and great. Their nonsense has become man's life and nature. 'Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmos' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone and has become people's lives. There are other words of life philosophy that are also like this. ... There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their handling things, and in their conduct and dealings with others—they are almost without a shred of truth—for example, their life philosophies, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. So, what flows through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan" ("How to Know Man's Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). As I contemplated God's words, I became immersed in thought: Over these last few months, why have I been living in such depression and pain? By which toxins of Satan is my behavior being dominated? Under the enlightenment of God, I felt my heart gradually brighten up inside, and I realized that the reason I had always paid so much attention to fame and status was the influence and deception of toxins of Satan such as "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face," and "Men should always strive to be better than their contemporaries." This made me care so much about face and vanity, as well as what others

thought of me. Everything I did and said was to maintain my image and status in other people's hearts. As soon as something impinged on my face or vanity, I would be in pain and torment. All this suffering and bitterness was because of Satan. I recalled that since moving in with the young sister, I had always gotten along with her cautiously in order to leave a good impression, afraid that I would leave a bad impression if I said or did anything wrong. I was therefore living obsequiously and acting like a fool. When the young sister dealt with me, I did not use the opportunity to know myself, but was full of opinions and prejudices against the sister because I didn't want to lose face, and even wanted to escape this environment. To preserve my image and face, I did not dare to be open with the young sister even when I sometimes saw her reveal a bit of corruption or do something incompatible with the truth, fearing that I might offend her and cause our relationship to become more and more estranged. ... These toxins of Satan, however, made me more and more hypocritical and cunning, which made my life very tiring and bitter. I really wished I could break through this dark cage and tear off my fake face, so that I might live with complete freedom and relief. But I could not do it on my own, so I poured my heart out to God: "Oh God! I used to treat praise and fame as a type of enjoyment. Now I know that I was wrong. Pursuit of these things is pain, depression, bondage, and constraint. Now I also see clearly that it was Satan's philosophies that deceived and controlled me, making me pursue fame, fortune, and status, as well as face and vanity. All my pain has been brought by Satan. Oh God! I beg for Your salvation; show me the right path of practice, and give me the confidence and power to break through Satan's trap and act in accordance with Your requirements." After the prayer, I felt unprecedented relief. At the same time, I realized that I could only resolve my corrupt disposition through the pursuit of truth. Afterward, I saw the following passage of God's words: "If you do not focus on your relationships with people but maintain a proper relationship with God, if you are willing to give your heart to God and learn to obey Him, then naturally your relationships with all people will become proper. This way, these relationships are not established in the flesh, but on the foundation of God's love. There are almost no fleshly interactions, but in the spirit there is fellowship, mutual love, mutual comfort, and provision for one another. This is all done on the foundation of a heart that satisfies God. These relationships are not maintained by relying on a human philosophy for living, but are formed very naturally through carrying a burden for God. It does not require man-made effort. You need

only practice according to the principles of the word of God. Are you willing to be considerate of the will of God? ... Are you willing to completely give your heart to God and to disregard your position among people?" ("It Is Very Important to Establish a Proper Relationship With God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words pointed out a clear way of practice to me, and that was to establish a proper relationship with God first of all and no longer try to maintain my image and status in people's hearts. Instead, I should give my heart to God, practice the truth and obey God in everything. Moreover, I should associate with brothers and sisters on the foundation of God's love, supplying and supporting each other and learning from each other's strengths to make up for what we lack. When we have a proper relationship with God, we will naturally have proper relationships with other people. Hence, I privately made up my mind to act in accordance with God's words to gradually dispel my corrupt disposition. Since then, I often consciously communicated with the young sister, read God's words, and shared fellowship about the truth together. If we encountered problems in the performance of our duties that we could not resolve, we would pray to God together and look for answers in God's words, and we no longer paid any attention to our relationship in the flesh. Imperceptibly, we got along with each other very well. The burden on my shoulders and the depression in my heart all evaporated, and a long-lost smile emerged on my face. I had truly experienced the relief and joy brought by practicing God's words. I sincerely thank God for saving me.

After these few months of painful refinement, I finally understood why God would not let us use philosophies of life to maintain relationship with other people. It is because all those philosophies of life and so-called dictums are toxins Satan implants in people, and are tools used by Satan to bind and harm people. These satanic philosophies can only generate division, conflict, and death among people, and can only bring people depression and pain. This is because Satan itself is corruption and division, and only God's words and what He requires of people can enable them to make peace with each other. Only by living in God's words and acting in accordance with His words can people break through the dark influences of Satan and live with complete freedom and relief before God. At the same time, I also realized that my living together with the young sister was a wonderful arrangement by God, which was set up to target the deep-rooted toxins of Satan inside me and my practical needs. If God had not worked in this way, I would have never recognized the extent of the harm satanic toxins such as "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose

utters its cry wherever it flies" and "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face" had done to me. I would have still worshiped these toxins as positive things, which would have made me more and more corrupted, and ultimately head for perdition and destruction. These situations and trials were precisely God's great salvation of me!

Later, I was elected as a leader of the church by my brothers and sisters. When I encountered issues in the beginning, I would often listen to suggestions from brothers and sisters, and did not care about how others would think of me. But it did not take long for my desire of pursuing fame and fortune to begin to expand again. Since I started fulfilling this duty earlier than the sister I was partnered with, brothers and sisters would naturally come to me more when they had difficulties. Gradually, I started getting carried away and thought that I was superior to that sister. When in meetings with that sister, I would always talk about some seemingly important doctrines to show off and win recognition and admiration from brothers and sisters, as well as to make them feel that I was better than her. Once, during a small group meeting, a thought came to my mind after the sister had just communicated for a little while: I must communicate more, or else brothers and sisters would think I am not as good as her. Thus, I butted in when there was a pause and began communicating non-stop. Just as I was really getting into it, a brother beside me interrupted me: "We can't just talk about empty doctrines. We should communicate some practical experiences and knowledge so as to supply brothers and sisters." After listening to the brother's words, I felt as though I had been slapped in public. With my face flushed, I thought: I had originally intended to say a few extra words so that brothers and sisters will rate me highly, but now it has gotten so embarrassing for me! At the time, I wanted to find a hole in the ground to hide in. Just as I was feeling tortured inside, the brother read a passage from God's word: "[S]ome people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to meet together and speak; they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and surrounding them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value their images. ... If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is a classic image of Satan. The aspects of their natures that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear

view into their natures" ("How to Know Man's Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). Every word of God's judgment was like a needle stabbing into my heart, making me even more ashamed. I recalled that before I believed in God, I particularly enjoyed being admired by everyone, and strived with my heart and soul to stand out and become a strong and successful woman. After this dream was shattered, I thought I could fulfill my dream of the fame, fortune, and status in the church. Especially during this period, I secretly competed against that sister in order to make brothers and sisters look up to me. On the surface, I was competing for status against a person, but in substance, I was vying with God for His chosen people. This is because those who believe in God should look up to God, worship Him, and give God a place in their hearts. Instead, I wanted to have a place in the hearts of brothers and sisters, and have them look up to me and worship me. Isn't this blatant resistance of God? Only before the facts was I able to see that my nature is against God. If I do not experience God's chastisement and judgment and achieve no change in my disposition, then even if I appear to be passionately and actively expending for God on the outside, I am in fact doing evil and resisting God. At the same time, I saw clearly that Satan corrupts mankind by instilling toxins into their minds and souls in various ways, making them scramble for fame, fortune, and status, and through this makes them gradually stray from God, betray God, and eventually drags them into hell. Thinking of this, I could not help but become afraid, and I also started to despise my blindness and foolishness, my deep corruption, and the satanic toxins that had taken root deep inside me. If I had not been under the dominion of fame, fortune, and status, I would not have been under the control of any person, occurrence, or thing, and would have only sought to satisfy God through fulfilling my duty as a created being. If I had not been controlled by fame, fortune, and status, I would have, through fulfilling my duty, focused on exalting God, witnessing God, and bringing brothers and sisters before Him. If I had not been controlled by fame, fortune, and status, I would not have lived in depression and torment every day, competing for supremacy with others in all things, focusing on other people's assessments of me, and being completely unable to enjoy the relief and happiness brought by the truth. If I had not been controlled by fame, fortune, and status, I would have established proper relationships with brothers and sisters and supported and helped each other in spirit, rather than using a facade to deceive others for their trust and admiration. ... This was all because of the harm of Satan's toxins. Satan really is too despicable and too evil. It absolutely is a soul-devouring demon! Under

the enlightenment and guidance of God, I developed the will and courage to forsake my flesh and practice the truth. So I prayed to God: "Oh God! It is the harm of fame, fortune, and status that has put me in today's situation. To pursue these things, I left Your requirements behind, disobeying and resisting You over and over again and making You sad and disgusted. I now hate these things from the bottom of my heart. I will forsake them thoroughly. May You guide me in my future path." Since then, I have kept a much lower profile, and during meetings I would start to focus on talking about my actual experiences. When brothers and sisters had problems, I would consciously open my heart to communicate with them about the states where I actually ran into problems myself and the enlightenment and guidance of God's words, so that they may understand God's intentions and know God's love. When I acted this way, I felt more at ease and illuminated inside my heart, making every day especially fulfilling.

After experiencing God's work for several years, I understood more clearly: Fame, fortune, and status are tricks used by Satan to fool people, chains used to bind people and means used to control people. People living under its domain can only be bound and fooled by it, without any freedom whatsoever and unable to live out the likeness of a true human being. On the other hand, God's word is the truth, the way, and the life. People living under God's word are living in the light and the blessings of God. Only by pursuing the truth can people embark upon the right path in life and obtain genuine freedom and liberation. Looking back at the pain and suffering that fame, fortune, and status has brought me, then at the salvation work God has performed on me, I really feel appreciative toward and indebted to God. To rescue me from the bondage of fame, fortune, and status, God elaborately arranged various environments, people, things, and occurrences, and led and guided me step by step by means of His work, allowing me to walk on the right path of life. Every environment and every manifestation was all elaborately planned by God, and behind each lies God's great love and salvation for me. After experiencing chastisement and judgment over and over again, I gradually saw the reality of my corruption. I also gained some knowledge of God's work, saw God's holiness, greatness, and selflessness, and felt deeply God's thought and care in saving mankind. In my future experiences, I shall be more willing to accept God's chastisement and judgment, His trials and refinements, so that my corrupt disposition can be thoroughly cleansed and changed, and so I can genuinely live out a meaningful and valuable life!

88. Judgment Is the Light

By Zhao Xia, Shandong Province

My name is Zhao Xia. I was born into an ordinary family. Due to the influence of dictums like "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," and "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face," reputation and face became particularly important to me. Everything I did was to earn other people's praise, compliments, and admiration. After getting married, the goals I set for myself were: I will have a more prosperous life than others; I must not allow anyone say negative things about how I treat the elderly or about my behavior and conduct; I will ensure my child gets into a well-known university and has good prospects in order to bring me more glory. Therefore, I never guarreled with my in-laws. Sometimes when they spoke harshly with me, I would feel so wronged that I would secretly cry rather than show them any kind of attitude. When I saw others buy clothing for their parents during Chinese New Year or other holidays, I would immediately go buy some for my mother-in-law, and only of the best quality. When relatives came to visit, I would help with the shopping and cooking. I was still entirely willing even when it was difficult or tiring. Out of fear that I would fall behind others, I left my baby daughter behind just a month after giving birth to her to go straight back to work. As a result, she suffered from malnutrition, becoming just skin and bones because I wasn't nursing her. It wasn't until she had received 100 injections of nutrients that she took a turn for the better, while I was so tired that my back was aching every single day. Though it was difficult and tiring, I endured the hardship and expended myself tirelessly for the sake of gaining a good reputation. My hard work paid off, and in just a few short years, I became well-known as a good daughter-in-law in the village, and my family became wealthy and were envied by those around us. As a result, my in-laws, neighbors, relatives and friends were all full of praise for me. In the face of the praise and compliments from those around me, my vanity was greatly satisfied. I felt that my hardships over the last few years were not in vain—I felt really self-satisfied. However, my serene life was disrupted after my brother-in-law got married. His wife always spoke to me mockingly, saying that I had ulterior motives in treating our mother-in-law well because I was only interested in her money. She always said that our

mother-in-law was biased toward us since she gave us more things than she gave them; she was always stirring up trouble over this. I felt very wronged and wanted to hash it out with her openly in order to proclaim my innocence, but I was afraid that it would ruin the positive image that I had built up with others. So, I would force myself to hold back, and when I could bear it no longer I would cry it out in private. Later on my sister-in-law really overstepped her bounds by taking over the land that had been parceled out for my side of the family. I was shaking with anger and couldn't eat or drink for days. I even wanted to fight it out with her. However, realizing that it would cause me to lose face, damage my reputation, and make those around me look down on me, I just swallowed it. However, I was so pent up that I was in torment. I moped around, sighing all the time, feeling that life was too painful and tiring, wondering when there would be an end to a life like that.

Man's end really is God's beginning. Just as I was in pain and feeling helpless, Almighty God reached out to me with His hands of salvation. One day, my neighbor asked me: "Do you believe that there is a God?" I answered: "Who doesn't? I believe in God." She went on to say that the God she believes in is the one and only true God who created the universe and all things, and that in the beginning, mankind lived within God's blessings because they worshiped Him, but after being corrupted by Satan, they no longer worshiped God and thus came to live under God's curse and in pain. She told me that Almighty God of the last days had come to bestow the truth upon people and to save them from the abyss of misery. She also shared fellowship on her own experiences in her faith. After hearing her fellowship, I felt that I had found my closest confidant, and could not help but spill out to her all the pain in my heart. Afterward, she read a passage of God's words to me: "When you are weary and when you begin to feel something of the bleak desolation of this world, do not be lost, do not cry. Almighty God, the Watcher, will embrace your arrival at any time. He is keeping watch by your side, waiting for you to turn back around. He is waiting for the day you suddenly recover your memory: when you realize that you came from God, that, at some unknown time you lost your direction, at some unknown time you lost consciousness on the road, and at some unknown time acquired a 'father'; when you realize, furthermore, that the Almighty has always been keeping watch, waiting there a very, very long time for your return" ("The Sighing of the Almighty" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words flowed into my heart like a warm current, consoling my painful and sad heart, and I could not stop tears from rolling down my face. In that moment,

I felt just like a wandering child in pain who had suddenly returned to the embrace of her mother. I had an indescribable feeling of excitement and emotion. I kept on giving thanks to God for taking me into His house and caring for me when I had nowhere else to go. I quietly resolved to follow God with my heart and soul. From then on, I began reading God's words, praying to God, and singing hymns to praise God every single day; I felt so relaxed and had such enjoyment in my heart. Through attending gatherings and interacting with brothers and sisters, I saw that they were just like a big family even though they were not related by blood. Their interactions were simple and open, without pretense, duplicity, jealousy, conflicts, or scheming. They did not bully the poor while favoring the rich, they were all able to treat everyone with sincerity and full equality, and we would share fellowship on God's word and sing hymns in praise of God. I had a real sense of freedom in my heart. This is how I fell in love with this life of the church that is loving and warm, fair and joyous. I became convinced that Almighty God is the one true God who created the universe and all things, and I resolved that I would follow Him to the very end.

Through reading God's words, I came to understand God's urgent desire to save mankind to the greatest extent possible, and saw that many brothers and sisters were doing their utmost to give and expend themselves for the sake of spreading the gospel of the kingdom, so I also became actively involved in the preaching of the gospel. One time, I went to preach the gospel to a potential believer. It was a very busy time for farming at the time. Seeing how busy she was with farm work, I went to work alongside her while sharing testimony of God's work of the last days. I never imagined that after three days straight of sharing fellowship with her, she would not only have no intention of accepting the gospel, but would instead yell at me: "You really have some nerve! I already said I don't believe but you won't stop preaching." Her words really struck a nerve with me. My face burned as though I had just had my face slapped in front of a crowd, while my heart ached with wave after wave of dull pain. I thought: "I came to preach to you with the best of intentions and exhausted myself helping you with your work until my back ached, but instead of accepting the gospel, you treated me like this. How heartless you are!" I felt extremely humiliated and did not want to talk to her anymore, but I also felt that giving up like that was not in line with God's will, so I prayed silently in my heart and held back my grievances so that I could continue to share fellowship with her while helping with her work. But no matter how hard I tried, I still could not get through to her. I collapsed like a deflated balloon upon returning

home. Her words kept cycling through my head. The more I thought about it the more pain I felt: "Why bother? All I get in return for my good intentions are jeers, slander, and abuse. This is so unjust! No one has ever treated me this way. Spreading the gospel is simply too painful and difficult! No, I cannot go out to preach the gospel any longer! If I continue preaching I won't have any face left to see anyone." Just when I felt so wronged and in such pain that I was no longer willing to preach the gospel, the words of God enlightened me: "Are you aware of the burden on your shoulders, your commission, and your responsibility? Where is your sense of historic mission? ... They are poor, pitiable, blind, and at a loss, wailing in the darkness—where is the way? How they yearn for the light, like a shooting star, to suddenly descend and dispel the forces of darkness that have oppressed man for so many years. Who can know the full extent to which they anxiously hope, and how they pine, day and night, for this? Even on a day when the light flashes past, these deeply suffering people remain imprisoned in a dark dungeon without hope of release; when will they weep no longer? Terrible is the misfortune of these fragile spirits who have never been granted rest, and long have they been kept bound in this state by merciless bonds and frozen history. And who has heard the sound of their wailing? Who has looked upon their miserable state? Has it ever occurred to you how grieved and anxious God's heart is? How can He bear to see innocent mankind, whom He created with His own hands, suffering such torment? Human beings, after all, are the victims who have been poisoned. And although man has survived to this day, who would have known that mankind has long been poisoned by the evil one? Have you forgotten that you are one of the victims? Are you not willing to strive, out of your love for God, to save these survivors? Are you not willing to use all of your energy to repay God—He who loves mankind like His own flesh and blood?" ("How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Reading between the lines of God's words, all that was revealed was His concern as well as His worry and care for innocent people. God cannot bear to see people created by His own hands deceived and harmed by Satan. God continues to bitterly await mankind to return to His house soon and receive the great salvation He has bestowed upon them. Yet when I was faced with a few harsh words from the person I was preaching to, I felt wronged and tormented and grumbled about the hardship and suffering. I even lost my willingness to preach the gospel because I had lost face. Where was my conscience and

reason? I was not someone who was considerate of God's will. In order to save us, corrupted humans in the last days, God has been continuously hunted and persecuted by the CCP government, abandoned, condemned, blasphemed and slandered by religious circles, and misunderstood and resisted by us followers of God. The pain and humiliation God has suffered is too much, too great! However, He has not abandoned His salvation of us, but has continued to supply mankind's needs in obscurity. God's love is too great! His essence is too beautiful and kind! My hardships today are nothing compared to the suffering God has endured for the sake of saving mankind! I thought of the fact that I was also a victim, someone who had been harmed by Satan for years. If God had not stretched out His hands of salvation to me, I would still be struggling painfully in the dark, unable to see the light and the hope of living. Having enjoyed such great salvation from God, I should bear the humiliation and pain to do my utmost to cooperate with God, fulfill my duty properly, and bring the innocents who are still being harmed by Satan before God. This is more valuable and meaningful than any job in the world, and is worthwhile no matter how much suffering must be endured! Thinking of this, I no longer felt that preaching the gospel is a painful thing, and instead felt that I was fortunate to be able to offer up my meager abilities for the sake of spreading the gospel of the kingdom. This was my honor as well as an exaltation of God. I made this resolve: No matter what kind of hardships I have to encounter in my gospel work, I will give my all and rely on God to bring more and more people who yearn for the appearance of God before Him to comfort His heart! After that I threw myself back into gospel work.

Following a period of practicing this, whenever I encountered someone I hoped to convert who had a bad attitude or spoke harsh words to me while I was fulfilling my duty, I was able to deal with it properly and continue to bear witness to God's work of the last days with a loving heart. Because of this, I felt that I had changed somewhat and no longer cared as much about my face and status. One day, the leader of the church asked me how I had been doing lately and also fellowshiped with me on God's current will and way of practice. When I found out during the conversation that she would be transferred to another church to fulfill her duty, I could not help but feel a wave of excitement, thinking: "Maybe I'll be made the leader of the church after she leaves. If so, I must really do well in my work!" Just as I was feeling secretly happy, she said that another sister from my village would be coming tomorrow. My heart churned as soon as I heard that. I thought: "What is she coming for? Is

she going to be made the new leader of the church?" I could not help but grow anxious: "She has not believed in God for as long as I have, and she's from the same village as me. If she is made leader, how will that impact my face? How would our brothers and sisters see me? They will surely say that I don't pursue the truth as much as she does." I couldn't stop thinking about it. I tossed and turned at night, unable to fall asleep. During the gathering the next day, I honed in on the tone and attitude of everything the leader was saying, desperately wanting to know who would be chosen as the new leader of the church. Whenever the leader looked at me as she spoke, I felt there was some hope that I would be made leader. My face would fill with joy and I would nod and agree with whatever she said. However, whenever she faced the other sister while speaking, I would become certain that that sister would be named leader, and feel frustrated and in pain as a result. Over those couple of days, I was tormented by the concept of face and status to the point that I became anxious and distracted. I lost my appetite and even felt that time was passing particularly slowly, as though it had been frozen. The church leader saw what kind of state I was in, so she flipped through The Word Appears in the Flesh, and found two passages in God's words "Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" for me to read. God's words say: "You are now followers, and you have some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind." "Although you have gotten to this step today, you still have not let go of status, but are always struggling to inquire about it and observing it daily.... The more you seek this way the less you will reap. The greater a person's desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they must undergo great refinement. That kind of person is too worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of that. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed; those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You don't focus on pursuing personal transformation and entering in; you always focus on those extravagant desires, and things that constrain your love for God and restrain you from getting close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?" Each line of God's words was like a knock at the door of my heart, making me feel that God was beside me, monitoring my every word and movement. I could not help

but reflect on my thoughts and actions over these past two days. I realized that my view of seeking was too base and too influenced by axioms of Satan such as "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face," and "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies." I always desired status so that I could win more praise from others, which resulted in me being tormented by face and status to the point that I became anxious and distracted, lost my appetite, couldn't sleep, and made a fool of myself like a buffoon. Only then did I understand that such an environment was set up by God in accordance with my own state, and that it was God's love coming upon me. This work of God today was to save me, to help me escape the dark influences of Satan so I could achieve salvation, to have me see clearly that my mode of seeking ran contrary to God's will. I would not have been able to receive God's approval even if I had believed in Him until the end. I would have been left with nothing! I therefore prayed silently to God: "Oh God! I am willing to obey Your work, walk on the path of faith in accordance with Your requirements, and put effort into Your word to achieve understanding of the truth and cast off my corrupt disposition. Regardless of whether I am made leader, I will pursue the truth and focus on changing my corrupt disposition to satisfy Your will." After understanding God's will, I felt especially calm in my heart and enjoyed fellowship with other sisters no matter which aspect of the truth of God's words it was. After the gathering, the church leader said that, based on the recommendations of the majority of brothers and sisters, the other sister would be the new leader of the church, and that I would help with her work. Internally, I was very calm and accepted this readily, agreeing to work in harmony with her to fulfill our duty.

One day, I was informed that there was a sister in the church who was not in a good state, so I consulted with the sister I was partnered with on how to resolve this problem. She was not feeling physically well at the time, so I went alone to seek out that sister that very night to have fellowship with her, and the problem was resolved very quickly. My heart was brimming with self-satisfaction, thinking that the upper-level leader would surely praise me because I had put in so much effort. Just as I was waiting for the good news, a letter came from the upper-level leader, inquiring after that sister's state. I thought it was to praise me, so I happily opened it up and began reading it. But I was surprised to see that the message was just to ask the sister I was partnered with how she had dealt with the problem. I immediately became indignant, thinking: "I was clearly the one who resolved the issue. Why not write to me to ask about it? It seems I do not have a place in the leader's heart and am

looked down upon. I'm just an errand girl. No matter how well I perform no one pays any attention to it." The more I thought about it, the more I felt wronged and depressed. I felt I had lost all face. Just then, my partner sister had the letter in her hand and was just about to come talk to me. I could not restrain the feelings I had inside and said harshly: "The upperlevel leader doesn't know how this issue was resolved. Aren't you clear on this? I was busy working on it for ages but no one said a single kind word about it, and in the end you still got all the credit. In everyone's eyes, I am just someone who runs errands. No matter how much effort I put in, no one will appreciate it." After saying this, I felt so aggrieved that I burst into tears. In that moment, the words of God echoed in my ears: "If you expended a lot of effort but I am still very cold toward you, will you be able to continue working for Me in obscurity? ... If, after you have expended some things for Me, I have not satisfied your petty demands, will you be disheartened and disappointed toward Me or even become furious and shout abuse?" ("A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (2)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's reproving words slowly calmed me down and cleared my head a great deal. The scene that had just taken place kept replaying in my mind like a movie. What God had revealed caused me to see that my nature is too horrible and dangerous, and that my belief in God and the fulfilling of my duty was not to satisfy God or to gain His approval, but instead to receive praise and compliments from others. As soon as my wishes were not met I would become full of resentment; my beastly nature would erupt and betraying God became even easier. I saw then that I had gone too far and that I did not possess even a shred of proper humanity. The pain I felt was heartrending. In remorse, I prayed to God: "Oh God, I thought I had changed somewhat and no longer lived for face and status and that I could get along with this sister. But in Your revelation today, I once again exposed my satanic ugliness, always feeling like I had no status among others and suffering because my efforts were not praised. Oh God, Satan has really harmed me too deeply. Status, reputation, and vanity have all become my shackles. I pray that You can guide me to understand the truth of my corruption by Satan, and guide me back out of its influence." Afterward, I saw the following words of God: "Every one of you has risen to the pinnacle of the multitudes; you have ascended to be the ancestors of the masses. You are extremely arbitrary, and you run amok among all of the maggots, seeking a place of ease and attempting to devour the maggots that are smaller than you. You are malicious and sinister in your hearts, surpassing the ghosts that have sunk to the bottom of the sea. You reside

in the bottom of the dung, disturbing the maggots from top to bottom until they have no peace, fighting each other for a while and then calming down. You do not know your place, yet still you battle with each other in the dung. What can you gain from such struggle? If you truly had reverence for Me in your hearts, how could you fight with each other behind My back? No matter how high your status, are you not still a stinking little worm in the dung? Will you be able to sprout wings and become a dove in the sky?" ("When Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots, You Will Regret All the Evil You Have Done" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words of judgment stabbed painfully into my heart like a sharp sword, awakening my spirit and making me realize that I fulfilled my duty not to exalt God and bear witness to Him, but because I always wanted to show off, bear witness to myself, and dreamed of standing high above others so that they would admire and look up to me. Was there any fear of God in my heart? How could this be fulfilling my duty as a creature? I thought of the archangel's wild ambition, its delusions of being equal to God, and competing with God for status. I was always pursuing others' high regard and trying to establish my own place and image with others. Wasn't what I pursued exactly the same as that of the archangel who betrayed God? I am a created being deeply corrupted by Satan; I am like dirt that is not worth a single penny. Now that I received God's grace and had the opportunity to perform my duty and be a new person, I should be worshiping God and fulfilling the duty of a created being with fear in my heart at all times, but I did not engage in honest work, instead always wanting to use my duty as an opportunity to show off, bear witness to myself and carry out my own business. How could God not hate and detest this? God is so holy and great, full of authority and power, and yet remains humble and concealed, never revealing His identity so that people will look up to and admire Him. Instead, He continues to quietly give His all to save mankind, never explaining Himself or claiming credit, and never demanding anything from mankind. God's humility, nobility, and selflessness made me see my own arrogance, lowliness, and selfishness. I couldn't help but feel ashamed, like I had nowhere to hide, and I also felt that I had been too deeply corrupted by Satan and that I was too much in need of the salvation of God's judgment, chastisement, trials and refinement. I therefore fell down again before God: "Oh, Almighty God! Through Your chastisement and judgment I can see my disobedience, as well as Your nobility and greatness. From now on, when I fulfill my duty I only hope to behave like a proper human being with a heart that fears You, to live entirely upon Your words, and to cast off my satanic disposition."

I was later chosen to be a church leader, cooperating with another sister to perform our duty. Due to my previous failures, I continually reminded myself that I needed to be of one accord with this sister in order to perform the church's work properly. At first, I would discuss everything with her and we would seek God's guidance together so that all aspects of our work would bear fruit. But after some time, I found that she had a good caliber, her fellowship on the truth was clear and illuminating, and that her work capabilities were stronger than mine. During gatherings, brothers and sisters were all happy to listen to her fellowship and they all consulted with her when they encountered problems. Faced with this kind of environment, I once again fell into Satan's snare, and I thought: "This sister is better than me in every respect and is admired by brothers and sisters regardless of where she goes. No way! I must surpass her no matter what, and have our brothers and sisters see that I am not inferior to her." To this end, I bustled around the church non-stop every day, having meetings with brothers and sisters, and no matter who ran into problems, I would rush to them to help resolve the issues. I may have seemed loyal and obedient from the outside, but how could my inner ambitions possibly escape the observation of God? My disobedience aroused God's anger, and He hid His face from me, and as a result I fell into darkness. When reading God's words I gained no enlightenment, I had nothing to say when praying, I communicated drily during gatherings, and I even became afraid of gathering with brothers and sisters. I became completely shackled by face and status. I muddled through every single day, as though I was shouldering such a great burden that I could not take a deep breath. I could also no longer clearly see some of the issues within the church and my work efficiency dropped sharply. Faced with such a revelation from God, I still did not try to know myself and I was also unwilling to open up to my brothers and sisters about my state and seek the truth to resolve it, for fear that they would look down on me. Later, God's chastening and disciplining descended upon me. My stomach suddenly began hurting so much that I could not comfortably sit or stand. The torment of this illness and my dissatisfaction from not achieving status left me hovering between life and death. Because I persisted in my misguided course and could no longer do the church's work, the church had no choice but to replace me. Having lost my status, I felt like I had been condemned to hell. Emotionally, I fell to my lowest point and felt that I had lost all face. I became even more tormented, particularly when I saw brothers and sisters all actively fulfilling their duties, while I had lost the work of the Holy Spirit and was unable to fulfill any duty. In my pain, I could not help but ask myself: Why is it that others believe in God and understand more and more truth, whereas I continue disobeying and resisting God time and time again for the sake of face and status? So, I prayed to God many times and asked Him to lead me to find the root of my failures. One day, I saw the following among God's words: "[S]ome people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to meet together and speak; they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and surrounding them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value their images. Let us analyze their natures from these behaviors: What sort of nature do people with such behaviors possess? If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is a classic image of Satan. The aspects of their natures that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their natures" ("How to Know Man's Nature" in Records of Christ's Talks). Then I read these words in a sermon: "The essence and nature of Satan is betrayal. It betrayed God from the very start, and after betraying God it deceived, fooled, manipulated, and controlled the men on earth created by God, trying to stand with God as an equal and establish a separate kingdom. ... You see, isn't Satan's nature one that betrays God? From all that Satan has done to mankind, we can see clearly that Satan is a genuine God-resisting demon and that Satan's nature is one that betrays God. All of this is absolute" ("How to Achieve Knowledge of Your Own Corrupt Substance" in Sermons and Fellowship I). Contemplating these words, I could not help but tremble with fear. I saw that what I had lived out was completely Satan's image—arrogant and conceited, and not worshiping God. God exalted me to fulfill my duty in the church so that I could bring brothers and sisters before God with fear of Him in my heart, and allow them to have a place for God in their hearts, as well as fear and obey Him. But I was not considerate of God's will in fulfilling of my duty, and felt no burden to help brothers and sisters achieve entry into life. Instead, I always wanted to have others pay attention and listen to me, and for the sake of my own desires, I always tried to build myself up no matter where I went. I was even jealous of the good and envious of the strong, and I stubbornly competed with others for superiority.

From the outside, it seemed I was competing with men, but in fact I was fighting against God. This is something that seriously offends God's disposition. He chastened and disciplined me, and deprived me of status to make me self-reflect and repent. God's love for me was too deep and too great! Coming to this realization, I could not help but feel regret and self-blame inside, and moreover hated that my corruption was so deep. I followed God but did not pursue the truth, and instead only blindly toiled for status and face. I had really failed to live up to God's love and salvation. The more I looked into myself, the more clearly I saw that the dictums I had lived by, such as "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face," and "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," were lies used by Satan to corrupt and harm mankind. I realized that Satan uses these things to paralyze people's souls, distort their minds, and to have them develop wrong outlooks on life, so that people strive bitterly to pursue empty things such as status, fame, fortune and face, and that they are ravaged and harmed by it at will, then in the end are swallowed up by it. This is Satan's plot. Now, I would never go against God again while enjoying His mercy. I should completely reform myself, thoroughly forsake Satan, totally give my heart to God, and live out the likeness of a true human being to comfort God's heart. After that, I sought how to continue on my future path, and how to pursue the truth to be after God's will. I thanked God for once again guiding me. I then saw God's words: "Today, even if you are not a worker, you should be able to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to submit to all of God's orchestrations. You should be able to obey whatever God says, and experience all manner of tribulations and refinement, and though you are weak, in your heart you should still be able to love God. Those who take responsibility for their own life are willing to perform the duty of a creature of God, and such people's viewpoint toward pursuit is the right one. These are the people that God needs. ... As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit" ("Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Like a beacon, God's words enlightened my heart, pointing out to me the path I should take. God's wish is that people, regardless of whether they have status or what environments have befallen them, will do their utmost to pursue the truth, and that they will

obey God's orchestrations and arrangements, and seek to love and satisfy God. This is the most correct way of pursuit as well as the right path of life that a created being should walk. I thus made my resolve before God: Oh God, thank You for showing me the right path in life. My status of the past was due to Your exaltation, and being without status today is also due to Your righteousness. I am just a minuscule created being. From now on, I only wish to pursue the truth and obey all Your arrangements.

Thereafter, my state quickly normalized through reading God's words and living a life of the church. The church again arranged a suitable duty for me. I began to focus on pursuing the truth in the fulfillment of my duty, and when I revealed my corruption, I would find the corresponding words of God to resolve it. When faced with things that involved face and status, even though some thoughts came to mind, through prayer, seeking the truth from God's word to understand the essence of fame and gain, gradually I became able to not be controlled by these things and could fulfill my duty with peace of mind. When I saw some brothers and sisters who had not believed in God for as long as me entrusted with commissions, by seeking the truth, I was able to understand that what duty one fulfills at which time is predestined by God, and that I should obey God's arrangements. As a result, I was able to handle these situations correctly. When brothers and sisters dealt with and exposed my nature and essence, even though I felt I had lost face, I was able to become obedient through prayer. This was because it was God's love coming upon me, which was greatly beneficial in changing my life disposition. In the past, I was overly focused on my face and was not willing to open up to anyone, for fear that others would look down on me. Now, I practice being an honest person in accordance with God's requirements, and if I have any problems I open up to my brothers and sisters. This brings me a feeling of release and happiness deep in my soul. Seeing these changes in myself, I could not help but thank and praise God, for these are the fruits borne in me by God's chastisement and judgment work of the last days.

I have now followed Almighty God for some years. Thinking back, it was Satan's toxins that had eroded my soul. I had lived under the domain of Satan and was ravaged and fooled by it for many years. I did not know the value and meaning of life. I could not see the light, nor could I find true happiness and joy. I sank into the abyss of misery and was unable to extricate myself. I am now rid of the harm of Satan and have achieved relief and freedom through time after time of God's chastisement and judgment. I have recovered my

conscience and reason, and I also have the correct target to pursue, following God onto the bright and right path in life. Through God's chastisement and judgment, I have truly experienced God's selfless and sincere love; I have enjoyed the blessing and received the love that people of the world cannot enjoy. Only God can save man from Satan's sea of misery, and only God's work of chastisement and judgment can cleanse us of the satanic toxins and make us live out the likeness of true human beings, and walk on the right path in life. God's chastisement and judgment is the light. It is the greatest grace, the best protection, and the most valuable wealth of life bestowed by God upon man. Just as the words of Almighty God say: "... chastisement and judgment by God was man's best protection and greatest grace. Only through chastisement and judgment by God could man awaken, and hate the flesh, and hate Satan. God's strict discipline frees man from the influence of Satan, it frees him from his own little world, and allows him to live in the light of God's presence. There is not better salvation than chastisement and judgment!" ("The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Thanks be to God's chastisement and judgment for saving me and allowing me to be reborn! In my future path of faith, I will spare no effort to pursue the truth, receive more of God's chastisement and judgment, and thoroughly cast off Satan's toxins to achieve purification, achieve a true knowledge of God, and become a person who genuinely loves God.

89. I Feel So Much Lighter After Casting Off the Shackles of Status

By Liang Zhi, Anhui Province

My name is Liang Zhi and I accepted God's salvation of the last days six years ago. Once, at a democratic election in our church, I was elected to be the church leader, and I found this news both unexpected and exciting. I thought to myself: "To be chosen as church leader amongst all brothers and sisters and to be responsible for all church work shows that I am better than everyone else!" When I thought about this, a sense of superiority began to take root in the deeps of my heart, I began to strut around with my head held high and I was filled with energy at gatherings with my brothers and sisters. After a while, however, I noticed

that the sister who I performed my duty with had a good caliber and she fellowshiped about the truth in a clear-headed way. She was able to grasp the root of any problem the brothers and sisters raised and could fellowship with them about how to resolve it and show them the way of practice. All the brothers and sisters wanted to hear her give fellowship and, seeing this situation unfold, I began to feel jealous and envious of her. I was unwilling to admit myself outdone and so, before each gathering, I would make careful preparations in relation to the states and problems of the brothers and sisters, and would rack my brains on how to fellowship in a more comprehensive, more enlightening way than my sister. After I'd given a fellowship and I saw all the brothers and sisters nodding their heads in agreement, I would feel so pleased with myself and very fulfilled. If I saw my brothers and sisters react in a lukewarm manner, I would feel depressed and frustrated. Later, I found that a brother I performed my duty with knew quite a lot about moviemaking and that he was good at computers. When I saw that brothers and sisters were seeking him out to discuss professional problems they encountered when shooting movies, despite being the one in charge of our church, I felt like I couldn't get a word in edgewise—I felt like a fifth wheel who was being left out. I felt really uncomfortable and unhappy, and I wondered: "The brothers and sisters always seek him out when they have an issue, so do they think he's better than me? It would be great if I could understand moviemaking skills as well, as then the brothers and sisters would seek me out instead whenever they have a problem." And so, every day from dawn to dusk I searched for related information and I studied all about how to make movies. Just as I was going hammer and tongs for the sake of status, problems arose one after another in the work of every group in the church, and no matter how much I held gatherings or fellowshiped, it was all to no avail. I felt under so much pressure that I could hardly breathe, and my heart was in torment. I thought to myself: "What will my brothers and sisters think of me? Will they think that, despite being a leader, I have no talent for work and that I'm simply not qualified to do this duty? It looks as though I won't be able to keep the position of leader for much longer." The more I thought about it, the more negative I became and my whole being felt like a deflated rubber ball; the energy I'd felt before was completely gone. Ultimately, because I was constantly living in a state of negativity and had become slack in my work, I had lost the work of the Holy Spirit and had achieved nothing real in the performance of my duty, and so I was replaced. At that moment, I felt as though I had lost all my credibility and I wanted the ground to swallow me up. At the same time, I wondered:

"Will my brothers and sisters talk about me behind my back and say that I am a false leader, that I only strive for fame and gain and that I don't do any real work?" The more I thought about this, the more pain I felt envelop my heart, as though many voices of reproach were resounding in my ears ...

That evening, I lay on my bed, tossing and turning and unable to sleep a wink. All I could do was pray again and again, calling on God to guide me and lead me. ... Afterward, I saw these words of God that say: "In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. The hopes, the desire for [a] status, and the notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. The reason that these things exist in people's hearts is entirely because Satan's poison is always corroding people's thoughts, and people are always unable to shake off these temptations from Satan. They are living in the midst of sin yet do not believe it to be sin, and they still believe: 'We believe in God, so He must bestow blessings on us and arrange everything for us appropriately. We believe in God, so we must be superior to others, and we must have more status and more of a future than anyone else. Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called believing in God.' ... You are now followers, and you have some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. ... The more you seek this way the less you will reap. The greater a person's desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they must undergo great refinement. That kind of person is too worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of that. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed; those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You don't focus on pursuing personal transformation and entering in; you always focus on those extravagant desires, and things that constrain your love for God and restrain you from getting close to Him.

Footnotes:

a. The original text does not contain the phrase "desire for."

Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?" ("Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Some people are always afraid that others will steal their limelight and surpass them, obtaining recognition while they themselves are neglected. This leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being jealous of people more capable than themselves? Is such behavior not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is malicious! Thinking only of oneself, satisfying only one's own desires, showing no consideration for the duties of others, and thinking only about one's own interests and not the interests of God's house—people like this have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of being considerate of God's will, then you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you give someone your recommendation, and that person is cultivated into someone of talent, thereby bringing one more talented person into God's house, will you not then have done your work well? Will you not then have been loyal in performing your duty? This is a good deed before God, and is the sort of conscience and reason humans should possess" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words exposed my inner essence that was in pursuit of status, fame and gain, and I felt terribly upset. Ever since I began performing the duty of church leader, I had always expended myself enthusiastically and had therefore believed myself to be someone who was in pursuit of the truth. But now that the facts had been revealed to me, faced with the judgment and chastisement of God's words I finally saw the defilements in my belief in God. I reflected on how, every time I gathered with my brothers and sisters to fellowship God's words, I did not do it to exalt God or bear testimony to God so that everyone could understand the truth in God's words, understand God's will and know how to practice in order to enter into the reality of God's words. Instead, I applied all my energy to thinking how to be better than my sister and how to get the brothers and sisters to agree with me and admire me, in an attempt to establish my own image in their hearts and to further stabilize my own position. When I saw that my brother was more professionally capable than I was and that the brothers and sisters all sought him out to seek and fellowship with him when they had issues, and I did not get a look in, I would then feel jealous of him and would exclude him. I was afraid that he would steal my thunder and leave me powerless, and so I strived to arm myself with professional knowledge in order to consolidate my position. When the church had a problem that I was unable to resolve, I didn't come before God to pray, I didn't rely on God or look to God, and I didn't seek the truth together with my brothers and sisters to resolve the problem, but instead I spent every day swayed by thoughts of gains and losses to my status, afraid that if I didn't work well then I would be unable to keep my position as leader. I saw that I was not performing my duty in order to pursue the truth and satisfy God's will, and I was not seeking change in my disposition as I performed my duty. Instead, I was treating my duty as though it were a career and regarding it as a tool that I could use to stand out from the crowd and make a name for myself. All I ever thought about was how to show off and prove myself, to win esteem and appreciation from everyone and to satisfy my ambition and desire to rise high above everyone else. I was not storing up good deeds in the performance of my duty at all, but instead I was completely living for the sake of fame, gain and status!

I then read God's words which say: "I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact" ("Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading God's words, I understood His will. When God determines a person's end, He does not do so based on how high or low their status is, how great their seniority is, how much they have worked for God or how much they have suffered. Instead, God determines a person's end based on whether or not they pursue the truth and gain the truth, and on whether or not their life disposition has changed. I had believed in God for several years but had never really made any effort with pursuing the truth or practicing God's words. On the contrary, I had constantly been in pursuit of fame, gain and status, and the views I held on what to pursue were completely at odds with what God required. The result of all this was that, though I had believed in God for years, I had not entered into the reality of the truth whatsoever and my life disposition had not changed at all. At gatherings, I was unable to talk about any experiences or knowledge of God's words, but had often just preached some letters and doctrines to deceive people. I had therefore lost the work of the Holy Spirit and had achieved nothing in the performance of my duty. If I had continued to follow the wrong path, then I would ultimately have been exposed and weeded out by God, and I would have lost my chance to attain God's salvation.

Thinking about it now, I realized that being replaced was God's righteous judgment and chastisement. God had done it in order to deal with and purify the ambition and desire within me to strive for fame and gain, and He was leading me onto the right path of pursuing the truth—God was saving me! At that moment, I was filled with gratitude toward God and I couldn't help but come before God to pray: "O God, I give thanks to You for Your judgment and chastisement, for allowing me to recognize that I was following the wrong path and to see the dangerous consequences of pursuing fame, gain and status. O God, I wish to turn back to You, to let go of fame, gain and status, and I choose to follow the path of pursuing the truth so that I may bring comfort to Your heart."

Over a period of spiritual devotions and self-reflection, my state gradually improved and the church leader arranged for me to water new believers. I was so thankful to God for giving me a chance to perform my duty, and I silently made a resolution: "I must cherish this opportunity to perform my duty. I cannot make the same mistakes again and follow the path in pursuit of fame, gain and status!" In my duty thereafter, whenever I encountered an issue, I would discuss it more with my brothers and sisters and I would listen to and adopt their suggestions. Whenever I began to reveal my corrupt disposition of striving for fame and gain, I would pray to God, and would purposefully go read more of God's words which related to His judgment of the corrupt essence of man, and I would then practice in accordance with His words. After experiencing this for a period, I was then able to relinquish fame, gain and status somewhat. However, my satanic nature which strived for fame and gain and which sought to rise above others could not be resolved once and for all just by having a little bit of understanding. I still needed to undergo more judgment and chastisement before I could finally be purified and changed.

Several months later, God once again orchestrated an environment in order to expose and save me. Because more and more people were looking into and accepting God's work of the last days, and the work to water and support the new believers was getting busier and busier, our church leader said we had to choose a group leader to be responsible for arranging the work. The moment I heard this, I began to weigh up the possibilities in my mind: "Out of the seven of us in this group, Brother Zhang is probably most capable in work. He also has a sense of righteousness, he fellowships about the truth in quite a practical way and he is able to actively safeguard the church work. It's most likely that he will be chosen to be group leader." But then I thought of how I had previously been a church leader and

how I had always been the one who arranged things for Brother Zhang to do. If he were chosen this time to be group leader, then I would always have to do what he told me to do, and that would show that I had a lower status than him. And then how could I ever face anyone again? When I thought of this, I felt very upset. When the day we were to choose our group leader arrived, I couldn't help but feel nervous and my mind was constantly battling with itself. Who should I vote for? Brother Zhang? But when I thought of how brothers and sisters always sought him out to discuss their difficulties, I began to feel a little jealous and I no longer wished to vote for him. Perhaps I should vote for myself? But I knew that I was not as capable as Brother Zhang, and if the other brothers and sisters didn't vote for me then I would not be able to become group leader. I felt so down just then, so much so that a malicious thought arose in my mind: "If I can't be group leader, then neither will you." And so, I ended up voting for Brother Wu, whom I normally got on well with but who was less capable. In the end, however, Brother Zhang still got chosen to be the group leader. I was not happy to see this outcome, but a sense of unease then followed, and I felt as though I had done something not altogether honest. On my way back home that day, I reflected on the thoughts and ideas that I had revealed during the vote. Why had I not been willing to vote for Brother Zhang? I had been afraid that Brother Zhang would rise higher than me. Hadn't I once again sunk back into a state of striving for fame and gain? I felt so distressed. I didn't want to strive for fame and gain, so why did I always fall back into my old ways whenever this kind of situation arose? I prayed to God in my heart and asked Him to enlighten and guide me so that I would be able to find the root of this problem. When I got home, I saw these words of God that say: "What does Satan use to keep man firmly within its control? (Fame and gain.) So, Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain. Looking now at Satan's actions, are its sinister

motives not utterly detestable? Maybe today you still cannot see through Satan's sinister motives because you think one cannot live without fame and gain. You think that if people leave fame and gain behind, they will no longer be able to see the way ahead, no longer be able to see their goals, that their futures will become dark, dim and gloomy. But, slowly, you will all one day recognize that fame and gain are monstrous shackles that Satan uses to bind man. When that day comes, you will thoroughly resist Satan's control and thoroughly resist the shackles Satan uses to bind you. When the time comes that you wish to throw off all the things Satan has instilled in you, you will then make a clean break with Satan and you will truly loathe all that Satan has brought to you. Only then will mankind have a real love and yearning for God" ("God Himself, the Unique VI" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

"What kind of behavior will a person with a God-fearing heart exhibit? (They will not just do whatever they please or act wantonly.) So what should someone do so as not to act as they please? (Have a seeking heart.) Some people may feel that their thinking is wrong, but they also feel unwilling to hear the right suggestions of others, thinking: 'I'm normally better than him. If I listen to his suggestion now, it'll look like he's superior to me! No, I can't listen to him with this matter. I'll just do it my way.' Then they find a reason and an excuse to exclude the other person. If they see someone better than they are, they suppress them, start a rumor about them, or employ some unscrupulous means so that other people don't look highly upon them, and that no one is any better than anyone else, then this is the corrupt disposition of arrogance and self-rightness, as well as crookedness, deceitfulness and insidiousness, and these people stop at nothing to achieve their aims. They live like this and yet still think they're great and that they're good people. However, do they have God-fearing hearts? First of all, to speak from the perspective of the natures of these matters, are not people who act this way simply doing as they please? Do they consider the interests of God's family? They think only of their own feelings and they want only to achieve their own aims, regardless of the loss suffered by the work of God's family. Not only are people like this arrogant and self-right, they are also selfish and contemptible; they are utterly inconsiderate of God's intention, and people like this, without a shadow of a doubt, do not possess God-fearing hearts. This is why they do whatever they want and act wantonly, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation,

without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. They do not fear God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is the least worthy of mention and the most insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all" ("The Five Conditions People Have Before They Enter the Right Track of Believing in God" in Records of Christ's Talks).

As I contemplated God's words, I thought back to everything I had thought and done at the election vote, and I felt ashamed beyond words. I understood that the fame, gain and status I had always pursued were actually invisible shackles Satan uses to bind us, and that they are a way in which Satan deceives and corrupts us! I thought back to before I believed in God, when I had regarded such ideas and views of Satan as "Make your name in life and you will not have lived in vain," "Make sure people know who you are, be you alive or dead," "Only by suffering great hardships can you rise up in society," and "Man always climbs upward, water always flows downward" as the axioms of my life and as true sayings. I accepted these satanic ideas and became enamored with power and status, I took the pursuit of fame, gain and status and to rise above others as my goals in life, and I struggled and fought hard for them. As long as I could win fame, gain and status for myself, then I would endure any amount of suffering or exhaustion. After I began to believe in God, I continued to live by these poisons of Satan in my pursuit of fame, gain and status and sought to rise above other people. These things had long since become my life, and they made me unable to stop myself from rebelling against God and resisting God. I knew perfectly well that Brother Zhang would benefit the church work as group leader, but I was envious of him being so capable and was afraid of being surpassed. Therefore, in order to maintain my own position and prestige, I decided that I would rather someone unsuitable got the position of group leader and the work of the church suffered than vote for Brother Zhang. I saw that I was refusing to accept God's scrutiny in my deeds, that I had no shred of a God-fearing heart, that I only ever considered my own prestige and position whenever I encountered an issue and that I was simply not upholding the work of the church—how then could such selfish and contemptible behavior not have disgusted God and made Him loathe me? I thought of God's words that say, "Transgressions Will Lead Man to Hell," and I felt that I was in a very dangerous state. If I carried on that way, then I would become someone whom God detests, rejects and weeds out. Just then, I thought of the Pharisees who had resisted

the Lord Jesus. In order to protect their positions and power in the temple, they did not seek the appearance of the Lord Jesus or the truths He expressed at all, but instead just persisted in resisting and condemning the Lord Jesus, so much so that they even crucified Him upon the cross, and thus they suffered the punishment and curse of God. I now saw clearly that, in one's belief in God, if one does not take heed to seek the truth and enter into the truth, but instead just continually pursues fame, gain and status, then one is following the path of the Pharisees in their defiance of God! Thinking of these things, I couldn't help but become afraid of following the wrong path, and I decided then and there to free myself from the bonds and harm of fame, gain and status, follow the path of pursuing the truth and faithfully performing my duty, and earn God's praise.

Afterward, I turned back to God's words and read: "Those who are capable of putting the truth into practice can accept God's scrutiny in their actions. When you accept God's scrutiny, your heart is set right. If you only ever do things for others to see and do not accept God's scrutiny, do you have God in your heart? People like this are without a God-fearing heart. Don't always do things for your own sake, don't always consider your own interests, and don't consider your own status, face or reputation. You must first consider the interests of God's house and make that your first priority; you should be considerate of God's will, reflect on whether or not you are thinking of the work of God's house and on whether or not you have performed your duty well. When you are always considering the work of God's house in your heart and thinking of the life entry of your brothers and sisters, then you will be able to perform your duty well. ... In addition, if you can fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duties, set aside your selfish desires, set aside your own intents and motives, have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God and His house first, then after a while of this type of experience, you will feel that this is a good way to live: It is living straightforwardly and honestly, without being a base person or a good-for-nothing, and living justly and honorably rather than being narrow-minded or mean; you will feel that this is how a person should live and act. Gradually, the desire within your heart to gratify your own interests will decrease" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). These words showed me the goals I should have and the direction I should take to be a human being. My heart was filled with light, and I then knew how to practice in a way which conformed to

God's will. Later, I took the initiative to open up to Brother Zhang about how I had constantly been living in a state of striving for fame and gain, and about how I had been envious of him, and I also disclosed to him my despicable intent during the vote. After listening to me, he did not look down on me, but instead gave me fellowship on the truths concerning my state, and he also opened up to me and talked to me about his experiences and understanding. After this fellowship, any estrangement between us was gone, and I felt an incredible sense of release and ease. Afterward, whenever I had a difficulty in my duty or I came across an issue I didn't understand, I would always actively seek with Brother Zhang, and he would always fellowship patiently with me until an answer had been found. The more I exercised practicing God's words in this way, the more I felt my relationship with God and my relationship with the other brothers and sisters get closer, and the results I achieved in my duty got better and better as well. I truly came to appreciate that by giving up fame, gain and status and living by God's words, and by turning to God and fulfilling one's duty, one is then blessed by God, and one can then live a just and honorable life with a sense of peace and ease in one's heart, and one's relationship with God will get closer and closer.

In October 2017, the annual church elections began again, and I was put forward as a candidate to be a church leader. When I heard this news, I did not feel as excited as I once had, but instead I corrected my state of mind in order to experience God's work. Participating in the election was not so that I could strive to be church leader, but rather to fulfill my obligation as part of this process, to learn to seek the truth, and to choose the right person to be leader in accordance with the church's principles on electing leaders. If I was elected to be leader, then I would merely wish to perform my duty as a created being in a sincere and orderly manner so as to satisfy God; I did not wish to be as I once was, striving for fame and gain and causing God to grieve. If I was not elected, I would not blame God, but would continue to cooperate with God, perform my duty to the best of my abilities and submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, for I was one of God's creations and it was my responsibility to perform any duty I was given, and I should always do it with all my heart and all my strength. When the votes were counted and the results announced, I discovered that I had been elected to be the church leader. I did not feel mightily pleased with myself, however, and I no longer felt myself to be fantastic or better than the other brothers and sisters. On the contrary, I felt as though this were a commission and an obligation, and I felt as though God were placing His hopes on my shoulders. I knew that I must diligently pursue the truth, cooperate with God and fulfill my duty to satisfy Him, and make sure I lived up to the love and salvation He was giving me.

God's words say, "In his life, if man wishes to be cleansed and achieve changes in his disposition, if he wishes to live out a life of meaning, and fulfill his duty as a creature, then he must accept God's chastisement and judgment, and must not allow God's discipline and God's smiting to depart from him, so he can free himself from the manipulation and influence of Satan and live in the light of God. Know that God's chastisement and judgment is the light, and the light of man's salvation, and that there is no better blessing, grace or protection for man" ("The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

Through my practical experiences, I truly came to appreciate that the judgment and chastisement of God are the light that saves us, and they are God's truest love. It was the judgment and chastisement, the chastening and disciplining of God's words which enabled me to see clearly the harm that fame, gain and status were causing me, and which aroused my courage and resolve to pursue the truth. When I let go of fame, gain and status, I felt as though it was not just status I had given up, but rather the shackles which Satan had chained me with, and in the deepest recesses of my spirit I came to feel an unprecedented sense of peace and joy, and a feeling of lightening and release. Although I can still, even now, reveal my corrupt disposition of striving for fame and gain, I am no longer controlled and bound by it. Through my experiences I have learned that, by practicing the truth, one can cast off one's satanic corrupt dispositions, and the more one practices the truth, the more one can live out the likeness of a human being and be blessed by God. I truly came to feel that every tiny thing God did on me was God paying a painstaking price. God's salvation of me is so practical, and His love is so great and real! From this day on, I wish to experience even more of God's judgment and chastisement, to pursue the truth so that I may cast off my satanic corrupt dispositions as soon as possible, and to live out a genuine human likeness so as to bring comfort to God's heart. Thank God for saving me!

90. The Lesson of Obedience

By Yang Mingzhen, Canada

My name is Yang Mingzhen, and I've followed Almighty God for seven years now. These last few years, no matter what duty the church has arranged for me to perform or what difficulties or setbacks I encounter in my duty, even if it requires suffering, or for me to pay a price, I've been able to cooperate enthusiastically without any negativity or retreating. I thought that since I was able to do all of that, my life disposition had changed and that I possessed some practical obedience to God. But God knows my deficiency and what I need for growth in my life, so He carefully arranged real environments for me to experience. It was only through God's revelation that I clearly saw my true stature.

In March 2016, I escaped to another country to avoid being arrested and persecuted by the CCP government and freely believe in and worship God. When I arrived, I stayed with a few younger sisters. The sisters went out every day to spread the gospel, and to water and support new believers. When they came home in the evening, they would happily share with each other their experiences and what they had gained from performing their duty. Seeing this, I really admired them. I thought: If I could be like them, if I could also do the work of watering and supporting our new brothers and sisters, that would be so wonderful! One day, Sister Zhang came to discuss the work of the church with us. She asked me: "Are you willing to help support our new brothers and sisters?" I said yes happily, and thought: When my friends and relatives, and brothers and sisters who know me find out that I'm able to perform this kind of duty abroad, they'll certainly admire me and look up to me. That will be so impressive! In the following days, I was eager to start my duty of watering new believers.

Just when my heart was full of expectations, the church leader came to me and asked if I could do hosting. My heart immediately did a somersault: "I thought that the church was going to arrange for me to water and support new brothers and sisters, so now why am I being arranged to act as a host? Won't I just be interacting with the pots and pans all day long? Not only is it hard work, but it's also an indignity! When I was in the world I was a businesswoman, and I ran a factory. My friends and relatives have all said that I'm a really strong woman. At home, I always hired help for the laundry, cooking, and cleaning. But now, it seems that I am the one cooking for you. I don't want to perform this kind of duty!" All these thoughts occurred to me, but in order to save face I was too embarrassed to directly refuse.

I made a tactful excuse, saying that I had just come to this country, I wasn't familiar with my surroundings, and couldn't speak the local language. I didn't even know how to buy vegetables, so I wouldn't be able to perform the duty of a host properly. Sister Zhang told me not to worry, that everyone would help me out whenever I needed it. After she said that, I couldn't possibly make any more excuses, but in my heart, I was utterly unwilling to do it. If I agreed, I probably wouldn't get another opportunity to do the duty of watering, and wouldn't all of my hopes come to nothing? But if I didn't agree, wouldn't the sister say that I was disobedient by picking and choosing my duties? After thinking it over, I forced myself to accept that duty.

Over the next few days, although I performed my duty of hosting, my heart was continually doing somersaults, and my suspicions kicked in. I thought: Could it be that the sister doesn't see me as capable of performing the duty of watering? Otherwise, why would she arrange for me to be a host? If the brothers and sisters who know me were to find about this, wouldn't they think that I am arranged to perform the duty of a host due to my lack of the reality of truth? Wouldn't they look down on me? The thought made me feel worse. Just then, a resolve I had made in front of God came to mind: No matter what I encounter, as long as it is beneficial to the work of the church, I will do my utmost to cooperate. No matter how far out of line with my own notions it is, I must be obedient and satisfy God. But when I was asked to be a host, why was I lacking in obedience? I quietly prayed to God: "Oh God! I know that Your rule and Your arrangements are coming upon me in this duty, but there is always rebelliousness in my heart, and I cannot be genuinely obedient to You. I know that my state is not right. I ask You to enlighten and guide me so that I may understand Your will and be able to obey what You have set up and arranged." After praying, I thought of God's words: "All those who do not seek obedience to God in their faith oppose Him. God asks that people seek the truth, that they thirst for His words, eat and drink His words, and put them into practice, so that they may achieve obedience to God. If these are your true intentions, then God will surely raise you up, and will surely be gracious toward you. This is undoubtable and unchangeable. If your intention is not to obey God, and you have other aims, then all that you say and do—your prayers before God, and even your every action—will be in opposition to Him. You may be soft-spoken and mild-mannered, your every action and expression may look proper, and you may appear to be one who obeys, but when it comes to your intentions and your views

about faith in God, everything you do is in opposition to God; everything you do is evil" ("In Your Faith in God You Should Obey God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

After going home, I read in a fellowship: "In performing their duty, some people only focus on vanity, on their own face. 'I'll perform whichever duty will allow me to show myself. If a duty requires putting my head down and working hard, if no one will see it and I won't be able to show myself, if it will be hidden and I'll just be a nameless hero, then I won't do it. I'll do work that makes me look good, work that appeals to my vanity.' They just want to look good in front of others, and as soon as they can, they're thrilled. They'll suffer any amount, they'll put out any amount of effort. They are always seeking to satisfy their own vanity. That kind of person does not love the truth. You must be considerate of God's will and obey His arrangements. The arrangements in the house of God are permitted by God, so you must be deliberately obedient. If you can obey the arrangements of God's house, that means you can obey God. If you cannot, then your obedience to God is nothing but empty words, because God will never command you to do something, face to face. Today, the house of God has arranged for you to perform this duty, to perform that duty based on our current requirements for work. You say: 'I have choices. I'll perform whichever one I want to. If I don't like it, I won't do it.' Is performing your duty like that being obedient to God? Is that kind of person someone who loves the truth? Can they achieve an understanding of God? They are not someone who reveres God. Picking and choosing your duty, being negative and slacking off—that kind of person doesn't have even a little reality of the truth. They do not have genuine obedience, but they rely entirely on their own preferences in their duty. God does not like that kind of person" ("Sermons and Fellowship About God's Word 'Knowing God Is the Path to Fearing God and Shunning Evil' (I)" in Sermons and Fellowship X).

God's words and the fellowship pierced my heart, and I felt ashamed. Even more so I realized the reason why I was disobedient in the duty of hosting. Thinking back to when I was responsible for a small group in the church, the leader would always discuss the church's work with me first, and then I would discuss it with the brothers and sisters and implement it. At that time I felt that the church leader thought highly of me, and my brothers and sisters also looked up to me. I was brimming with energy in my duty, and I was happy to do it no matter how difficult or tiring it was. But now that I'm supposed to be a host, I'm negative and lacking energy, thinking that preparing meals is too humble of a task, just interacting with pots and pans all day and no one will know no matter how hard I work. That

kind of duty is frustrating, so I resist it, and don't want to accept it. I don't have any practical obedience to God. It was only then that I saw that in the past, my tireless work in my duty was not done out of true obedience, but all for the sake of showing myself and gaining others' admiration and high regard, and that I was not performing my duty as a creature of God. The moment my duty couldn't satisfy my own ambition and desire to gain fame and status, I thought of every possible way to make excuses, and I wasn't willing to accept it and be obedient. To put it bluntly, I was just waving the flag of performing my duty while pursuing individual fame and status to satisfy my own vanity. I was not being at all considerate of God's will, or maintaining the work of the church. I really am so selfish and despicable! I've always performed my duty with my personal preferences and choices, always scheming for fleshly purposes. How could I possibly be someone who pursues the truth and is obedient to God? Then, I read more of God's words: "Those who are capable of putting the truth into practice can accept God's scrutiny in their actions. When you accept God's scrutiny, your heart is set right. If you only ever do things for others to see and do not accept God's scrutiny, do you have God in your heart? People like this are without a God-fearing heart. Don't always do things for your own sake, don't always consider your own interests, and don't consider your own status, face or reputation. You must first consider the interests of God's house and make that your first priority; you should be considerate of God's will, reflect on whether or not you are thinking of the work of God's house and on whether or not you have performed your duty well. When you are always considering the work of God's house in your heart and thinking of the life entry of your brothers and sisters, then you will be able to perform your duty well" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). Pondering over God's words, I understood His will, and knew what to do to satisfy Him. I prayed to God and set my resolve: "Oh God! I am willing to accept Your scrutiny, put aside my own vanity and face, and no longer pursue fame or status. I am willing to obey Your arrangements and devoutly perform my duty to satisfy You!" After praying, my heart was much quieter, and I accepted this duty from within my heart.

In the days that followed, since my sisters knew that I had just come here and wasn't familiar with my surroundings, so doing the grocery shopping would be difficult, they made time to go with me to buy food and daily necessities. I'm older, and I'm not very good with computers, so my sisters kindly and patiently taught me. At times, when I encountered a

difficulty, I was in a state of negativity and weakness, and they found relevant passages of God's words to share with me in fellowship. They helped me with love, and resolved my practical difficulties. Even though my sisters were very busy with their duty, whenever they had a moment they would help me with housework, cleaning, and the like. Not a single one looked down on me or gave me the cold shoulder because I was a host. Everyone just did whatever they could in their duty. I felt that between brothers and sisters, there was no distinction between what was lowly and what was lofty. We were even closer, more intimate than a family. Every single day was very full, and I felt at ease and at peace. I truly thank God! After undergoing that judgment and chastisement of God's words, I felt that I had gained some entry into the truth of obeying God, and I became more obedient in my duty. But God knew well that my satanic nature of pursuing fame and status was well entrenched, so He set up another environment to purify and save me.

One day, the church leader called me and said that one of the sisters had been very busy with her duty and didn't have anyone to watch her child on Saturday afternoons, asking me if I could make the time to help her for half a day every week. When I heard that I was going to babysit, I felt a little offended. Does babysitting count as performing my duty? Besides, all these years I've been busy doing business, and I didn't need to watch my own grandchildren. All the work I did was something that made me look good, and in the eyes of my relatives and friends I was a strong woman. Just performing the duty of a host is already very humbling for me, so if I watch someone's kid on top of that, haven't I just become a nanny? I can't make a name for myself or gain status by babysitting, so I don't want to do it. So, I offered an excuse: I'm preparing meals for the sisters now, and I have to look after the home. Brothers and sisters come over often, so I really can't get away. As I was just making excuses and being evasive, the leader asked me to first pray to God, seek, and then make a decision. After hanging up the phone, I could not find peace in my heart, and the more I thought about it the worse I felt. I thought: Why doesn't the leader find someone else? Why does it have to be me? I can't make a name for myself or gain status by babysitting. How would my brothers and sisters see me if they knew? How could I show my face to them? But if I don't do it, won't my brothers and sisters say I don't have love in my heart? I thought and I thought, and in the end I decided to go and try it out.

I went to Sister Zhou's house on Saturday afternoon and I saw that the lively little child was innocent and adorable, but I just couldn't feel any happiness. My heart was unsettled. I

struggled to make it to 5 p.m. when the little girl started crying for her mom, and I couldn't soothe her no matter what I did. Sister Zhou was about to get home, but the girl just wouldn't stop crying. I became agitated. I thought: If she comes back and sees her daughter crying, what will she think of me? Will she think that at my age, I can't even take care of a small child? In a fluster, all I could do was coax her with delicious snacks, tell her stories, and play cartoons for her. She slowly stopped crying, and then Sister Zhou came back from performing her duty. I made it through one afternoon that way. On the way back home, I walked along and thought: Watching a child is not a simple task. Aside from being tiring, there's so much to worry about. If something happened, I wouldn't be able to deal with it. And there are so many people in the church, so why do they have to have me babysit? The more I thought about it, the more frustrated I became. That evening, I tossed and turned in bed, and could not get to sleep. I had to come in front of God and pray: "God! I feel terrible right now. I know that helping this sister take care of her daughter is so her family concerns don't interfere with her duty, and I should accept it as my duty. But I always feel wronged and I struggle to obey. Oh God! I beg You to enlighten and guide me so that I may understand Your will, and I can come out from this wrong state." After praying, I didn't feel as terrible as before. I opened up the book of God's words, and read this: "What is genuine submission? Whenever things go your way and allow you to stand out, shine, and have some honor, you feel that everything is satisfactory and appropriate. You thank God and can submit to His orchestration and arrangements. However, whenever you get sidelined, become unable to stand out, and you are constantly ignored by others, then you stop feeling happy. ... Submitting while conditions are favorable is usually easy. If you can also submit in adverse circumstances—those in which things do not go your way and your feelings get hurt, that make you weak, that make you suffer physically and take a blow to your reputation, that cannot satisfy your vanity and pride, and that make you suffer psychologically—then you have truly grown up. Is this not the goal you should be pursuing? If you have such a resolution, such a goal, then there is hope" (God's Fellowship).

"Man's corrupt disposition hides within their every thought and idea, within the motives behind their every action; it hides in every viewpoint man has about anything and within every opinion, understanding, viewpoint and desire they have in their approach to all God does. It is concealed within. And what does God do? How does

God approach these things of man? He arranges environments to expose you. He will not only expose you, but He will also judge you. When you reveal your corrupt disposition, when you have thoughts and ideas that defy God, when you have states and viewpoints that contend with God, when you have states whereby you misunderstand God, or resist and oppose Him, God will rebuke you, judge you and chastise you, and He will sometimes even punish you and discipline you. ... He wants you to recognize your corrupt dispositions and satanic essence, for you to be able to be obedient toward the environments God arranges for you and, ultimately, for you to be able to practice what He requires of you in accordance with His will, and to be able to meet His will" ("Only Being Truly Obedient Is a Real Belief" in Records of Christ's Talks).

Faced with God's revealing words of judgment, I felt I had nowhere to hide. Seeing these words of God "Man's corrupt disposition hides within their every thought and idea, within the motives behind their every action; it hides within every opinion, understanding, viewpoint and desire they have in their approach to all God does," I couldn't help but look into myself: Why was I unable to obey the environment that God had set up for me? Why was I unwilling to help the sister with childcare? I believed that taking care of children was something that lower-status people did, and that it was a loss of status, that others would look down on it. I thought that only performing a duty where I could show myself and do something great, that others would admire and look up to was valuable, and would be praised by God. If my duty is humble and is invisible to others, it's worth nothing. I reflected on these thoughts and ideas inside of me and only then realized that I was still under the control of a desire for fame and status. The goals, perspectives on life, and values that I pursued in my belief in God were the same as people of the world, such as "As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face," "Men should always strive to be better than their contemporaries," "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," "Water flows down, man clambers up," etc. These satanic toxins and laws of logic had all deeply taken root in my heart and become my life, making me extremely arrogant, and making me love fame and status. This led me to always calculate my gains and losses of fame and status in my duty, and be unable to truly obey God.

I then pondered God's words again and came to understand that although the environment God had arranged for me was contrary to my own notions, it contained God's

kind intentions. He wanted to expose me through that environment so that I would gain a deeper understanding of my own corrupt disposition and clearly see that I was taking the wrong path, allowing me to repent and turn around in time, to step onto the right path of pursuing the truth. Now, whether others see the duty I am performing as great or as trivial, it's all God's rule and arrangement and it is the responsibility and duty I must take on. I must simply accept and obey it without conjecture or deliberation; I cannot reason or resist it. It's not my own choice to make—only this is genuine obedience!

When doing my spiritual devotionals the next day, I read more of God's words: "If you do not perform your duty well, but always seek honor and compete for position, face, reputation, and your own interests, then while living in such a state, do you want to do service? You can serve if you want to, but it's possible that you will be exposed before your service ends. Exposing you happens instantaneously. As soon as you are exposed, the question is no longer whether your state can be improved; rather, it is likely that your outcome will already have been determined—and that will be a problem for you" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). "Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed; those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You don't focus on pursuing personal transformation and entering in; you always focus on those extravagant desires, and things that constrain your love for God and restrain you from getting close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?" ("Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). This pierced my heart, word by word. I saw God's righteous, holy disposition that will not tolerate mankind's offenses, and I could not help but feel afraid for the path that I had taken. I realized that I had believed in God for many years yet I had not pursued the truth—I had always pursued fame and status. I had focused on the things I could do in front of others so that they would look up to me and support me. I was bound and restricted by these extravagant desires, and I was unable to obey God's arrangements. I was particularly unable to obey or love God. If I continued to follow God this way until the end, my life disposition would never change. I would continue to suffer from the control of this satanic nature, and rebel against and resist God. Then how could I possibly be saved by God? Even though I exposed quite a bit of corruption through this adjustment in my duties, I came to understand that in my faith in God, it is only by pursuing the truth, and accepting the judgment, chastisement, pruning, and

dealing with of God's words that I can understand the essence of my own satanic nature, and clearly see the truth of my corruption of rebelling against and resisting God. This can lead me to detest myself, forsake the flesh, and achieve a transformation in life disposition, thus becoming someone who is truly obedient to God and gains His praise. Understanding this, I felt it was really necessary to learn to submit in faith in God. Right then, I resolved: No matter what duty the church arranges for me, I am willing to absolutely obey what God has set up. I will not try to insert my own reasoning, and I will not take into consideration my own benefit or loss. I only want to steadfastly fulfill my duty as a creature of God and satisfy God!

In the days that followed, whenever my brothers and sisters were busy with their duty and needed me to help with childcare, I accepted it from within my heart and obeyed the environment that God had set up for me. I diligently performed my duty, and I felt at ease, and had peace of mind. I also saw a great deal of God's guidance and blessings. Sometimes when the child was disobedient or threw a tantrum, I was about to lose my temper. But I was immediately able to recognize that I was once again exposing my corruption, so I would rush to return to God and reflect on myself, and see that in front of God, I was just like an immature child who frequently rebelled against and resisted God, and wouldn't do what He said. I didn't feel as agitated, and I was able to be more understanding and forgiving of the child. Sometimes I had some small differences of opinion with them, so I tried to take off the mantle of the adult and listen to what they had to say, and accept any of their suggestions that were correct. I also learned how to have a heart-to-heart with a child and really understand their feelings. When they had something on their mind, they would talk to me about it, and there was no longer any distance between us. We also frequently read God's words together and listened to hymns. I shared fellowship on God's three stages of work, and how to pray to God and rely on Him when we experienced difficulties in life. They also taught me English we helped each other. When I saw that the children became more and more obedient, and that they learned how to pray to God and rely on Him when they had difficulties, I felt incredibly happy. I could not help but express thanks and praise for God from my heart! Through my experience of the judgment and chastisement of God's words, I gradually let go of my desire to pursue fame and status. I no longer wanted to perform a duty that would give me prominence, and I no longer focused on how others saw me. Instead, I became able to obey God's arrangements and steadfastly face God and fulfill my duty. I feel that living this way is relaxing, freeing, and is a release. I have also deeply experienced that in the house

of God, no duty is great or small, and there is no distinction between what is lowly and what is lofty. No matter what kind of duty I perform, it contains a lesson that I must learn as well as truths that I must put into practice and enter into. As long as I practice God's words and obey Him I will be able to gain the work of the Holy Spirit and understand the truth, and receive His blessings when performing my duty. It allows me to see how righteous He is, and that He does not treat anyone unfairly!

God says: "God pays a painstaking price for the sake of every individual. He pins His will on each and every person, with expectations and hope for all. He freely pays the painstaking price for those people of His own will, and He willingly gives His life and truth to every individual. So God is gratified if anyone is able to understand this aim of His. If you can accept and obey the things He does, and if you can receive all from God, He then feels that the painstaking price has not been paid in vain. This means that, if you have lived up to the care and thought God has invested in you, you have reaped the rewards in every environment, and haven't disappointed God's hopes in you, and if what God does on you has had the expected effect and has reached the expected objective, then God's heart is satisfied" ("To Attain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You" in Records of Christ's Talks). I have understood from God's words that the people, events, things, and environments that I encounter every day all contain God's will and His efforts. God has a commission for me and has particularly placed His hope in me. He has salvaged me from out of the huge world. God's will is for me to play my own role in His management plan. As one of God's creations, my duty is to heed what God says, obey His arrangements, to do what He has entrusted me with in an orderly way, and to carry out my responsibilities. This is my duty and my mission that I cannot shirk. I hereby resolve to accept and obey all things that come from God, and in all people, events and things set up by God, seek the truth, try to grasp God's will, and practice according to God's requirements. In the future, no matter what kind of environment or what duties come upon me, no matter how far from my own notions it is, I will be willing to accept and obey. I will give myself heart, soul, and mind to fulfilling my duty. I will pursue becoming someone who genuinely obeys God and gains His praise!

91. A Farewell to Being "Nice"

By Lin Fan, Spain

My childhood was spent amid the sound of my stepmother shrieking and cursing. Later, when I knew better, in order to get along with my stepmother and people around me, I lived by the satanic laws of survival of "Better to keep schtum than point out trouble; stay guiet for self-protection and seek only to escape blame," and "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship." This earned me the praise of others and made everyone say I was easy to get along with. Gradually, I distilled some life lessons: If I was to survive in this dark and evil society, I had to get on well with the people around me. Only then would I fit in. After coming to the church, I still acted by the same principles. Whenever I came across a problem while performing my duty, I kept guiet, afraid that pointing out the problem would offend people and be bad for me. My failure to practice the truth harmed the work of the church and was a transgression before God. The chastisement and judgment of God's words showed me my true face as a "nice" person, and allowed me some knowledge of the substance of those "nice" people. I saw that being "nice" harmed others and hurt myself, that I had taken the path of no return—the path of opposing God and so I resolved to cast off the constraints of my "being nice" mentality, to have the courage to practice the truth and abide by principle, and to live out a little of the semblance of someone honest.

In 2018, I was selected to be a mid-level leader. I was very grateful to God for giving me this opportunity to train, and resolved to perform my duty properly, to satisfy God, and to live up to God's expectations of me. When I just accepted my duty, I was not so familiar with some of the church's affairs. Sister Liu, who I was teamed up with, had been performing this duty for more than a year and was relatively familiar with the various aspects of the church's work. Whenever I came across a problem, I would ask Sister Liu, and she would frequently help me. But I gradually realized that during assemblies, Sister Liu only spoke of letters and doctrines, and did not have the reality of practicing the words of God. She was also very passive and did not do real work when it came to performing her duty. When the brothers and sisters reported problems to her, she did not try to fix them; in particular, she did not handle the false leaders in the church that urgently needed replacing, but instead kept putting the problem off. During this time, Sister Liu mentioned, several times, how the

church leader Sister Zhang simply went through the formalities, how she had never done real work when performing her duty, and spoke nothing but letters and doctrines during assemblies. What's more, Sister Zhang even did not accept the suggestions or help of others. Yet after saying this, Sister Liu didn't seem to have any intention of replacing Sister Zhang, Later, when I met Sister Zhang, I discovered she really was like what Sister Liu had said about her, so I said to Sister Liu, "Measuring what is manifested in Sister Zhang according to principle, she is a false leader who does not pursue the truth, does not do real work, and is without the work of the Holy Spirit. She should be replaced." But Sister Liu only replied lightly, "Sister Zhang may not be capable enough, but right now she's still able to do some work. Let's try and help her." In my heart, I thought: "In our work arrangements it is said that as soon as false leaders are discovered in the church, they must be replaced in time. Sister Zhang has already been laid bare as a false leader, so she should be replaced!" I was just about to open my mouth to say this, when I thought to myself: "Sister Liu has been performing her duty as a leader for such a long time, she should be aware of the requirements of the work arrangements. If I insist, will she think I'm saying she's not doing real work, will she think I'm making a fuss, and hard to get along with? Oh! I'm new at this and there's much that I don't understand. I'm going to be working with her for a while, too if I fall out with Sister Liu because of this, how will we perform our duty together? I should just forget it!" Thinking this, I said nothing more.

Later, I fellowshiped with Sister Zhang several times, but there was no improvement in her state. Then the other brothers and sisters in the church informed me that Sister Zhang was not doing real work, and I realized that the issue was urgent. Not wasting any time, I went back to Sister Liu to discuss replacing Sister Zhang. But Sister Liu started making excuses: "The upper-level leaders are verifying the letters of accusations. She'll be replaced when they confirm she is a false leader." In my heart I thought, "If she really is a false leader, she must be replaced as soon as possible. If we wait for them to be verified before replacing her, the work of the church will be delayed, and the brothers' and sisters' entry into life will be delayed, too. This is going against God!" I wanted to speak of the importance of replacing false leaders with Sister Liu, but then I thought: "If I make a point about replacing Sister Zhang, will Sister Liu think I am too arrogant and conceited, that I'm just trying to prove myself in my new position by showing off myself here? What's more, Sister Liu hadn't said Sister Zhang wouldn't be dealt with; she'd just said to wait for confirmation from the upper-

level leaders before doing anything—so I'd better keep quiet. It will only be for a few days." Thus did I keep my words to myself. Several days later, the upper-level leaders subjected us mid-level leaders to stern reproach for not immediately handling the false leader in the church. They said we weren't protecting God's chosen ones, that we were the accomplices, the shields, of Satan, that we were harming the other brothers and sisters. Only then was Sister Zhang quickly removed. While this was being sorted out, I discovered that it had been a long time since Sister Zhang had not done any real work. She had never been effective at the gospel work of the church for which she was responsible, and the brothers and sisters all lived amid negativity and weakness. Some didn't even want to go to assembly. Seeing what great harm not immediately dealing with a false leader had brought to the church, I felt a great deal of self-reproach in my heart. Yet I didn't spend more time reflecting on this matter and trying to know myself, believing it enough that Sister Zhang had been replaced.

Next, serious problems began appearing in all aspects of work from the churches Sister Liu was responsible for. When she was pruned and dealt with by the upper-level leaders, she was not only unrepentant, but lived in negativity and resistance, no longer willing to perform her duty. Seeing Sister Liu's state, I wanted to point these problems out to her so that she could reflect on them, but I was also worried: "If I tell her to reflect on herself, will she say that I don't show consideration for her, that I have no love for her? It would be hard to work together if things turn frosty between us." After giving it some thought, I fellowshiped God's will to her in a very roundabout way, and advised her to stop being negative. Afterward, Sister Liu would often complain, and argue about right and wrong—she was clearly without the work of the Holy Spirit. I thought of how Sister Liu had never done real work since we'd been performing our duties together, and about how, when she was pruned and dealt with, she didn't accept them or try to seek the truth. These were the manifestations of a false leader! It was at this time that the upper-level leaders asked me to write an evaluation of Sister Liu. I felt really conflicted in my heart: Should I be honest about what has usually been manifested in Sister Liu? If I didn't report this, I'd be sheltering a false leader and not upholding the work of the house of God. But most of the brothers and sisters didn't know what was really going on. They couldn't discern this, and were all pretty supportive of Sister Liu. If I stuck my neck out and reported her problems, would they think badly of me? What's more, I lived with Sister Liu every day. She had helped me when I had problems. If I reported her problems and she really was replaced, would she hate me? And so, after weighing the

pros and cons, I underplayed the manifestation of Sister Liu's failure to do real work and lack of entry when writing her evaluation. After the evaluation was submitted, I felt great unease in my heart. I realized that I had hidden the facts and deceived God. In my spirit, I felt great accusation. Over the next few days, I would nod off while reading the words of God, and would not be enlightened or illuminated during assemblies and fellowships. I couldn't feel God's guidance, nor was I able to identify problems in the church. Several days later, after holding an investigation and confirming that Sister Liu was a false leader who didn't do real work, the upper-level leaders removed her. Although Sister Liu had been removed, for the sake of maintaining my relationship with her I had forsaken the truth and transgressed. Thinking of this, I was overwhelmed with shame and self-recrimination. I immediately prayed to God and began reflecting upon myself.

Later, I read in God's words that "The most fundamental and important components of one's humanity are conscience and reason. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, he is a person who lacks humanity or a person of bad humanity. ... Such people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's will. They take on no burden of testifying for God or performing their duties, and possess no sense of responsibility. ... There are even people who, upon seeing a problem, remain silent. They see that others are creating interruptions and disturbances, yet do nothing to stop them. They do not consider the interests of God's house in the least, nor do they at all think about their own duties or responsibilities with which they are bound. They speak, act, stand out, put forth effort, and expend energy only for their own vanity, face, position, interests, and honor" ("You Can Obtain Truth After Turning Your True Heart Over to God" in Records of Christ's Talks). I also read a fellowship which went like this, "All who behold the appearance of false leaders and antichrists, who are able to identify them, but do not do their responsibility, do not protect the chosen ones, nor uphold the work of God, being afraid of offending people, being 'nice'—such people do not love God, and God does not make such people perfect. God does not make 'nice' people perfect; people like this are slippery, crafty, insidious, they go whichever way the wind's blowing, they are nothing good, they are classic devils and Satan" ("The Relationship Between Pursuing the Love of God and Being Made

Perfect" in Sermons and Fellowship IX). Reading God's words and this fellowship caused me great distress, and I couldn't hold back the tears of shame. I saw that I was someone "nice," that I would do everything I could to protect myself when something happened, did nothing to uphold the interests of the house of God, and had no sense of responsibility toward the work of the church and the brothers' and sisters' entry into life. I knew full well that Sister Zhang had been exposed as a false leader. The work of the church, and the brothers' and sisters' entry into life, that she was responsible for had been obstructed, and I knew that to not immediately remove false leaders was to sin against God and offend God's disposition, yet I would rather go against my conscience and displease God than displease people—as a result of which the false leader continued to harm God's chosen ones in the church for more than two months. Despite this, still I did not look within myself. When serious issues appeared in the various work that Sister Liu was responsible for, and she not only did not accept the pruning and dealing of the upper-level leaders, but also pushed back with negativity, I should have immediately provided help and given out pointers, and should have exposed and dissected the nature and consequences of such manifestation, so that the sister could immediately repent. I had, however, protected my own interests, and only provided a few words of comfort and advice. When I was asked to write an evaluation of Sister Liu, I was clearly aware that she had already lost the work of the Holy Spirit, that she could not solve the problems in the church, that she was a false leader—but to protect my own status, I had tried to hide the true facts and shelter Sister Liu. I saw that I had protected a false leader time and time again, that I would rather the work of the church suffer than practice the truth and abide by righteousness, that I cared only for my own interests, and gave not the slightest consideration to the church work or whether the brothers and sisters lived or died; acting thus, I was a protective shield for the false leader, I was an accomplice of Satan who comes to meddle in and disturb the work of God's house. Where was my humanity? I was someone "nice," who was selfish and ignoble, slippery and crafty! The church had given me such an important duty. I shouted that I wanted to repay God's love and satisfy God, but I had actually tried to deceive God, and after encountering problems, I always stretched my elbows outward by standing on Satan's side to resist God. My actions had long since offended the disposition of God, they had earned God's disdain and hate. There was no end to my shame. I couldn't help but pray to God: "O God! I have gone against Your will time and time again, protecting myself, not practicing the truth, obstructing the work of the church, harming the lives of the brothers and sisters. I have rebelled against You, I have opposed You, and if I do not repent, I shall suffer the punishment of Your righteousness. O God! I have done wrong, I wish to repent to You, to practice the truth to make up for my transgressions."

Later, during an assembly, the brothers and sisters reported on how Brother Li, who I worked with, was not doing real work. They reported that he only ever went through the formalities during assemblies, and didn't immediately fellowship and seek a solution when they encountered problems and difficulties in performing their duties. Later, I sought out Brother Li to fellowship several times. Yet he just agreed with what I said; after some cursory acknowledgment, that was it. Some time later, the brothers and sisters once again began reporting on the manifestation of Brother Li not doing real work, which had long since stood in the way of the church's work and stopped it from progressing. Measured based on principle, Brother Li was also a false leader who didn't do real work. I should immediately report this to the upper-level leaders and have him removed. But at the mention of reporting Brother Li, the worry and concern returned to my heart: "Brother Li has been performing his duty here the longest out of all of us. He's considered an 'elder.' I also often consult him about church affairs, and he always helps me. If he knows my report leads to him being removed, what would he think of me? Would he say I am ungrateful? How embarrassing it would be when we meet after that. Several other co-workers haven't reported Brother Li; so, I'd be better off not sticking my neck out, I shouldn't kick up a fuss, and I'd better not deal with it until the upper-level leaders discover it. But if I don't immediately report the situation and have Brother Li removed, I'd be delaying the brothers' and sisters' entry into life, and would be meddling in and interrupting the work of the church." At that moment, I felt so conflicted in my heart, I didn't know what to do, so I wasted no time in praying to God and seeking. I thought of God's words: "You must always have My words at work inside you, regardless of who you are facing; you must be able to stand firm in your testimony to Me and show consideration to My burdens. You cannot be confused, agreeing blindly with people without having your own ideas, but instead you must have the courage to stand up and object to things that do not come from Me. If you know clearly that something is wrong, yet you keep silent, then you are not someone who practices the truth. If you know that something is wrong and then twist the topic, but Satan blocks your path—you speak without any effect and are unable to persevere until the endthen you are still carrying fear in your heart, and isn't your heart still filled with thoughts from Satan?" ("Chapter 12" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "... all have said that they would be considerate of God's burden and defend the testimony of the church. Who has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for God's burden? Can you practice righteousness for God? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to put your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My will to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart when the crucial time comes? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself and think about it often" ("Chapter 13" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). In each of God's reproachful questions were His expectations toward me. When something happened in the church that violated the principles of the truth, God expected me to stand on the side of God, to have the courage to expose Satan and uphold the church's work, and have a sense of righteousness. But from what I had been revealed and manifested in me. I was not someone who was mindful of God's will or practiced the truth: When I saw that Brother Li was a false leader and needed to be replaced, for the sake of protecting my own interests and upholding my image in his heart, I was reluctant to report the situation even when I discovered problems, trying to offload this matter onto the upper-level leaders for handling, giving not the slightest consideration to the interests of the house of God. I saw just how selfish and crafty my nature was! Why, when it came to the crucial moment, was I always being "nice," and dared not stand up to defend the work of the church?

Later, I read the words of God: "Man's corrupt disposition stems from his being poisoned and trampled upon by Satan, from the egregious harm that Satan has inflicted upon his thinking, morality, insight, and sense. It is precisely because the fundamental things of man have been corrupted by Satan, and are utterly unlike how God originally created them, that man opposes God and does not understand the truth" ("To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Once you have faith, when you come before God but are still living in the same old manner, is your belief in God meaningful? Is it of value? The goals and principles of your life and the way you live have not changed, and the only thing that

places you above unbelievers is your acknowledgment of God. You seem to be following God, but your life disposition still has not changed one bit. In the end, you will not be saved. That being the case, is this not but an empty belief and an empty joy?" ("Only by Putting the Truth Into Practice Can You Cast off the Binds of a Corrupt Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). I then read the words in a fellowship: "Can people within the church, who live by Satan's philosophy and try to be 'nice,' be praised by God? They absolutely cannot be praised by God. 'Nice' people do not bear any witness. They do not stand on God's side, and are categorically disobedient to God. 'Nice' people do not have the reality of truth, so they cannot be saved! 'Nice' people are deeply corrupted by Satan and live by Satan's philosophy. Others view them as good people, but God views them as humans who do not possess the principles of truth, and who stand on Satan's side and obey Satan. Is this not the case? There are many such people within the church these days. If their views do not change, then sooner or later, they will come to ruin. If you cannot stand on God's side, then you are finished" (Sermons and Fellowship on Entry Into Life, Volume 151). Reading these words enlightened my heart. Only then did I understand that the reason I always looked out for my own interests and tried to be "nice" when there was an issue was because the laws of survival of Satan—"Better to keep schtum than point out trouble; stay quiet for self-protection and seek only to escape blame," "The less trouble, the better," and "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship"—had long since become my life, such that ever since I was young, I had been careful and considered in my interactions with my family, neighbors, and friends, thinking that I would only have a place in the world if I had good relationships with others and didn't offend anyone. Even when I saw other people doing things wrong, I dared not speak of it; I only looked out for my own interests and lived without any self-respect. After I started believing in God and performing my duty, I continued to act according to these satanic laws of survival. When I saw a false leader appear in the church who brought losses to the work of the church, the first thing I thought of was my own interests; I would rather offend God than other people, I dared not abide by the principles of the truth and stand on the side of God, and over and over again, I was heedless of the church's work. I was the slave of Satan, and despised by God. This time, when I discovered Brother Li was a false leader, I still tried to live by the interpersonal philosophies of Satan, to maintain my image in his heart. I was considering my own interests. I saw that, living by the life viewpoint of being "nice," I had become ever

more selfish and ignoble, slippery and crafty, without any semblance of humanity. At the same time, I came to know that "nice" people are also false and obsequious, they do nothing but interrupt and disturb the work of God's house in every aspect, they are lackeys of Satan who are expert in harming and bringing destruction upon others, they are running dogs, the enemies of God. God despises and disdains people who are "nice," and does not save them or make them perfect. If I did not repent, and carried on walking the path of someone "nice," I would ultimately be eliminated and punished by God! Knowing this, I realized that my state was very dangerous, that I couldn't carry on like this; I must genuinely repent to God, practice the truth, and be someone with a sense of righteousness.

Later, I reported Brother Li's situation to the upper-level leaders. After their investigation and verification, they determined that Brother Li was a false leader and asked me to relieve him of his duties. At the thought of replacing Brother Li—of exposing and dissecting him for not doing real work—I felt a little timid in my heart; I didn't want to face him, I was afraid of hurting him. At that moment, I thought of God's words: "If you have the motivations and perspective of a 'nice person,' you will always fall down and fail in these matters. So what should you do in such situations? When faced with such things, you must pray to God. Ask that God give you strength, that He allow you to abide by principle, to do what you should do, to handle things according to principle, to stand your ground, and not let harm come to the work of God's house. If you are able to forsake your own interests, face and perspective of a 'nice person,' if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan, and will have gained this aspect of the truth" ("Only When You Know Yourself Can You Pursue the Truth" in Records of Christ's Talks). In a fellowship it is said that "Some of God's chosen ones have a sense of righteousness; for the sake of protecting the chosen ones and the work of God's house, they have the courage to expose false leaders and antichrists. Such people are honest and forthright, they are beloved of God, and they are the ones who truly love the truth. Only those who love the truth and have real manifestations are those who truly repent, and they are precisely the ones who shall be saved" ("Sermons and Fellowship About God's Word 'God Himself, the Unique II' (XX)" in Sermons and Fellowship XII). From God's words and this fellowship, it can be seen that God loves those who are honest and have a sense of righteousness, that these are the kind of people who will be saved and made perfect. Today, a false leader had appeared in the church. God was looking at how I approached

this matter, at whether I protected my own individual interests or considered the interests of the church, at whether I was able to practice the truth and not make concessions to Satan. In the past, I was not mindful of God's will, and betrayed God's hopes toward me. This time, toward the matter of replacing Brother Li, I would accept God's scrutiny, I would put right my own intentions, and regardless of what Brother Li thought of me or treated me, I must not protect my own interests anymore. Exposing and replacing false leaders was my obligatory duty, and it was my responsibility; I should uphold the work of the church, consider the brothers' and sisters' entry into life, stand on the side of God, and immediately replace Brother Li and expose his manifestation. If Brother Li was someone who pursued the truth, then his replacement would help him reflect on himself, which would be of benefit to his entry into life, and stop him from making more transgressions before God. And so I prayed to God: May God guide me, and give me the courage to fellowship with Brother Li. After I'd exposed and dissected each of the manifestations of Brother Li's failure to do real work, he not only didn't hate me, but also repented and said, "That I am replaced today is the righteousness of God. It is God's love and protection of me. If you hadn't pointed this out to me, I wouldn't have known just how great the harm I was doing to the church was. Thanks be to God! I will reflect on this. Tell me what other corruption there is in me; it will help me reflect on myself properly. ..." Hearing Brother Li's words, I felt touched; I'd felt that exposing his manifestations would hurt him, but it turned out that these were my imaginings. If I hadn't pointed them out to him, I'd be really harming him. At that moment, I felt steadfast and at peace in my spirit, and especially close to God. So, too, did I truly appreciate that only by practicing the truth and standing on the side of righteousness could I truly help brothers and sisters. Later, when I saw brothers and sisters violated the principles of the truth, I would still reveal the perspective of being "nice" and have fear of offending others, but I would immediately come before God to pray, forsaking myself and treating these things according to the principles of the truth. Thanks be to God. My being able to have this little bit of practice and entry is the effect of God's words!

After experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words and the laying bare of the facts, I saw that those who are "nice" are crafty, black-hearted, without conscience or humanity, and have no chance of being saved by God. I was also thankful for the guidance and leadership of God's words; they had allowed me to shed the constraints of my mentality of being "nice," and to live out a little of the semblance of someone honest. Whilst

experiencing, I had truly appreciated how the truth and righteousness hold power in the house of God. In the house of God, only people who practice the truth, act according to the principles of the truth, and are someone honest with a sense of righteousness can stand firm and be approved by God. In the future, I would do all I could to pursue the truth, to be someone with a sense of righteousness, to perform my duty properly and satisfy God, and bring comfort to His heart!

92. Embarking on the Path of Belief in God

By Rongguang, Heilongjiang Province

In 1991, by the grace of God, I began to follow Almighty God because of an illness. At that time I didn't know anything about believing in God, but the amazing thing is that, when reading the words expressed by Almighty God, I enjoyed it. I felt that His words were so good, and when I sang or prayed I was frequently moved by the Holy Spirit to the point of weeping. That sweetness in my heart, that enjoyment was as if a joyous event had come upon me. Particularly when I was in gatherings with brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit would do such great work, and through singing hymns, reading God's words, and fellowshiping on the truth, I felt so bright and at ease in my heart. I felt as if I had transcended the flesh and I was living in the third heaven, that everything belonging to the world had been cast to the winds. I was very joyful and happy. So at that time I believed that believing in God was just enjoying His grace and blessings.

As more and more of God's words were being released (at the time they were being continuously sent to the churches, passage after passage), I also knew more and more. When I saw "firstborn sons" mentioned in His words and I learned that God bestows great blessings on His firstborn sons, I sought to become one, hoping that in the future I could reign with God. Later on, I saw His words as follows: "The days will come to an end; all things in the world will come to nothing, and all things will be born anew. Remember this! Remember this! There can be no ambiguity! Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away!" ("Chapter 15" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I felt even more urgency, and thought: I started believing in God so late; will I be unable to gain this blessing? I need to put more effort into it. So when

the church arranged for me to perform a duty, I was very proactive. I wasn't afraid of hardship. I decided to forsake everything to follow God so that I would be able to gain the blessing of being a firstborn son. In truth, God had never said definitively in His words that we could be firstborn sons. It was just because we were ambitious and had extravagant desires, we believed that because God had called us His sons and that He now uplifted us, that we would certainly become the firstborn. This was how I believed that I had, naturally, become a firstborn son. Later I saw words of God that had just been released that frequently mentioned "service-doers," and there were more and more mentions of the judgment of service-doers. I didn't take that to heart, but just thought happily: Luckily I am following Almighty God, otherwise I would become a service-doer. This is how, when I read about God's blessings and promises for firstborn sons, I believed that a portion of that would be mine. When I read His words of comfort and exhortation for His firstborn, I also felt that they were addressed to me. I felt even more delighted particularly when I saw the following: "The great disasters will certainly not befall upon My sons, My beloved. I will look after My sons in every moment and in every second. You certainly will not endure that pain and suffering; rather, it is for the sake of the perfection of My sons and the fulfillment of My word in them, so that you may recognize My omnipotence, further grow in life, shoulder burdens for Me sooner, and devote your entire selves for the completion of My management plan. You should be glad and happy and rejoice because of this. I will hand over everything to you, allowing you to take control. I will place it in your hands. If a son inherits his father's entire estate, how much more so with you, My firstborn sons? You are truly blessed. Instead of suffering from the great disasters, you will enjoy everlasting blessings. What glory! What glory!" ("Chapter 68" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I thought: Am I dreaming? Such incredible manna from heaven has landed upon me? I couldn't completely dare to believe it, but I was afraid my brothers and sisters would say that my faith was too small, so I didn't dare to not believe it.

One day, I excitedly went to participate in a meeting, and I saw that two leaders had come to the church. When I was in fellowship with them, they said that they were service-doers. After hearing this, I was shocked, and asked them: "If you are service-doers, aren't we all service-doers?" They spoke the truth: "Nearly all of us in China are service-doers." Hearing them say this, my heart sank: "It couldn't be! Is this the truth?" But when I saw their

heavy, pained expressions and that the others' faces were also very somber, I couldn't not believe it. I thought: As leaders, they have given up their families and careers, have suffered so much and paid such a great price for God's work. I am quite lacking compared to them; if they are service-doers, what else could I say? I'll just be a service-doer.

After going home, I once again took up the word of God and looked at what God had to say about service-doers, and I saw this: "Those who do service for Me, listen! You can receive some of My grace when doing service for Me. That is, you will know for a time about My later work and the things that will happen in the future, but you will absolutely not enjoy that. This is My grace. When your service is complete, leave at once and do not linger. Those who are My firstborn sons should not be arrogant, but you may be proud, for I have bestowed endless blessings upon you. Those who are targets for destructions should not bring trouble on yourselves or feel sorrow for your destiny; who made you a descendant of Satan? After you have done your service for Me, you may once again return to the bottomless pit because you will no longer be of use to Me and I shall begin to deal with you with My chastisement. Once I begin My work I do not ever stop; what I do shall be accomplished and what I accomplish shall last forever. This is applicable to My firstborn sons, My sons, My people, and this goes for you as well-My chastisements of you are everlasting" ("Chapter 86" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). As soon as I read these words I was beset by a pain I had never felt before. I quickly closed the booklet of God's words and didn't dare to look at it again. In one moment feelings of aggrievement, of confusion, of discontent all welled up in my heart. I thought: Yesterday I was in a cradle of happiness, but today I have been pushed out of God's house. Yesterday I was God's son, but today I have become God's enemy, Satan's descendant. Yesterday, the limitless blessings of God were awaiting me, but today the bottomless pit is my destination, and I will be punished into eternity. If He's not bestowing blessings, then no matter, but why does He still have to chastise me? What on earth have I done wrong? What on earth is all of this for? The more I thought, the more I felt I couldn't face this reality. I closed my eyes and wasn't willing to think about it anymore. I hoped so much that it was just a dream.

From then on, as soon as I thought of myself as a service-doer, I felt an unspeakable pain in my heart, and I didn't dare to read the words of God again. But God is very wise, and His words which chastise and reveal people are not only permeated with mystery, but there

are also prophecies of the future catastrophe as well as the kingdom outlook and similar things. These were all things that I wanted to know, so I still could not turn my back on His words. When reading God's words of revelation, His razor-sharp words repeatedly pierced my heart, and I couldn't help but accept His judgment and chastisement. I felt that His majestic and wrathful judgment was always upon me. Aside from the pain, I knew the actual truth of my having been corrupted by Satan. It turned out that I was the child of the great red dragon, Satan's descendant, and the target of destruction. In despair, I no longer dared to greedily hope for any blessings, and I was willing to accept God's predestination that I was a service-doer. However, God examines people's innermost hearts, and He knew that I had not truly let go of the motive to gain blessings. When I felt that I was willing to be a servicedoer, God once again arranged an environment that brought out the corrupt disposition that had been hidden in me. One day when reading God's words, I saw: "After I have returned to Zion, those on earth will continue to praise Me as in the past. Those loyal servicedoers remain waiting to render service to Me but their function will have come to an end. The best that they can do is to contemplate the circumstance of Me being on the earth. At that time I will begin to bring down disaster upon those who will suffer calamity, but just as[a] all believe that I am a righteous God, I will certainly not punish those loyal service-doers and they will only receive My grace" ("Chapter 120" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Seeing this, I thought to myself: I will no longer think of the status of firstborn son and I will no longer want great blessings. Now I will only pursue being a loyal service-doer. This is now my sole pursuit. In the future, no matter what the church arranges for me to do, I will do it as devoutly as I can. I absolutely cannot lose the opportunity to be a loyal service-doer. If I am not even capable of being a loyal service-doer but am simply a service-doer, after I have completed my service I must return to the bottomless pit or the lake of fire and brimstone. In that case what is it all for? I didn't dare to express this thought to anyone, but I couldn't escape the searching from the eyes of God. I read God's words saying: "No one can fathom the nature of man except Me, and they all think that they are loyal to Me, not knowing that their loyalty is impure. These impurities will ruin people for they are a scheme of the great

Footnotes:

a. The original text does not contain the phrase "just as."

red dragon. It was long ago laid bare by Me; I am the almighty God, and would I not understand something so simple? I am able to penetrate your blood and your flesh to see your intentions. It is not hard for Me to fathom man's nature, but people try to be smart alecks, thinking that no one but themselves knows their intentions. Don't they know that the almighty God exists within the heavens and earth and all things?" ("Chapter 118" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Most people now harbor a small hope, but when that hope turns to disappointment they become unwilling to go any further and ask to turn back. I have said before that I don't keep anyone here against their will, but take care to think about what the consequences will be for you, and this is a fact, it is not Me threatening you" ("Chapter 118" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). After reading this, my heart was pounding. I felt that God truly examines the deepest parts of man's heart and has a thorough understanding of man. Whatever thoughts I have within me, God knows; I secretly hold some little hope in my heart and God hates it and is disgusted by it. Only at that time did I have a bit of a heart of reverence for God. I determined that I would no longer conduct transactions with God, but I would honestly act as a service-doer and obey His designs.

Only later did I know that my experience through these three months was the trial of service-doers. It was the first work God completed in people of a trial by His words. After undergoing the trial of service-doers, I understood that God is not only a merciful and loving God, but He is a righteous, majestic God who does not tolerate the offenses of mankind. His words contain authority and power, so people cannot help but develop a heart of reverence and fear. I also came to know that mankind is God's creation, that we should believe in God and worship Him. This is what is right and proper. There need be no reasons, no conditions, and there must not be ambition or extravagant desires. If people believe in God in order to gain something from Him, then this type of belief is exploiting and cheating Him. It is an expression of lacking a conscience and reason and is even more treacherous. Even if people believe in God but gain nothing and later gain His punishment, they should believe in Him. Mankind should believe in and obey God because He is God. I also recognized that I myself am a son of the great red dragon, Satan's descendant, and one of those who will perish. God is the Lord of all creation, and no matter how He treats me it is deserved. All of it is righteous, and I should obey His designs and arrangements without conditions. I should

not try to reason with Him, and even more I should not resist Him. Thinking back to my own ugliness revealed in this trial, I felt truly shameful. I only wanted to gain some high status, great blessings, or even sit side-by-side with God and rule with Him. When I saw that I would not gain the blessings I had hoped for but instead would suffer catastrophe, I thought of betraying God and of leaving Him. These utterly transparent demonstrations made me clearly see that my goal in believing in God was to be blessed. I was trying to conduct transactions with God. I really was shameless, and I had completely lost the reason that a person should have. I truly was a descendant of Satan. If it had not been for such wisdom in God's work—using the trial of service-doers to conquer me, to break my ambition of gaining blessings—I would still be racing down the false path of seeking blessings. I would not possibly have understood my own corrupt essence, and I particularly would not have obediently accepted the judgment and chastisement of God's words. In the end, I certainly would have been done in by my own ambitions and desires, and the chance to be saved would have been forever lost to me.

After undergoing the trial of service-doers, I no longer dared to believe in God and fulfill my duty in order to gain blessings, and I no longer dared to do things with the intention of conducting transactions with God. I felt that exploiting and cheating God in this way was too despicable and evil. At the same time, I had an understanding that God using this trial to save mankind is His kind intention, and I knew that there is no part of Him that hates man, and His love for mankind has not changed since He created the world. In my heart, I was willing to pursue a path of loving God and satisfying God and repaying God's love in my future faith in Him and fulfillment of my duty. However, because the intention of gaining blessings and conducting transactions with God was too entrenched in my heart, it was not possible to completely resolve it by experiencing just one trial. Later, God performed several successive trials—the trial of the times of chastisement, the trial of death, and the seven-year trial. Of these trials, the one that I suffered the most from and gained the most from was the seven-year trial of 1999.

In 1999, I was elected as a church leader. This happened to be the year that the gospel of the kingdom was greatly expanded, and the work arrangement required that we try to save everyone who had the possibility of being saved. When I saw this arrangement, I thought that God's work would be done in 2000. So in order to obtain a favorable destination for myself when the time came, I made myself busy with the work of the gospel from early

morning to late at night. As for the life of the church, I would just briefly involve myself and go through the motions. Even though I realized that my intentions were wrong, I just could not control my desire for gaining blessings, even to the extent that I felt that doing anything aside from the work of the gospel was just holding me up, even reading the word of God. It was this way that I threw myself into a fervor of work.

Before I knew it the year was over. I imagined that when God's work was done, the great catastrophe would certainly occur, and so I just waited every day for the disaster, waiting for the end of God's work. When the Spring Festival was right around the corner, there was fellowship from the church leader saying that it was necessary to undergo the seven-year trial. After hearing this message, I felt shaken and my heart was in turmoil. I couldn't help but start to reason with God: A seven-year trial? How could another seven years be upon me—how can I live through this? Oh God, I beg You to extinguish me. I truly cannot endure this suffering anymore! The next day, I still could not escape from my depression. I thought: Anyway, there are seven years to go. Tomorrow is another day—I'll go out and get this off my mind. As soon as I got on the bus, I felt the Holy Spirit was inside of me reproaching me: At the time you were willingly seeking, you had paid your price, and said that you would love God to the end, that you would never leave Him, that you would bear any hardships and share any joys. You were a hypocrite who fooled yourself! Facing the Holy Spirit's reproach, I couldn't help but hang my head, thinking: "It is true. Before, when I enjoyed God's grace, I made promises to Him to expend myself for Him for my entire life, but now when there are difficulties and I must suffer, I want to go back on my word. So aren't my promises just lies? God gave me so much love, and now when I encounter an environment that is not as I wish I have such great resentment to the point that I want to turn my back on God. I truly lack a conscience and reason!" When I thought of this, I was no longer in the mood to go out, but returned home with a heavy heart. Even though I had been forced into being "obedient," when I thought of the fact that there were still seven years remaining in God's work, I felt that believing in God was too painful, too difficult. I just indulged myself and whatever I did, I was not hurried or worried. I slogged through every day of fulfilling my duty like it was just another day on the clock. I lived in a negative and confrontational condition. Gradually, I lost the work of the Holy Spirit, and although I wanted to transform my own condition, I was unable to.

One day, I saw these words of God: "When some people first performed their duty,

they were full of energy, as though it would never run out. But how come as they go along they seem to lose that energy? The person they were then and the person they are now are like two different people. Why did they change? What was the reason? It is because their faith in God went the wrong way before it got on the right track. They chose the wrong path. There was something hidden inside their initial pursuit, and at a key moment that thing emerged. What was hidden? It's an anticipation that lies inside their hearts while they believe in God, the anticipation that the day of God is arriving soon so that their misery will be at an end; the anticipation that God will be transfigured and that all of their suffering will be over" ("Those Who Have Lost the Work of the Holy Spirit Are Most at Risk" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words caused me to seek the root of my problem. It turned out that I had a concealed hope within my pursuits, hoping that God's day would come soon and that I would no longer suffer, that I would have a good destination. All along, my pursuits were dominated by this hope, and when my hope came to nothing, I suffered and fell apart to the point of wanting to betray God, even thinking of escaping through death. Only at that time did I see that I had followed God for so many years, but its essence wasn't walking the path of pursuing the truth; I had always had my eye on the day of God, and I had been conducting transactions with Him in order to gain His blessings. Even though then I could not help but stay within God's household and did not leave Him, if I did not resolve the contamination within me, sooner or later I would resist and betray God. After seeing the dangerous state I was in, within my heart I prayed to God: What can I do to get rid of the contamination of hoping for the day? Then, I once again read God's words, which said: "Did you know that by believing in God in China, being able to undergo these sufferings and enjoy the work of God, that foreigners really envy you all? The wishes of foreigners are: We also want to experience the work of God, we will suffer anything for it. We want to obtain the truth too! We also want to gain some insight, gain some stature, but unfortunately we do not have that environment. ... Making this group of people complete in the country of the great red dragon, making them endure this suffering, can be said to be God's greatest exaltation. It was once said: 'I have long ago brought My glory from Israel to the East.' Do you all understand the meaning of this statement now? How should you walk the path ahead? How should you pursue the truth? If you do not pursue the truth then how can you obtain the work of the Holy Spirit? Once you lose the work of the Holy Spirit, then you will be in the most danger. The suffering at present is insignificant. Do you know what it will do for you?" ("Those Who Have Lost the Work of the Holy Spirit Are Most at Risk" in Records of Christ's Talks). From these words of God, I could see that there is great meaning in people today being able to suffer. It is to allow people to gain the truth, and the suffering occurs because of God's work, even more because of God's grace and elevation—it is a special favor for us. Just as God said, "The suffering at present is insignificant. Do you know what it will do for you?" Pondering these words, although I was aware that suffering has value and meaning, I wasn't at all clear on what God wanted to accomplish in me through this suffering. I considered this: Although I do not understand the meaning of suffering at this time, the only thing I can do is to really pursue the truth, to seek the truth more, because only if I gain the truth can I truly understand the meaning of suffering, and only then can I be rid of this contamination within me.

I blinked and it was already 2009. Those seven years were gone without me realizing it. I had come that far and finally felt that those seven years had not been as long as I had imagined. Those few years, in God's words of judgment and revelation, in the revelations of God's trials and refinements, I had seen my true face. I had seen that I was, through and through, a child of the great red dragon, because I was full of its poisons, such as the poison of "Don't get up early if there's no benefit, benefit takes the lead in everything." This is a classic representation of the great red dragon. Under the domination of this poison, my belief in God was only to be blessed. Expending myself for God had a time limit, and I desired to suffer little and gain great blessings. In order to rid me of this strong intention to be blessed and transactional attitude within me, God completed multiple trials and refinements on me. Only then was the contamination in my belief in God purified. And I saw within God's revelations that I was full of Satan's corrupt disposition. I was arrogant, deceitful, selfish and despicable, reckless, and perfunctory. They made me see more and more clearly my own true colors, see that I had been too deeply corrupted by Satan, that I was the son of hell. Through His work of judgment and chastisement, my gratitude to God grew, my requirements shrank, my obedience to Him grew, and my love of myself shrank. I only asked to be able to throw off my corrupt satanic disposition, to be a person who truly obeys and worships God. Following God to this day, I have finally understood that God's salvation of mankind truly is not easy. His work is too practical—His work of changing and saving mankind is not as simple as people would imagine. Now I am no longer like a naive child,

just hoping that the day of God will come quickly, but I always feel that my own corruption is too deep, that I am too much in need of God's salvation and too much in need of experiencing more of His judgment and chastisement, His trials and refinements. If I can possess the conscience and reason that should be present in normal humanity, and properly experience God's work, and in the end I can live out the likeness of a true person, my heart will be fulfilled. Now, when I think of what I revealed of myself when the seven-year trial came upon me, I feel that I am too indebted to God, that I wounded His heart too much. If God's work had concluded in 2000, I, who was utterly filthy, certainly would have been a target of perdition and destruction. The seven-year trial really was God's tolerance and compassion for me, and moreover, it was God's truest and realest salvation for me.

Once I had come out of those seven years and I reflected on those words from God that I hadn't understood before: "Did you know that by believing in God in China, being able to undergo these sufferings and enjoy the work of God, that foreigners really envy you all? The wishes of foreigners are: We also want to experience the work of God, we will suffer anything for it. We want to obtain the truth too! We also want to gain some insight, gain some stature, but unfortunately we do not have that environment. ... Making this group of people complete in the country of the great red dragon, making them endure this suffering, can be said to be God's greatest exaltation. It was once said: 'I have long ago brought My glory from Israel to the East.' Do you all understand the meaning of this statement now?" I could understand a bit of the meaning of these words; I could finally feel that suffering truly is meaningful. Even though I suffered while experiencing these trials, only after suffering did I see that what I had gained was so precious, so valuable. Through experiencing these trials, I saw the righteous disposition of Almighty God and His almightiness and wisdom. I understood God's kind intentions, and I had a taste that it was God's profound love for mankind, just like when a father teaches his child. I also experienced the authority and power in His words, and I saw the truth of my own corruption by Satan. I appreciated God's hardships in His work of salvation, and saw that He is holy and honored, and that humans are ugly and despicable. I also experienced how God conquers and saves mankind to bring them onto the correct path of believing in Him. When I think of it now, if God had not performed the work on me of one agonizing trial after another, I could not possibly have gained understanding of these things. Hardships and refinements are so beneficial for people's growth in their lives.

Through them, people can gain the most practical and precious thing in their course of believing in God—the truth. After seeing the value and meaning of suffering, I no longer dream of entering the kingdom riding on a sedan, but I am willing to firmly plant my feet on the ground and experience the work of God, to truly pursue the truth to change myself.

Through experiencing several years of God's work, only now do I have a bit of practical understanding of these words from God: "True faith in God means the following: On the basis of the belief that God holds sovereignty over all things, one experiences His words and His work, purges one's corrupt disposition, satisfies the will of God, and comes to know God. Only a journey of this kind may be called 'faith in God.'" (Preface to The Word Appears in the Flesh). Before I had experienced these trials from God, I was full of a strong intention to be blessed and a transactional attitude. Even though I knew in principle what it was to believe in God and what the goal of belief in God was, I still only had my eyes on being blessed. I paid no mind to the truth, I did not take ridding myself of my corrupt disposition to satisfy God's will and knowing God as the goal of my pursuit. Only now do I understand that when God becomes flesh His primary work is to resolve mankind's intention to be blessed and their transactional attitude. It is because these things truly are obstacles and stumbling blocks between man and their entering into the correct path of believing in God. When these things are harbored within mankind, they will not pursue the truth. They will not have a correct goal in their pursuit; they will walk an incorrect path. This is a path that is not recognized by God. Now, God's work of conquering and salvation has destroyed Satan's fortress within me. I am no longer worried, no longer preoccupied with thoughts of gaining blessings or suffering catastrophe. I am no longer bitterly pursuing extravagant desires, and I am no longer discussing conditions or making requirements about the day of God in order to escape the catastrophe. Without this contamination, I feel much lighter, freer. I can begin to pursue the truth with my feet firmly on the ground. Being able to change this way is the fruit borne of the trials and refinements of Almighty God. It is Almighty God who has led me onto the true path of believing in God. From now on, no matter what kind of trial God performs, no matter how great the painful refinements I suffer, I will accept and obey, and truly experience them. I will seek the truth from them, and achieve a disposition free from corruption to satisfy God's will, in order to repay God's many years of grace of salvation.

93. One's Duty Can Only Be Performed Properly After Remedying Perfunctoriness

By Jingxian, Japan

Ordinarily, during assembly or when doing my spiritual devotions, though I would often read the words of God that related to exposing people's perfunctoriness, I didn't pay much attention to my own entry; in my heart, I didn't believe that this was a serious issue in me, and so rarely sought the truth to remedy the problem of performing my duty perfunctorily. Until, that was, my own perfunctoriness led to major problems in my work. When this perfunctoriness brought harm to the gospel work of the church, it was only through the judgment and chastisement of God's words that I gained some knowledge of the manifestations and origins of my own perfunctoriness whilst performing my duty. I saw that if left unsolved, my problem of perfunctoriness would incur the hate and disdain of God, and that sooner or later He would expose and eliminate me. After that, I began to focus on pursuing the truth to solve the problem of perfunctoriness, so that I could perform my duty adequately.

One day, whilst listening to some brothers and sisters of other churches talk about some good paths to practice for spreading the gospel, I realized that I had heard something similar last year. Back then, I had also felt that practicing thus was much better than our current approach—but later, when I tried to get several responsible persons of the gospel groups to implement these practices, they had said that due to myriad reasons, such practices weren't feasible for us. Though I had felt a little disappointed hearing them say this, I didn't push the issue; that was just how things were. Hearing a similar talk again, I felt reaffirmed; I thought this path of spreading the gospel was really good, and was keen to communicate to the responsible persons about how to draw on others' strengths. And so, during assembly, I told the responsible persons of my own opinions and suggestions. Afterward, I observed that some of them didn't seem overly interested, while others gave reasons why this method of spreading the gospel wouldn't be practicable here. I could tell that they had many outdated ways of thinking and viewpoints that they didn't want to let go of, and that my fellowship hadn't had any effect. But then I thought about how experienced these responsible persons were at spreading the gospel: Though I was responsible for their work, I didn't have much

experience of spreading the gospel. If I was incapable of fellowshiping a practical path, it would be very difficult to change their way of thinking with a few simple words. In my heart, I thought: "It's not going to be easy making them accept these new paths to practice! If I am to explain a feasible basis for these methods and fellowship them clearly, I must find other, more experienced brothers and sisters to help, and try to figure this out. I may well have to discuss it in detail with many people, and talk a lot, in order to be effective. Oh! There are no such brothers and sisters around me, and I don't know any in other countries, either. For me, solving this problem is going to be very difficult. It would take time and effort, and I'd have to pay a high price. It is too much trouble. I also have other work to do. I can't devote all my efforts to solving this one problem! I have said what I should; how much other people accept is up to them. Better to forget this, and I should not be that serious. I've done more or less enough when I get to this point." And in this way, because this problem was not solved in time, there was no improvement in the work of the gospel.

Over the next several days, I felt ill at ease whenever I thought about this. Realizing that my state was wrong, I came before God to pray and search. Later, I read the words of God: "When doing things and performing your duties, do you often reflect upon your behavior and intentions? If you do so only rarely, then you are very liable to make mistakes, which then means that there is still a problem with your stature. If you never do so, then you are no different from the unbelievers; however, if there are times when you do reflect, then you have a bit of the look of a believer. You must spend more time reflecting. You should reflect upon everything: Reflect upon your own state to see whether you live before God, whether the intentions behind your actions are right, whether the motivations and source of your actions could pass inspection by God, and whether you have accepted God's scrutiny. Sometimes the thought will occur to you, 'Doing it this way is fine; it's good enough, isn't it?' However, the assumption inherent in that thought reveals a certain kind of attitude people have when dealing with matters, as well as how they look at their duties. This mentality is a kind of state. Is such a state not an attitude that in which one lacks responsibility and merely goes through the motions when looking at one's duty? You may have yet to reflect on this, and you may feel that it is a natural expression, that it is but a normal manifestation of humanity, and that it means nothing, but if you are often in such a state, in such a condition, then behind it is a disposition that dominates you. This is worthy of

examination, and deserves to be taken seriously; if you do not, then no change will occur within you" ("How to Solve the Problem of Being Careless and Perfunctory When Performing Your Duty" in Records of Christ's Talks). "If you do not put your heart into your duty and are careless, just doing things in the easiest way, then what sort of mentality is this? It is one of just going through the motions, with no loyalty toward your duty, no sense of responsibility, and no sense of mission. Every time you do your duty, you use only half your strength; you do it half-heartedly, do not put your heart into it, and just try to get it over and done without any conscientiousness. You do it in such a relaxed manner that it is like you are just playing around. Will this not lead to problems? Eventually, someone will say that when you perform your duty, you are merely going through a process. And what will God say to this? He will say that you are not trustworthy. That is, if you have been entrusted with a job and, whether it is a job of primary responsibility or one of ordinary responsibility, if you do not put your heart into it and do not live up to your responsibility, and if you do not see it as a mission God has given you or a matter with which God has entrusted you, and you do not do it as your own duty and obligation, then trouble will befall you. 'Not trustworthy'—these two words will define how you go about your duty, and God will state that your character is not up to par. If a matter is entrusted to you and you take this attitude toward it and handle it in this way, then will you be entrusted to do any duties in the future? Can you be entrusted with anything important? Perhaps you could be entrusted, but it depends on how you behave. In God's heart, however, there will always exist some distrust toward you. There will always be some distrust and some dissatisfaction in God's mind, so is this not a problem?" ("Only Through Frequent Contemplation of the Truth Can You Have a Way Forward" in Records of Christ's Talks). Faced with the revelation of God's words, I felt great reproach and accusation in my heart. I saw that my attitude toward my duty was one of perfunctoriness and goldbricking. I thought back to when I had first heard about good paths for spreading the gospel. I had agreed with and approved of these paths, and felt we should accept and practice them. When, however, I actually tried to fellowship about introducing these methods with the brothers and sisters and failed—I was aware that I should fellowship the truth with them to reverse their old ways of thinking and viewpoints. But when I thought of the price I'd have to pay to solve this problem, of how much time and effort it would involve—this was a "major project," and not something that could be fixed straight away—I thought it was too much trouble, I was afraid of the hardship of the flesh, and so I was perfunctory, I just went through the formalities, the motions, believing that "I tried," "I put some effort," "That was more or less enough," and "No one can buckle down on everything." I used these to let myself off the hook, to get past this problem with one eye open and one eye closed; nor did I care whether I had been effective, believing that it was enough just to finish it. Such were the standards by which I acted throughout. My fellowship with the responsible persons was no more than surface deep. I had not really suffered and paid a price to solve their problems; instead, I believed that I had already done enough. In fact, I had used short-term, superficial methods to hoodwink people, so that afterward, when someone brought this problem up, I would have an answer for them; what's more, responsibility for poor performance in spreading the gospel was not my own it was the result of them not accepting the good paths to practice. I even tried to fool God: "O God, this is all I can do." Only now did I realize that I didn't truly try to grasp the will of God, didn't strive to practice and satisfy God according to what He asks, every time I encountered difficulty. Instead, I was often perfunctory, and tried to deceive God. How slippery and crafty I was! I was clearly aware that the brothers' and sisters' difficulties in spreading the gospel hadn't been solved, and that I hadn't fulfilled my responsibility. But for the sake of avoiding hardship of the flesh, I paid no heed even when I saw that the work of the gospel was being obstructed. Was this not making a joke of God's work? I saw that I had not a shred of conscience or rationality, that I couldn't be counted on at all! Once again, I read the words of God: "... before I created you, I already knew of the unrighteousness that existed deep in the human heart, and I knew all the deception and crookedness in the human heart. Therefore, even though there are no traces at all when people do unrighteous things, I still know that the unrighteousness harbored within your hearts surpasses the richness of all things that I created" ("When Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots, You Will Regret All the Evil You Have Done" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). At that moment, it became clear to me that God's judgment and chastisement had come upon me. God had seen into my inmost being, and though no human knew of my devious thoughts, to God, they were crystal clear. I hadn't taken responsibility for the commission that God had entrusted to me. I had been disingenuous, which had obstructed the work of the gospel. To all appearances, it looked as if I was performing my duty—but in fact, I was

being perfunctory and trying to deceive God. I had no fear of God. Before God's words, I felt ashamed.

Later, I read the words of God: "If, when you do things, you put a little more heart into them, as well as a little more kindness, responsibility, and consideration, then you will be able to put forth more effort. When you can do this, the results of the duties that you perform will improve. Your results will be better, and this will satisfy both other people and God" ("Entry Into Life Must Start From Fulfilling Your Duty" in Records of Christ's Talks). In a fellowship, it is said: "What does it mean to be perfunctory? Simply put, it means going through the motions for others to see, so they think 'He's or she's done it.' Can such an approach achieve results? (No.) Such is how those without burden do things; this is how they perform their duty. They do not truly shoulder the burden of this work, but they can't get away with not doing it. If they don't do it people will see there's a problem with this leader, and so they have to go through the motions for appearance's sake. God said, 'This is doing service. They are not performing their duty.' So, what's the difference between doing service and performing one's duty? People who truly do their duty have a sense of responsibility—which comes from truly wanting to remedy the problem, truly wanting to do this work properly, wanting to satisfy God, and wanting to repay God's love. And so, what is their resolve when they do these things? That they must be done, and they must be done well. The problem must be solved. They won't rest until it is done, they will not stop until it is fixed. Such is the burden with which they carry out their work, and thus it is easy for them to be effective. This is what's meant by performing one's duty. Only when your work and performance of your duty is effective are you performing your duty; if there is no effect, then you are being perfunctory, you are muddling along. This is what's known as doing service; performance of duty that is ineffective is doing service—of this there is no doubt, there is nothing wrong about this!" ("How to Enter Into the Truths for Discerning False Leaders and Antichrists" in Sermons and Fellowship XI). From God's words and this fellowship, I found a path to practice: Performing one's duty requires earnestness and sincerity, it requires treating everything seriously and responsibly; only this will satisfy God's will. Trying to avoid solving real problems, being perfunctory and going through the motions is deceiving God and toying with Him, and will definitely not have any effect. God did not wish to see me being perfunctory, and opposing Him, whilst performing my duty. He hoped that I could approach His commission with honesty, rectify my attitude toward performing

my duty, face all difficulties practically, and spend more time thinking about how to solve problems, how to be effective; only practicing thus is after God's heart. At that moment, I realized that the problems with the gospel groups could not be put aside any longer. Although fellowshiping and turning around the outdated perspectives of the gospel groups would not be easy, I did not want to avoid it any longer. Next, I looked for the opportunity to discuss the problems of spreading the gospel in detail with the responsible persons Brother Zhang and Brother Zhao—how to flexibly adopt the methods of spreading the gospel in other places and incorporate their advantages. After the fellowship, Brother Zhang and Brother Zhao said they were happy to accept this and explore how to practice it. Afterward, the brothers and sisters were more agile when spreading the gospel, and their effectiveness improved, too.

Having experienced this matter, I was capable of a little discernment when it came to my own perfunctory state whilst performing my duty. I began to deliberately forsake my flesh and focus on practicing the truth and faithfully performing my duty. But I still didn't have much knowledge of the substance, root, and severity of the consequences of my perfunctoriness. Later, God set out an environment to allow me to continue learning my lesson, to solve the problem of perfunctoriness.

Some time afterward, I discovered certain issues with the gospel groups. As a person in charge of the work, Brother Zhang was quite arrogant. He was overbearing in his words and behavior, and reluctant to accept the suggestions of the other brothers and sisters. He also had a controlling influence over Brother Zhao, who worked with him. Together, the two of them were incapable of discussing and seeking to solve the real difficulties in the work of the gospel. Brother Zhao was also very conservative, and abided by much doctrine in his spreading of the gospel. These two reasons hindered progress in the work of the gospel. I had held special fellowships with them to address their issues, but there wasn't any great change. Afterward, I stopped trying to get them to cooperate harmoniously; it was enough to keep things as they were. Toward the problem of Brother Zhang's unwillingness to accept the suggestions of others, there were times when I chose to give in, and times when I simply kept an eye on things. But I did not seek the truth to solve this problem. Several months previously, Brother Zhao's rigid adherence to doctrine had interrupted the work; I fellowshiped this to him, and he took it in, but afterward I discovered that in certain areas, he was still sticking to doctrine and being inflexible. Sometimes I would point these things

out to him, but he was good at upholding himself. In my heart, I thought: "It's going to take a lot of effort to turn his views around. I need to find some principles, speak to him in light of what is actually manifested in him. I might have to find other brothers and sisters with experience of spreading the gospel to communicate together with him in order to have an effect." Thinking of the trouble that solving this problem would involve, I decided to let things run their course. Although I realized that the problems with Brother Zhang and Brother Zhao would affect the work of the gospel, I felt that, for the time being, there wasn't anyone better in the gospel groups who could take on this commission. It wasn't like their performance of their duty was totally ineffective—merely passable. It was fine as long as the upper-level leadership didn't have anything to say to me about it. There were some things that would always bug you, and some problems that could never be solved. So when it came to the problems with these two brothers, I didn't spend any more time searching just how I should approach this, nor did I measure whether the benefits of their performance of their duty outweighed the drawbacks.

Soon after, the church conducted a public opinion survey. The results left me very alarmed. Many brothers and sisters reported that Brother Zhang never accepted other people's suggestions, that he often acted arbitrarily, that he always had to have the last word, and often lectured and dealt with other people condescendingly. Some brothers and sisters were afraid of meeting him. They had no choice but to reluctantly go along with his arrangements, feeling constrained and living amid negativity. The facts showed that Brother Zhang was walking the path of the antichrist. When it came to Brother Zhao, the brothers and sisters reported that he was intransigent, and rigidly adhered to doctrine. He rarely guided the brothers and sisters in entry into principle. During the process of spreading the gospel, he asked the other brothers and sisters to do a lot of work that served no purpose. All this showed that he did not understand the spirit and did not understand principle. Their actions caused considerable obstruction and interruption to the work of the gospel. They also brought many constraints and pain to the brothers and sisters. According to principle, Brother Zhang and Brother Zhao must be removed.

My being perfunctory and not doing real work had brought harm to the work of the gospel. It had also caused many difficulties for the brothers and sisters. Thinking this, I felt a great deal of condemnation in my heart. Sensing that I can't shirk this responsibility, I prayed to God: "O God! For me to have brought such harm to the church's work today is the

result of my being negligent in my duties, being perfunctory, indulging in the blessings of my status, and not doing real work. I am indebted to You, and I feel sorry to my brothers and sisters. O God! I would accept Your judgment and chastisement in this matter, so that I may know myself more deeply, and truly repent to You."

Later, I read in the fellowships that, "If you are someone who muddles through in their duty and contrives to be deceitful, this shows that you are a deceitful and crooked person who belongs to Satan" (The Fellowship From the Above). "Everyone has the same problem in the fulfillment of their duty, and that's acting perfunctorily. It's as though no one deserves their conscientiousness—if someone does something for a person and takes it very seriously, then that person must be someone they greatly respect, someone who can help them a lot, or someone they owe a big debt of gratitude toward, or else they would not take it seriously. The word 'profit' is written large on mankind's nature; people only take something seriously if they receive some profit in return, and if it is of no profit to them they will adopt a perfunctory attitude. That's the nature of human beings, and also a characteristic of corrupted mankind. All people are self-seeking, so all people act perfunctorily and are happy just getting by. It might be a bit better if mankind could genuinely see performing its duty as something that is for God and is to be taken seriously for God's sake. If mankind really has a heart that fears God, then people would be unlikely to act perfunctorily when fulfilling their duty" (The Fellowship From the Above). Holding myself up for comparison with these fellowships, and reflecting upon my own actions, I felt great shame. I saw that my own nature was especially selfish and crafty, that everything I did was to protect my own interests. My mantra was that law of survival of "If there were no benefit to getting up early, who would get up early?" Things of benefit must be done, those without benefit, not. Performance of one's duty was not to repay God's love, but to strike a deal with God. I had always tried to get more blessings by paying less of a price, and thus was I liable to be perfunctory and try to deceive God. I thought back to how, in approaching the problems with Brother Zhang and Brother Zhao, I had been clearly aware that what was manifested in them would hinder the work of the gospel—but seeing that, to all appearances, they were performing their duty, and feeling that there was no one better to replace them, I did nothing more than fellowship with them a few times, unwilling to pay any greater price to resolve this. When performing my duty, I was satisfied merely with getting others to think that I did a good job, or when the upper-level leadership wouldn't be able to find any major problems; I gave absolutely no

thought to what God thought, or how He saw this. I knew full well that I hadn't completely solved the problem, nor did I try to figure out what the source and substance of their issues were, such that it had taken all this time to replace them—which was a major obstruction to the work of the gospel. God had uplifted me by giving me such an important duty, hoping that I would be mindful of His will—but I gave no thought to repaying God's love, and instead played the role of Satan's lackey, trying to fool and deceive God and bringing destruction upon God's work. I lacked the slightest humanity. I was truly despicable and hateful, I was genuinely unfit to live before God! God's righteous disposition is unoffendable by man; how could my actions not be despised by God?

Afterward, I read God's words: "As for what people's intentions are and how much effort they put into performing their duties, God scrutinizes and can see. It is crucial that people put all their heart and strength into what they do. Their cooperation is crucial, too. To strive to have no regrets over the duties one has completed and over one's past actions, and to get to where one does not owe God anything—this is what is meant by giving all one's heart and strength. If, today, you do not give all your heart and strength, then later, when something goes wrong, and there are consequences, will it not be too late for regrets? You will be forever indebted, and it will be a stain on you! To be stained is a transgression when people perform their duties. Strive to devote all your heart and strength to what should and needs to be done when fulfilling your duties. If you do not simply do them perfunctorily, and if you do not have any regrets, then the duties you perform during this time shall be remembered. That which is remembered are good deeds before God. And what are the things that are not remembered? (Transgressions and evil doings.) They are transgressions. People might not accept that they are evil doings if they were described thus right now, but if a day comes when there are serious consequences to this matter, when it has a negative impact, then at that time you will sense that this is not just a behavioral transgression, but an evil doing. And when you realize that, you will think to yourself, 'This wouldn't have happened if I'd realized this earlier! If I'd given it a little more thought, if I'd put in a little more effort, then this would not have come to pass.' Nothing will wipe this eternal stain from your heart. If it gives rise to an eternal debt, then you will be in trouble" ("How to Solve the Problem of Being Careless and Perfunctory When Performing Your Duty" in Records of Christ's Talks). Pondering God's words, I felt deeply touched. I

thought of how I had been directed by my own crafty, selfish nature, about how I always disingenuously tried to avoid paying a price when performing my duty, about how I hadn't immediately identified and redeployed those responsible persons who were not fit for use, such that the work of the gospel was hindered, and the brothers and sisters lived amid the darkness and constraints. I had transgressed before God. If God's timely judgment and chastisement had not checked my evil steps, who knows what great evil I would have committed in the future? At that moment, the more I thought about this, the more afraid I became. Being perfunctory in the performance of one's duty was so dangerous—it could interrupt the work of the church at any time! Only after seeing the grievous consequences of being perfunctory did I realize that if I didn't focus on accepting the judgment and chastisement of God, and on practicing the words of God, if I was slipshod in the performance of my duty, then I would never be able to achieve faithfulness to God, much less the deliverance from my corrupt disposition and the salvation of God. At that moment, I had some resolve and desire to pursue the truth and attain faithfulness in performing my duty.

After that, we used principle to find people more appropriate to replace Brother Zhang and Brother Zhao. Yet the problems in the gospel groups remained, and so I prayed to God: "O God! There are still many problems in the gospel groups that haven't been solved. Some good methods of practice haven't been fully implemented. Because, previously, I was lax in searching for the truth, some problems have stuck around until now. This time I must search properly to see how to solve these problems. O God! May You guide me." Afterward, I found some better-performing brothers and sisters in the gospel groups to discuss the gospelpreaching path in detail. I learned a lot. Next, I prepared to hold assembly with everyone and fellowship the problems with performing our duty. That evening, I mulled things over as I read through the materials, trying to figure out how to make preparations effectively. I summed up problems in several areas and looked at the relevant words of God for an answer. When I had gotten halfway through, I realized that there were still a lot of details to be sorted out—and, seeing that it was already late, those thoughts of giving in and being perfunctory arose unbidden once more: "These problems are going to take a lot of time and effort to find references for. Oh, it's so late—perhaps I shouldn't go into so much detail; in any case, I've already got the overall direction, and the brothers and sisters will be able to understand it. This'll do." But as I thought of stopping to rest, I felt uneasy within my heart.

At that moment, I thought of the words of God: "Whenever you want to be slack and just go through the motions, whenever you want to be lazy, and whenever you allow yourself to be distracted and wish to just go have fun, you should think it through: In behaving like this, am I being untrustworthy? Is this putting my heart into doing my duty? Am I being disloyal by doing this? In doing this, am I failing to live up to the trust God has placed in me? This is how you should self-reflect. You should think, 'I have not taken this matter seriously. Back then, I felt there was a problem, but I didn't treat it as being serious; I just glossed it over carelessly. Now this problem still hasn't been resolved. What sort of person am I?' You will have identified the problem and come to know yourself a little. Should you stop when you have a little knowledge? Are you finished once you have confessed your sins? You must repent and make a turn-around!" ("Only Through Frequent Contemplation of the Truth Can You Have a Way Forward" in Records of Christ's Talks). The judgment and chastisement of God's words made me realize that I was once again being perfunctory; that, once again, I was following the flesh and trying to take shortcuts. At the same time, I was clear in my heart that if I did not identify the critical issues and carry out a targeted fellowship, this would surely have an impact on effectiveness. To achieve the optimal effect, I had to forsake the flesh. As a result, I gave it a lot of thought and listed each of the problems that were in most urgent need of resolution. Although this took me well into the night, I felt steadfast in my heart. The next day, we assembled to fellowship the existing problems. The brothers and sisters strongly approved of the new path and measures. Seeing that the problems that had confounded us for so long had been solved, and that everyone had been liberated, I felt great comfort in my heart. After that, we started practicing according to the new path and methods. The work of the gospel was gradually effective and I couldn't help but give thanks to God in my heart.

After experiencing this, I had a genuine sense of just how deeply I had been corrupted by Satan. I had lost my conscience and rationality; although, on the outside, I was able to give things up and expend myself—and was even able to pay a price in certain matters—because I had not gained the truth and the life, my corrupt disposition still held power within me. My treacherous and crafty nature, a nature that was blind to anything but my own interests, directed me at every moment. Whatever I did, it was for my own benefit. When performing my duty, I was always disingenuous and tried to deceive God; I had not the slightest realization that a created being should repay God's love and be mindful of His will.

Thanks to God's revelation, I saw how lowly and ignoble I was, that I had not the slightest semblance of humanity. Particularly when I thought of the harm I brought to the work of God's house because of my perfunctoriness, I felt that I was so untrustworthy, and so hurtful to God. I felt greater hate for myself, too, and had an ever stronger desire to shed my corrupt disposition and be saved by God. May God set forth more environments to judge and chastise me, so that I could be after His heart when performing my duty as soon as possible.

94. The Riches of Life

By Wang Jun, Shandong Province

The years since my wife and I accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days have been spent under the oppression of the CCP. During this time, although I have had weaknesses, pain, and tears, I have gained a great deal from experiencing the persecution of the CCP. These bitter experiences have not only made me clearly see CCP's reactionary, evil satanic nature and its ugly countenance, but I have also known my own corrupt essence. It has also allowed me to experience God's almightiness and wisdom. I have truly experienced and recognized the actual significance of God utilizing the CCP as a foil, and my confidence in following God has become firmer and firmer.

After accepting God's work in the last days, my wife and I fulfilled our duty by providing hospitality in our home. At that time, there were brothers and sisters living with us and they were frequently going in and out of our house. So, we were relatively well-known in the area for believing in God. In the winter of 2003, the oppression of the CCP became more and more severe. One day, our leader said to us: "The police have their eyes on you. You're in danger of being arrested at any moment; find a safe place to hide as soon as possible so that you're not arrested." After hearing this, I was shocked. I can't put words to the feeling in my heart when I thought of leaving my home. I thought: "This tile-roofed house that I worked so hard to build, that we have lived in for less than a year—I'm not willing to leave it just like that! Oh God, if You could just let us live here for a few years before we have to leave, that would be fine. Living somewhere else isn't as convenient, as comfortable as living at home." But due to the oppression of the CCP, I had no other choice but to sell our new house and move. As I was looking around our newly-built house, I felt a wave of sorrow and pain. I

really couldn't bear to part with it; I felt that selling it at that time was such a shame. Just as I was accounting for the gains and losses of the flesh, I thought of the following words from God: "Abraham offered up Isaac. What have you offered up? Job offered up everything. What have you offered up? So many people have given their lives, laid down their heads, shed their blood in order to seek the true way. Have you paid that price? By comparison, you are not at all qualified to enjoy such great grace" ("The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words pierced to the core of my heart like a double-edged sword. I felt terribly ashamed. It was true! In order to meet God's requirements, Abraham was willing to bear great pain to part with what he loved, to return his only son as a burnt offering to God. When Satan and God made a bet, although Job lost all of his possessions and his ten children, he was still able to praise and extol the name of Jehovah God. Even in the end when he suffered the tortures of being abandoned by his friends and family and being stricken with illness, he would still rather curse the day of his birth than blame God. He made a strong and resounding witness for God and Satan suffered a complete and humiliating defeat. There were also all those saints and prophets through the ages—in order to follow God's will, some of them gave up their youth and their marriages, some of them gave up their families and relatives and the wealth of the world. Some even laid down their own lives for God's work. But looking at myself, even though I was enjoying the rare grace of salvation that generations of saints never enjoyed and rich words for life bestowed by God, what had I given up for God? What had I offered up for God? Because of the CCP's current oppression and arrests, I had no choice but to leave home so that I wouldn't fall into their evil clutches and be subjected to brutal persecution. However, all I cared about was my new tile-roofed house and the enjoyment of the flesh. I didn't even value the safety of my own life just for the sake of a bit of fleshly enjoyment right in front of me. I really am greedy for comfort and I value money over life! Today, I wasn't willing to leave my home behind even for the sake of my safety. If I were asked to turn my back on my own personal interests and devote myself to God or give up my life for God's work, how could someone like me—who loves money as life itself, who covets the enjoyment of the flesh—be willing to devote himself to God? Would I not just run away straight away? I thought of myself often shooting off my mouth, saying: "I am willing to follow Peter's example and be a pioneer for loving God. I am willing to give up everything and to expend everything for God. I only want to satisfy God." But when faced

with an actual situation, all this had become lies. I only thought of my own immediate interests, and I actually tried to bargain with God for fleshly enjoyment. Then, I asked myself: Could it be that this is the love I have to return to God? God has said: "If you love, then you will gladly dedicate yourself, will gladly suffer hardship, you will be compatible with Me, you will forsake all that you have for Me.... If not, your love would not be love at all, but deceit and betrayal! What kind of love is yours? Is it a true love? Or false? How much have you forsaken? How much have you offered up? How much love have I received from you? Do you know? Your hearts are filled with evil, betrayal, and deceit ..." ("Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I made an oath in front of God but did not honor it. Isn't this trying to deceive God, to fool Him? When I thought of that, I couldn't help but prostrate myself in front of God and pray: "Oh Almighty God! I always used to believe that I was willing to host any number of brothers and sisters without ever whining about any hardships, and that this was an expression of my love for You. But only now have I seen the revelation of the facts that my so-called love was conditional and selective. It was all based on what I wanted, and I only had it in a comfortable environment. But when You required me to endure fleshly hardships and compromise my own interests, my 'love' just disappeared. From that I saw that I didn't really contain love for You and that I was not at all performing my duty to repay Your love, but it was to use a small price I paid to barter for great blessings. I really am an opportunist through and through. I simply am not fit to live in front of You, and I am even less fit to receive all the sustenance for life that You provide! Oh God, I am no longer willing to deceive You and rebel against You, to hurt You. I am willing to keep my vow, to put aside my own personal benefit, and to obey Your orchestrations and arrangements." After that, I sold that new house, bought a two-room apartment in an unfamiliar place, and we resumed our hosting duties there.

In the blink of an eye it was the spring of 2004 and unexpectedly, the CCP police once again had their eyes on us. They sent two spies to our house pretending to be fortune-tellers to get some information. I gave thanks to God for His enlightenment and guidance; we saw through their scheme, and relying on God, we employed wisdom and ushered them out. After the church learned of this, our duties were suspended. They suggested us to find jobs in order to safeguard our environment. From that time on, we had almost no contact with our brothers and sisters. The local situation became more and more tense. Six months later, we unexpectedly received a notification from the church saying that a Judas had sold us out

and that we needed to move as quickly as possible to avoid falling into the hands of the CCP. Facing this situation, I couldn't help but have a hatred for the CCP. I thought of the past when I had heard the CCP's words proclaiming: "Citizens have freedom of religion, and their legitimate rights and interests are protected." There were also churches being built; my adoration of the Party really increased. But that day, in the face of reality, I finally clearly saw the ugly face of the CCP. I saw through its machinations and realized that what it proclaimed and what it did were worlds apart—the things the CCP said and did were nothing but lies and deception. They were all despicable means to deceive and blind people. The CCP was sinister and ruthless, cunning and deceitful, perverse, against Heaven, and utterly reactionary. It was a demon that devoured and brought harm to people! God incarnate came to the earth to save His creation, mankind. This was God's love for man; it was an enormous, joyous thing, but the CCP would not allow God to come among mankind, would not allow people to worship God and walk a proper path in their lives. It did everything it could to frantically hunt Christ, it cruelly persecuted the chosen people of God, and tried to disrupt and destroy God's work. It attempted to exterminate God, to kill all the chosen people of God, and to demolish God's work in the last days. It truly was utterly reactionary and intolerable by Heaven! Just then these words of God just came into my mind: "Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin! ... Why put up such an impenetrable obstacle to the work of God? Why employ various tricks to deceive God's folk? Where is the true freedom and legitimate rights and interests? Where is the fairness? Where is the comfort? Where is the warmth? Why use deceitful schemes to trick God's people? Why use force to suppress the coming of God? Why not allow God to freely roam upon the earth that He created? Why hound God until He has nowhere to rest His head?" ("Work and Entry (8)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Through God's words I was able to clearly see the ugly face of the CCP, to clearly see the truth of its resistance to and persecution of God as well as its harm and restraints of people. I thought of how many brothers and sisters who, under its oppression and pursuit, could not return home and led the lives of vagabonds, of the homeless. I thought of how many brothers and sisters had suffered the destructiveness of its inhuman torture, how many brothers and sisters had been imprisoned on false charges and passed so many dark days, leading hellish lives no better than a dog or a pig, only because they believed in God and performed their duty. I also thought of how many brothers

and sisters who had no freedom at all under its surveillance; they could not lead a normal life. Today, us believing in God and offering hospitality for our brothers and sisters was merely performing our duty as creations. We were carrying out our responsibilities, and absolutely had not contravened the laws or regulations, but we were still subject to CCP's baseless strictures and oppression. We could only uproot ourselves and go to yet another place to fulfill our duty. In spite of this, the police did not relax in their pursuit of us, they actually disguised themselves as fortune-tellers to dig up information, thinking they could find some evidence to arrest and persecute us. The CCP truly is immeasurably sinister, treacherous, despicable, and vicious! At that thought, I felt even greater righteous indignation and was full of deep hatred for the CCP. Thanks be to God! It was God's practical work and words that completely removed the mask of the CCP and fully exposed the ugliness of its hypocrisy with an appearance of dignity. This finally opened my eyes which had been blind. My spirit was awakened, and I saw the clarity of the truth that the CCP builds up its name by deceiving the public and the truth of its deceit and harmfulness. So I had the confidence and determination to firmly forsake it, to reject it. Meanwhile, I gained an even greater understanding of God's righteousness, holiness, brightness, beauty and goodness. I saw His great salvation and care for us corrupt humans. No matter how harsh the environment was, no matter what kind of resistance and oppression there was from the CCP, God has never given up His salvation for us. He is still enduring all suffering to do the work He must do. In this filthy, evil world, God is all we can rely upon—He gives us the greatest love and the greatest salvation. This has led to my aspiration and longing for a lifetime of pursuing the truth, and following Christ. Thanks be to God for laying out such a feast for me to partake of, that in the midst of misery I can gain discernment and insight. From now on, no matter how the CCP persecutes or pursues me, I will rely on God, not be intimidated by its despotism, and break through the control of the forces of darkness. I only wish to closely follow God and fulfill the duty of a created being in order to repay the grace of God's salvation.

Because of the harsh conditions that didn't allow us to stay there for long, we rushed to move to another unfamiliar place. After our arrival, a sister from the local church told us that this was an ethnic minority area and that the CCP government had less strict control over this place. So the situation there was less tense. But my heart wasn't at ease. I thought to myself: "The CCP government is currently in power; it's feels like dark clouds are bearing

down on us. It will not allow us to believe in God in peace." Sure enough, when we had been there for just 20 days, CCP spies came to our home under the guise of collecting a sanitation fee. Only seeing my wife at home, they started searching for me inside and outside of the house, sternly asking my wife where she was from, where her residence was registered, and why she had come here. One of them described my appearance and asked her to confirm it. My wife didn't think much of it and said "Yes," and as soon as they heard that they exchanged a look with each other. Only then did my wife realize that they knew what I looked like without having seen me. It had to have been the Judas who sold me out, who had even described my appearance to them. After the CCP spies left they went to the house of the neighbors just behind us. It was not until then that we realized that they had been monitoring us. We immediately reported this to the church. Before long, a sister from the church wrote us a letter that said: "The local police have had contact with the police from your hometown. They are determined to arrest those of you who have been sold out. They want to first observe the situation with unannounced visits and get a grasp on you, and when the time is right they'll make a clean sweep of all of you. Your situation is perilous, you should go back to your hometown in Shandong and hide out. Get on the road quickly—the sooner the better." After receiving this note, we didn't dare to brush it off. We decided to leave the next day. That evening, I was tossing and turning and absolutely could not get to sleep. I was not only incredibly angry at the mad persecution of the CCP, but I also felt confused and disconsolate about the road ahead. Oh! At first I thought that believing in God was simple, that all I needed to do was acknowledge God with my words, believe in Him in my heart, and do my best to fulfill my duties and I would receive God's praise. I had never imagined that this road would become more difficult the longer I walked it. Just as I was feeling worried and sad because of my arduous journey of believing in God, His words enlightened me: "People do not take belief in God seriously, and this is entirely because believing in God is too unfamiliar, too strange for them. In this way, they fall short of God's demands. In other words, if people do not know God, and do not know His work, then they are not fit for God's use, and still less are they able to satisfy His will. 'Belief in God' means believing that there is a God; this is the simplest concept as regards believing in God. What's more, believing that there is a God is not the same as truly believing in God; rather, it is a kind of simple faith with strong religious overtones. True faith in God means the following: On the basis of the belief that God holds

sovereignty over all things, one experiences His words and His work, purges one's corrupt disposition, satisfies the will of God, and comes to know God. Only a journey of this kind may be called 'faith in God.'" (Preface to The Word Appears in the Flesh). I pondered these words in silence. Inside, I gradually brightened: Yes, it is the truth that true faith in God means experiencing His words and work based on a belief that He holds sovereignty over all things, obeying all of God's arrangements, and pursuing truth so we can be freed of our corrupt dispositions, fulfill the desire of God, and come to know Him. Only through such a journey can we be said to believe in God. It absolutely was not as simple as I had believed, that I only needed to acknowledge Him with my words, never stop having gatherings with others, reading the words of God, and fulfilling my duty. This type of belief of mine was just a vague religious belief and it did not contain the essence of belief in God. Even if I followed to the end, I could not possibly satisfy God's will, nor could I gain His praise. I thought of Peter; in his belief in God, he emphasized taking God's word into his everyday life to experience it. No matter what happened, he was seeking to satisfy God's will and requirements. Whether it was judgment and chastisement, trials and refinement, or adversity and suffering as well as disciplining, he was always able to accept it and obey. From that, he sought the truth, pursued knowledge of himself and knowledge of God. His pursuit of many years not only resulted in a change in his own disposition, but he also came to have greater knowledge of God than any other through the ages. Peter's faith was most in line with God's will, and it was the most up to standard. But I had too simple of an outlook on believing in God. I thought that I continually have gatherings with others, read the words of God, and fulfill my duty and I would be able to receive His praise. What difference is there between my ideas and those of religious people? In the end, wouldn't it all still be in vain? Only then did I recognize that all my years of believing in God were awash in confusion. I didn't even know what it meant to believe in God. If it hadn't been for God's practical revelations and the guidance and enlightenment of His words, I would still have been following God while living in my own conceptions and imagination. I still would not have seen that I am truly a religious believer who only follows his own way. I couldn't help but feel a little scared then. I realized that if I continued with this confused way of following God without focusing on experiencing His work, or focusing on pursuing the truth or a change in disposition, in the end I would certainly be eliminated by God. When I became aware of my perilous condition, I immediately offered up a prayer to God: "Oh God! Thank You for Your

revelations and Your enlightenment which have allowed me to understand the truth and to recognize the errors in my belief in God. Oh God! I am willing to follow the example of Peter's practices, to pursue the path that he took. Since I have chosen this path now, I am willing to go forward with confidence no matter how treacherous the road is or how many dangers lurk ahead of me. I am willing to have the will to suffer, to obey Your orchestrations and arrangements, and to truly experience Your words and work according to Your requirements of me so that I can become a creation of Yours who truly believes in You and worships You." I felt very relieved after praying and I had confidence to experience the work of God.

The next day, we got on a train to Shandong. After hiding out for a period of time in our hometown as well as a few setbacks, we were finally able to have contact with the church, and we resumed our life of the church. But the CCP government had not relaxed in its persecution of us. No matter where we went, we were always subject to its restrictions. The police came by frequently to inspect residence permits—sometimes they would come twice in one day and absolutely insisted that we register for temporary residence permits, otherwise they would drive us out. However, we couldn't show them any documentation at all. So, moving house became a commonplace thing for us. Later, we moved into a larger house that the son of an elderly brother in the church rented, so this brother hosted us there. But there not only did we have to register for a temporary residence permit, but we had to have an entry and exit permit or else we wouldn't be able to come and go, much less be able to move in. We had to hide inside of the house and we couldn't go out. Even so, the police still did not give up. They still frequently went door to door conducting inspections. From this we saw that in this dictatorial, faithless country ruled by an atheist party, belief in God was suppressed and oppressed at every turn; there was no freedom. Particularly during the 2008 Olympics the situation was very tense, very harsh. The government used every possible means to monitor people and police were standing guard everywhere. However, it was under these circumstances that we saw God's almightiness, wisdom, and His wonderful deeds, that it was God orchestrating everything. Every time the police wanted to conduct an inspection, by God's arrangement, the man watching the main gate would come tell our elderly brother in advance so that we could get quickly prepared and hide beforehand. There was one time when the police carried out a surprise inspection while we were in the middle of a meeting. We heard the dogs outside barking like crazy. The people conducting the inspection had forced their way into the courtyard and under the pretense of checking

electricity meters, they were going all over, looking around, searching, interrogating, and threatening our elderly brother, who used wisdom from God to get them to leave. We were all afraid after they left. Luckily we had all hidden in time—if they had found us or the books of God's words, the consequences would have been unimaginable. Just as there was fear lingering in my heart, I thought of these words of God: "Don't suffer the control of any person, matter or object; so long as it conforms to My will then practice it in accordance with My words. Have no fear, as My hands support you, and I will surely protect you from all evil ones" ("Chapter 28" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "Act courageously! Just keep your heads up! Do not be afraid: I—your Father—am here to support you, and you will not suffer. As long as you pray and supplicate before Me frequently, I will bestow all faith upon you. Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult. Cheer and jump to your hearts' content! Everything is beneath your feet and in My grasp. Isn't accomplishment or destruction decided by one word of Mine?" ("Chapter 75" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words made me feel ashamed. It was true. Aren't all people, events, and things in this world within God's orchestrations and arrangements? Don't they all turn, renew, and change according to His thoughts? The CCP is also a creature in God's hands. No matter how savage it is, it cannot escape His rule. If He wants to destroy it, wouldn't He just have to say the word? God has not destroyed it, but He has allowed its savagery for a time. It is so that it does the service of perfecting us through its oppression, bolstering our faith and courage, and it is to allow us to know God's wisdom, omnipotence, and wonderful deeds through our experiences. It is also to allow us to better recognize the evil, reactionary nature as well as the ugly countenance of the CCP in its oppression, so that we may hate it, reject it, betray it, and curse it from the bottom of our hearts. Under the guidance and leadership of God's words, not only was I no longer timid and fearful, but I was full of gratitude for God. I was willing to be obedient within this environment and deal with the CCP, to accept God's own training and perfection, to seek to understand and gain more of the truth. Over the following few months, the local police would make two or three surprise visits every month, so we were unable to prepare for them. But it was under these terrible conditions that we were able to escape their view time and time again under God's care and protection. There were always

near misses, and things always barely turned out okay. After these experiences, I couldn't help but feel genuine gratitude and praise for God deep in my heart. I thought: "Oh Almighty God! You truly are the Lord of the universe who is in charge of all things. Your wonderful deeds are everywhere! Through my actual experiences I have not only had a taste of Your omnipotence and wisdom, but I have seen that You are my strong rear guard, You are my refuge and I have seen that the CCP is nothing but a paper tiger. When looking from the outside it is all claws and teeth and terribly overbearing, but when it faces You, it is so powerless—it cannot withstand a single blow. It can only obediently heed Your assignments and orchestrations. As long as I have the confidence to rely on You I can triumph over all of the forces of darkness. Oh God! Although I am now in this demon-controlled country, I will not be under the constraints of any person, event, or thing. I will only rise up from the oppression of darkness, stand up from this place of filth to act as evidence of Your victory."

Under the terrible circumstances of being pursued by the CCP, I deeply felt that it was Almighty God's words leading me through crisis after crisis, helping me triumph time after time in Satan's tests. It was God's great grace and protection that brought me here today. Thinking back on the road I've taken, I've suffered the oppression and pursuit of the CCP, I've been unable to return home and have been displaced, I have had to move from place to place, and I haven't had a "warm nest" as worldly people do, nor have I been able to be as light-hearted as them or lead a leisurely life. And because of the oppression of the CCP, my heart has endured significant suffering and pain. However, because I have experienced these bitter situations, I have gained the riches of life. By undergoing the CCP's oppression I realized that my belief had been vague over my years of faith, and that I have selfish, despicable nature and essence. I also understood the true meaning and value of believing in God, and even more, I saw that I did not possess the true reality of believing in and loving God. Through this experience of its oppression, I also became aware of the CCP's insidious, despicable, vicious, fierce, evil, perverse, reactionary essence which is contrary to God. I fully saw that the CCP is the embodiment of Satan and I also recognized God's essence of righteousness, trustworthiness, brightness, beauty and goodness. In particular, I came to appreciate God's wisdom and almightiness, as well as His wondrous deeds. It was through this very practical experience that I thoroughly saw how Satan corrupts, dupes, and harms mankind. From that I developed a deep hatred for it, and I was willing to rely on God's words to throw off the corrupt disposition of Satan, to be able to thoroughly turn my back on Satan,

to live as a real person and satisfy God's heart. I give thanks to Almighty God! It was God's practical work that allowed me to personally taste such a rich feast of life. It not only awakened my heart, but it allowed me to gain so many great riches of life, and before I knew it I had stepped onto the proper path of believing in God. I give heartfelt thanks and praise to God!

95. Pledging My Life to Devotion

By Zhou Xuan, Shandong Province

April 3, 2003 was the most unforgettable day of my life. I went with a sister to preach the gospel to a potential believer. Little did I expect that she had been deceived by the rumors spread by the CCP, and she reported us to the police. As a result, four plain-clothes police came and aggressively forced the two of us into their vehicle and took us to the police station. On the road, my heart was extremely nervous, because there was a pager, a list of names of some of the members from our church, and a notepad in my bag. I was afraid that the police would discover these things and I was more afraid that my brothers and sisters would call my pager, therefore I continually and urgently prayed to God in my heart: "God, what am I supposed to do? I ask You to provide a way out for me and not let these things fall into the hands of the police." Following this, I took my bag and quietly stuffed it into my waistband and said that my stomach was not feeling good and I had to use the restroom. The police swore at me saying: "You really are a bloody nuisance!" Upon my repeated requests, they had a female police officer watch me as I went to the bathroom. When I removed my belt, the pager fell out and I easily picked it up and threw it into the sewer pipe. Because I was afraid at the time that the female officer would discover the bag in my waistband, I didn't throw it in the pipe, but rather placed it in the garbage can; I thought that I would use the bathroom again at night and then throw it in the toilet. As it turned out, I never went back to that bathroom. Later the police found the bag I had thrown away in the garbage can.

The police locked the sister and I up in a room and ordered us to take all our clothes off so they could search us. They even sifted through our hair to see if we were hiding anything. After they were done searching, they handcuffed us and locked us in the room. When night

came, the police separated us for interrogation. They asked me: "Where are you from? What is your name? When did you come here? What are you doing here? Where do you live? What do you believe? What is the name of the person with you?" Because they were not satisfied with my answers, the police furiously said: "We show leniency to those who confess and sternness to those who resist. If you don't tell the truth, you will have yourself to blame! Speak! Who is in charge of you? What are you doing? Speak and we will treat you leniently." Seeing how devilishly fierce they looked, I silently made a resolution: I will absolutely not be Judas, I will not sell out my brothers and sisters and I won't sell out the interests of God's family. After that, no matter how the police tried to force a confession out of me, I didn't answer them. When they saw that they couldn't get anything from me, they became flustered and began hitting and kicking me fiercely saying: "Since you are not saying anything, we will teach you a lesson by racking you into a spread eagle!" Then suddenly there was another burst of violent punching and kicking. Afterward, they ordered me to sit on the ground, then they handcuffed my hands and twisted them behind my back and lifted up my hands. Then they placed a chair behind me and used a rope to bind my hands to the back of the chair. They exerted all their strength downward, putting pressure on my arms. Immediately, my arms felt like they were going to break; it hurt so bad that I let out a shrilling yell. They tortured me like this without pause for a couple of hours. Afterward, I couldn't bear it and twitched from head to toe. But they said: "Don't pretend like you're crazy, we have seen this many times before. Who do you think you are scaring? Do you think that doing this will let you off the hook?" Seeing that I was still twitching, one of the evil policemen said: "Go to the bathroom and put some feces in her mouth, see if she eats it or not." They used a stick to get some feces and rubbed it in my mouth and made me eat it; at that time I was foaming at the mouth and they saw that I was twitching, so they let me down from the seat. My entire body hurt unbearably like I had cramps from head to toe and I couldn't help but yell in pain as I lay paralyzed on the floor. After a long period of time, my hands and arms began to move again and feeling came back to them. The evil police were afraid that I would bash my head against the wall and kill myself, so they gave me a helmet. Afterward, they dragged me back to the small iron room. I cried and prayed to God: "Oh God! My flesh is too weak. I wish for You to protect me. No matter how Satan persecutes me, I would rather die than betray You like Judas. I won't sell out my brothers and sisters or the interest of God's family. I am willing to stand testimony for You to shame that old Satan."

On the third day, the police took the notepad and list of church member names that I had thrown into the garbage can and interrogated me. When I saw these things, I felt especially awful and full of self-blame and regret. I hated that I was so cowardly and timid and that I wasn't courageous enough at the time to throw the bag into the sewer pipe, thus putting the brothers and sisters on the list in danger of being arrested. I hated even more that I didn't listen to the arrangements of the church and brought these things when fulfilling my duty, which had brought the church such trouble. At that moment, I wished only to rely on God to face all that was ahead of me. More than that, I wished to rely on God to conquer Satan. At this time I thought of the hymn "Marching on the Path of Loving God": "I don't care how tough the path of belief in God is, I only carry out God's will as my vocation; much less do I care whether I receive blessings or suffer misfortune in the future. Now that I am resolved to love God, I will be faithful to the end. No matter what dangers or hardships lurk behind me, no matter what my end will be, in order to welcome God's day of glory, I closely follow God's footsteps and strive onward" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). I silently hummed this song and I again had faith and power. They asked me: "Are these things yours? Be honest with us, we won't treat you unfairly. You are a victim and have been lied to. The God you believe in is so vague and distant, it's a pie in the sky. The Communist Party is good, and you should rely on the Party and the government. If you have any trouble, you can come to us and we will help you resolve it. If you need help finding work, we can also help you. Just confess everything about your church; tell us what these people on your list are doing. Where do they live? Who is your upper-level leader?" I saw through their lying tricks and said: "These things are not mine, I don't know." When they saw that I wouldn't reveal anything, then their true face was revealed and they ferociously beat me down to the ground and continued to violently beat me and exert all their strength to drag me about by my handcuffs. The more they dragged me, the tighter the handcuffs got and cut into my flesh. It hurt so bad I cried out loud and the evil police fiercely said: "We will make you talk, we will squeeze you a little bit at a time like toothpaste to make you talk!" Finally, they took both of my hands and bound them again behind me to the chair and made me sit on the ground. They hit me and exerted their strength and pressed downward on my arms; all at once I felt an unbearable searing pain like my arms were going to break. The evil police tortured me and snarled at me: "Speak up!" I unhesitatingly said: "I don't know!" The evil police flew into a frenzied rage and roared at me: "If you don't speak up we will kill you; if you don't speak up then don't expect to leave; we will imprison you for ten years, twenty years, your whole life; don't expect to ever get out!" When I heard this, an idea flashed into my mind: I must resolve to be willing to go to prison for life. Afterward I thought of a hymn "I Wish to See the Day of God's Glory": "I'll give my love and loyalty to God and complete my mission to glorify God. I'm determined to stand firm in testimony to God, and never give in to Satan. Oh, my head may break and blood may flow, but the mettle of God's people can't be lost. God's exhortations rest on the heart, I determine to humiliate Satan the devil" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). God enlightened me, making me firm and courageous and giving me the faith and determination to suffer everything and stand testimony for God. In the end, the evil police's plot did not prevail; they tortured me until they were tired, then they sent me back to the cell.

A few days later, I was tortured by the evil police until I had no strength. I was in a complete absent-minded trance and my hands and arms were numb. In facing this cruel and inhumane torture, I was especially afraid that the evil police would come back and interrogate me. As soon as I thought upon this, my heart couldn't help but shiver with fright. I really didn't know what else they would use to torture me with, and I didn't know when this interrogation would end. I could only continue to pray in my heart to God and ask God to protect my heart and give me the will and power to endure the suffering so that I would be able to stand witness for God and make Satan fail in complete humiliation.

When the police saw that I wouldn't confess, they joined with the National Security Brigade and the Public Security Bureau to interrogate me. There were over twenty people there taking turns interrogating me day and night trying to force me to confess. That day, two police officers from the National Security Brigade who had already interrogated me once before came to me and initially spoke kindly, saying: "If you confess the truth, then we will let you go and we will guarantee your safety. Only the Communist Party can save you, and God can't save you...." When one of them saw that I wouldn't utter a word, he became flustered and began yelling at me with a foul mouth, making me sit on the floor. He kicked me as hard as he could in the legs with leather shoes causing unbearable pain. At that time, another policeman came to ask him: "How is it going, is she talking?" He said: "She is pretty stubborn, and no matter how I beat her, she won't talk." The other one fiercely said to him: "If she doesn't talk, then beat her to death!" Then he threatened me, saying: "Will you not talk? Then we will kill you!" I said: "I have said everything I need to, I know nothing else." He

became so angry that he appeared completely crazy, then he roared like a wild beast and began beating and kicking me. Finally he became tired from beating me and found a rope about the thickness of a finger and wrapped it around his hand a few times. He ferociously whipped my face over and over saying: "Don't you believe in God? You are suffering, so why doesn't your God come and save you? Why doesn't He come and open your handcuffs? Where is your God?" I gritted my teeth and endured the pain. I silently prayed in my heart to God: "Oh God! Even if they beat me to death today, I will never be like Judas. Oh God, I want You to be with me and protect my heart. I am willing to give my life to stand witness for You and humiliate the old Satan." I thought of a hymn "I Ask Only That God Be Satisfied": "To God I give my utmost devotion, what matter if I die, God's will is higher than all. Unheeding the future, not reckoning gain or loss, I ask only that God be satisfied. I bear resounding witness and bring shame down on Satan, to God's greater glory. I pledge loyalty to the death to repay God's love, I praise Him with my whole heart. My eyes have seen the Sun of righteousness, truth reigns supreme on earth. Righteous and holy is God's disposition, worthy of mankind's praise. I love Almighty God with all my heart, I love Him forever" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). I closed my eyes and endured Satan's crazy torture and beatings. At that moment, it was as if I forgot about my pain. I didn't know what time the torture would end. I didn't dare to think about it, and I couldn't even think about it. The only thing that I could do was incessantly pray and cry to God. God's words also gave me continual faith: "Do not fear, Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He has your back and He is your shield" ("Chapter 26" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat 10:28). Indeed, the CCP is merely a paper tiger doomed to be defeated by God's hands. If God didn't allow it, it would never dare to harm my life and not a strand of my hair would be lost. At that time, I also thought of these words of God: "Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the light guiding you. You will surely be the master of all creation. You will surely be an overcomer before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs to bear witness to My victory.

You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe" ("Chapter 19" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The power of God's word is boundless and caused my faith to multiply; I had the determination to fight Satan to the end. When the evil policeman was tired of beating me, he asked me again: "Will you speak?" I firmly said: "Even if you beat me to death, I still won't know!" When the evil policeman heard that, he couldn't do anything. He threw the rope and said: "You are damn stubborn, like a mule. You are really good, you won't say anything even if you die. Where did you get this much strength and faith from? You are really more Liu Hulan than Liu Hulan." When I heard him say this, it was as if I saw God sitting on His throne triumphantly, watching Satan being humiliated. I half cried and half praised God: Oh God, by relying on Your power, I can prevail over Satan, the demon! In light of the facts, I see that You are omnipotent and Satan is powerless; Satan will always be defeated under Your control. If You do not allow it, Satan will not be able to torture me to death. At this time, God's words once again enlightened me: "The disposition of God is one that belongs to the Ruler of all things and living beings.... His disposition is the symbol of authority ... it is a symbol of Him who cannot be [a] overcome or invaded by the darkness and any enemy force ..." ("It Is Very Important to Understand God's Disposition" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Having experienced the CCP's cruel persecution, I truly saw God's love and salvation for me and I experienced the power and authority of God's word. Without God's word leading me every step of the way and by only relying on my own strength, it would have been impossible for me to overcome the torture and beatings of the CCP. And it made me see the desperate and battered image of the evil police. I saw through the demonic substance of the CCP's inhumanness and disregard for life and I detested it and cursed it in my heart even more. I wished to completely break all connections with it and follow Christ and serve Christ for eternity.

The next day, the evil police came and interrogated me again, they were really surprised and said: "What's wrong with your face?" When I looked in the mirror, I couldn't recognize myself; the evil police had whipped my face with a rope the day before and it had become

Footnotes:

a. The original text reads "it is a symbol of being unable to be."

so swollen and black and blue like a panda bear. When I saw my face had changed beyond recognition, I felt bitter hatred for the CCP devil and made my resolution to stand testimony. I could absolutely not allow its plot to prevail! My legs had been beaten so bad that I couldn't walk and when I went to the bathroom, I could see that both of my legs had no normality left, everything was black and blue. One of the evil policemen said: "There is no need for you to suffer this; if you spoke up then you wouldn't have to suffer; you are doing this to yourself! Think about it; confess and we will send you home to your husband and daughter." After hearing him say this, I hated him to the core. Afterward, they changed their method and began taking shifts by not letting me sleep all day and all night. When I started falling asleep, they would yell and make loud noises to wake me up; they tried to break my will by not letting me sleep so that I would talk in an absent-minded, fuzzy-headed state of mind. I thanked God for protecting me. Even though the evil police kept me up for four days and four nights, it didn't matter how they interrogated me, I relied on God for stamina and faith, and not only was I not absent-minded, but I was very alert. As the evil police interrogated me over and over, they became more and more low-spirited and discouraged. They started carrying out half-hearted interrogation; they cursed and grumbled, they resented that I had caused them to lose their appetite, to not get good rest, and be tormented with me, they felt that they were very unfortunate. Finally, all they did was ask casually me questions and no longer had the willpower to interrogate me. In this round of the fight Satan ended in failure again.

However, the evil police didn't leave it at that—they sent a good-looking police officer to seduce me. One evil policeman came over and put his fingers under my chin, picked up my hand and said my name. In a warm voice he said: "You are so pretty; it isn't worth it to suffer so much here. Whatever difficulties you have, I can help you resolve them. See, your faith in God has gotten you nothing. I have two houses, one day, I will bring you there to have some fun; the two of us could form a partnership. If you confess, then you will be free. Whatever you want, I can help you. I won't treat you unfairly." When I heard his nasty, filthy lies, I felt nauseated and flat-out refused him. He had no other choice but to withdraw with his tail between his legs. This made me thoroughly understand these deplorable and shameless so-called "people's police." They use deplorable and vulgar methods without any sense of shame to obtain their own purpose; they don't have any dignity or integrity; they are truly evil filthy spirits!

The evil police had one crafty plot after another and they exploited my family members to try to coerce me, saying: "You only believe in God, you are not thinking about your husband, daughter, parents, and other family members? Your daughter will go to school some day and look for work. If you persist in your faith, this will directly affect her future prospect. Will you let this happen to her? You are not thinking about her; do you have the heart to let her be involved in this?" Following this, they brought my husband, daughter, and aunt in to let them try and persuade me. When I saw my daughter whom I hadn't seen in several years, my tears uncontrollably flowed down. I could only pray with all my might to God: "Oh God, I ask You to protect my heart, because my flesh is too weak. At this time, I can't fall prey to Satan's tricks and I can't be tempted by Satan to fall into my emotions; I can't betray God or sell out my brothers and sisters; I ask You to be with me and give me faith and power." My aunt said to me: "Hurry and speak up, why are you so foolish? Is it worth suffering this for your belief in God? Who will take care of you if something happens? You've been gone for years and we haven't heard anything from you. Your mom and dad are worried about you every day, they can't eat or sleep well. You have to think about us and come back and live with us. Don't believe in God. Look at what hardships you have suffered because of your belief; why do you bother?" Even though I was weak, I was protected by God and I recognized that this was a spiritual struggle and Satan's tricks; God's words reminded me in my heart: "... you must satisfy God in spite of any reluctance to part with something you love, or bitter weeping" ("Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). At that time, I said to her: "Auntie, don't try to persuade me, I have said everything I should say to them. I know nothing else. They can treat me however they want to, it is up to them. Don't worry about me. You should go back." Seeing my firm attitude, the evil police had no other choice but to let my family go back. The evil police's schemes and plots had failed once again, and they were so angry that they gritted their teeth and said: "You really are heartless! You are so selfish. You truly have no human nature. Where is your God? If He is so almighty, then why does He let you suffer here? Why doesn't your God come and save you? If there really is a God, then why doesn't He come and open your handcuffs and save you? Where is God? Don't be fooled by these lies, don't be foolish. It is not too late to wake up and see the truth. If you don't confess, then we will send you to prison for years!" The evil police's lies made me think of the sight of the Lord Jesus being crucified on the cross. In the past, the Lord Jesus was

sneered at, slandered, and accused by the Pharisees and by those in power. They said: "If You be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Mat 27:40). The CCP government is just the same as the Roman authorities and the Pharisees were—they are the devils and Satans who hate the truth and hate Christ, and they are the hated enemies of God. God is using this environment to test me and allow me to truly understand CCP's evil nature of the great red dragon and, to despise and betray the great red dragon, and to wholeheartedly follow God. Just like the word of God says: "God intends to use a portion of evil spirits' work to perfect a portion of man, so that these people can completely see through demons' deeds, and allow everyone to truly understand their ancestors. Only then can humans completely break free, not only forsaking the posterity of the demons, but even more so their ancestors. This is the original intent of God completely defeating the great red dragon, to make it so that all of man knows the great red dragon's true form, completely tearing off its mask, and seeing its true form. This is what God wants to achieve, and it is His final goal on earth for which He has done so much work; He aims to accomplish this in all of man. This is known as the maneuver of all things for God's purpose" ("Chapter 41" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

Finally, the evil police sent me to the detention house and detained me for one month. During this month, they interrogated me one more time. For two days and two nights, they didn't let me sleep and didn't give me enough to eat. Sometimes they wouldn't give me any food, but in the end, it was still to no avail. The CCP tortures and afflicts people like this without end! When my detention came to an end, they sentenced me to two years of reform through labor for "believing in a xie jiao and disturbing the order of society" without any evidence. Before I went to the labor camp, my family sent me 2,000 yuan for living expenses, but it was all embezzled by them. These devils were indeed Satans and evil spirits that thirsted for blood and human life. It was purely evil! This made me see more clearly that, in the country ruled by the CCP, simply nothing is done by the law; anything it opposes, it can slaughter and exploit at will; it can make criminal charges as it wishes to control people and persecute people. The CCP creates something out of nothing, unfairly labels people, frames and entraps people, and slaughters innocent people. It is an authentic and true cult, a group of organized criminals and a gangster that brings calamities and disasters upon mankind. For two years in the labor camp, I saw the CCP police basically abuse and order the laborers

about like slaves. They made us eat steamed rolls and vegetable soup every day; day and night, they made us work overtime. We were unbearably exhausted every day and didn't receive any compensation. If we didn't do a good job, we would receive their stern criticism and punishment (such as extended sentences, withholding food, and being forced to stand still). During this time, the evil police would still not let me off, they interrogated me trying to make me confess the church's information. I hated it bitterly, relying on faith and power from God, I indignantly said: "You have beaten me and punished me; what else do you want? I have said everything I am supposed to say; you can interrogate me for ten or twenty years, and I still won't know anything. You can forget about it!" When they heard this, they said exasperatedly: "You are incurable, you can just wait here!" Finally, the evil policemen left with their tails between their legs.

After experiencing the CCP's inhumane torture and cruel treatment as well as unjustly living in prison for two years, I saw clearly that the substance of the CCP is lies, evil, arrogance, and viciousness. They are less than livestock. They are perverse and duplicitous; they put up banners saying "religious freedom," and yet they go about pursuing and persecuting Christians in every way possible. They are frantically disturbing and dismantling God's work. They are murderers who kill without batting an eye, they are looting bandits under the cloak of "greatness, glory and correctness." In the end, their masks have been completely torn off through God's wise work, and their malevolent demonic faces have been exposed in the light so that I can open my field of vision and wake up from my dreams. Just as the word of God says: "For thousands of years this has been the land of filth, it is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations,^[1] being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. [2] Who can see the world beyond the skies? The devil tightly trusses all of man's body, it puts out both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has rampaged for several thousand

Footnotes:

^{1. &}quot;Making groundless accusations" refers to the methods by which the devil harms people.

^{2. &}quot;Heavily guarded" indicates that the methods by which the devil afflicts people are especially vicious, and control people so much that they have no room to move.

years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons; this pack of watchdogs, meanwhile, stare with glaring eyes, deeply fearful that God will catch them unawares and wipe them all out, leaving them without a place of peace and happiness. How could the people of a ghost town such as this have ever seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God's eager will? Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people in the blink of an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they have long since disdained God, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, and have not a trace of kindness, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!" ("Work and Entry (8)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

Almighty God is eternally wise, omnipotent, and wonderful, and Satan, the CCP devil, is eternally deplorable, filthy, and foolish. Regardless of how savage and unbridled, and regardless of how it struggles and rebels, it will always be a serving object for God to train His chosen people. Moreover, it is doomed to be struck down to hell by God as an everlasting punishment. It attempts to break the will of people through inhuman persecution so that people will distance themselves from God and forsake God. But it is wrong! Its persecution precisely makes us thoroughly see the substance of the demon and arouses us to completely betray it and have the faith and courage to follow God on the correct path of life. We will always rely on the wise and almighty God! From now on, no matter what untold dangers and difficulties are on the road ahead, I will resolutely follow God to the end and bear resounding witness to Him.

96. Tasting the Love of God in the Midst of Adversity

By Chen Lu, Zhejiang Province

I was born in the 1980s in a village—we had been a family of peasants for generations. I threw myself into my studies so that I could test into college and escape the village life of poverty and backwardness. When I started high school, I encountered The History of Western Art, and when I saw so many beautiful paintings such as "Genesis," "The Garden of Eden," and "The Last Supper," only then did I realize that there was a God in the universe who had created all things. I could not help but have a heart full of veneration for God. After graduating from college, I found a good job very easily, and then I found a great partner. I had finally realized my own hopes as well as those of my forebears: I had escaped the life of keeping our face to the ground and our back to the sky. In 2008, the birth of a child added much more joy to my life. Looking at everything I had in my life, I believed that I should have a happy, comfortable life. However, while I was enjoying that enviable, beautiful life, I could never shake that vague feeling of emptiness deep in my heart. This made me feel very confused and helpless.

In November of 2008, my family spoke to me of the gospel of the last days of Almighty God. Through the words of God I finally understood that He is the source of mankind's life, and that His words are the driving force and the pillar of our lives. If we abandon God's sustenance and nourishment for our lives, our souls will be empty and alone, and no matter what material enjoyments we have we will never be able to satiate the needs of our souls. Just as Almighty God said: "Man, after all, is man, and the position and life of God cannot be replaced by any man. Mankind does not just require a fair society in which everyone is well-fed and is equal and free; what mankind needs is the salvation of God and His provision of life to them. Only when man receives God's provision of life and His salvation can the needs, the yearning to explore, and the spiritual emptiness of man be resolved" ("God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). His words washed over my soul like a spring in the desert, and they released the confusion in my heart. From then on, I read God's words with a great hunger and thirst, and there was always an inexpressible feeling of ease in my heart that my soul had finally come home. Before long, the church arranged for some brothers and sisters to meet with me, and they did so continuously no matter how fierce the weather was. During that time, there were

a lot of things I didn't understand and the brothers and sisters always patiently communicated with me. There wasn't even a modicum of irritation or just humoring me, and through this I deeply felt the sincerity and love of these brothers and sisters. As I understood more of the truth, I began to understand God's urgent desire to save mankind, and I saw that the brothers and sisters were very eagerly expending themselves and preaching the gospel of the kingdom for God. I also wanted to perform my own duty, but my child was small and I didn't have another caretaker, so I just prayed for God to give me a way out. Later, I learned that there was a sister who was in charge of a preschool, so I sent my child to her. She promised to help me look after my child without hesitation, and she wouldn't even accept tuition or meal expenses. From then on, that sister not only helped me watch my child during the day, but sometimes she helped in the evenings as well. That sister's actions really deeply moved me, and I knew this all came from God's love. In order to repay His love, I joined the ranks of those preaching the gospel without hesitation. While preaching the gospel, I saw the sorrowful states of person after person who had not been illuminated by the brilliance of God. I heard the laments of their bitter courses in life, and I also saw their faces filled with joy and happiness after they had gained God's salvation of the last days. This excited my passion for evangelism even more, and I resolved to bring the gospel of God to even more people living in darkness who thirsted for the light! But during that time, the CCP government's oppression and pursuit of believers was even more severe; many brothers and sisters were arrested, and I myself could not escape this fate.

That was the morning of December 21, 2012. Over a dozen brothers and sisters were having a meeting when there was a sudden burst of knocking and shouting at the door: "Open the door! Open the door! Inspection of the house!" Just as a sister was opening the door, six or seven policemen wielding batons forced their way in. They roughly pushed us apart and then began to rummage through drawers and search everywhere. A young sister came forward and asked them: "We haven't broken the law. Why are you searching the house?" The police replied fiercely: "Behave! If we tell you to stand there, just stand there. If we don't ask you to speak, keep your mouth shut!" Then they brutally threw her to the ground, and yelled aggressively: "If you want to resist we'll beat you!" Her fingernail had been broken off and her finger was bleeding. Seeing the vicious faces of the police, I felt both hatred and fear, so I silently prayed to God to give me strength and confidence, to protect me to stand witness. After praying, my heart settled considerably. The police

confiscated many evangelical materials and collections of God's words, then they ushered us into police vehicles.

As soon as we arrived at the station, they confiscated everything we were carrying and interrogated us for our names, addresses, and who our church leaders were. I was afraid to implicate my family so I didn't say anything; another sister didn't say anything either, so the police saw us as ringleaders and intended to try us separately. I was very scared then-I had heard that the police were particularly brutal with believers in God, and I had been classified as a target for interrogation. That would certainly be fraught with grim possibilities. Just as I was in a terrible state and living in fear, I heard my sister who was very close to me praying: "Oh God, You are our rock, our refuge. Satan is under Your feet, and I am willing to live according to Your words and stand witness to satisfy You!" After hearing that, my heart brightened. I thought: It's true—God is our rock, Satan is under His feet, so what am I afraid of? As long as I rely on God and cooperate with Him, Satan can be vanquished! Suddenly I was no longer afraid, but I also felt ashamed. I thought of the fact that when that sister encountered this, she could live based on God's words and not lose confidence in God, but I had been timid and cowardly. I hadn't had even a bit of the backbone of someone who believes in God. Thanks to God's love and through that sister's prayer that had motivated and helped me, I was no longer in fear of the police's despotic power. I quietly resolved: Now that I have been arrested, I am determined to stand witness to satisfy God. I absolutely will not be a coward who lets God down!

Around ten o'clock, two of the police handcuffed me and brought me to a room to interrogate me alone. One of the police interrogated me in the local dialect. I didn't understand, and when I asked him what he had said, unexpectedly this question angered them. One of the police standing by yelled: "You don't respect us!" As he was speaking he ran over and grabbed my hair, tossing me back and forth. I was dizzy and thrown all around, and my scalp felt like it was being peeled off and some of my hair was being pulled out. Right after that, another cop ran up to me and yelled: "So we have to play rough? Speak! Who had you preach the gospel?" I was full of anger and replied: "Preaching the gospel is my duty." The second I said this, the first cop once again grabbed me by the hair and slapped my face, hitting me and yelling: "I'll have you preach more! I'll have you preach more!" He hit my face until it was beet red and in pain, and it started swelling up. When he tired of beating me he let me go, then took the mobile phone and MP4 player they had found on me

and asked me for information about the church. I relied on wisdom to deal with them. Out of nowhere, a cop asked: "You're not from here. You speak Mandarin so well—you're definitely not an average person. Be honest! Why did you come here? Who sent you here? Who is your leader? How did you get in touch with the church here? Where do you live?" Hearing that these police saw me as an important person and they insisted on gathering information about the church from me, my heart went to my throat and I called out to God to give me confidence and strength. Through prayer, my heart was slowly calmed, and I responded: "I don't know anything." When they heard me say that, one of them pounded the table furiously and shouted: "Just you wait, we'll see how you feel in a bit!" Then he picked up my MP4 player and pressed play. I was very scared. I didn't know what means he would employ to deal with me, so I made an urgent cry to God. I hadn't imagined that what was played was a recording of a sermon: "Do you think that type of person can be saved? He does not have devotion to Christ; he is not of one mind with Christ. When he encounters adversities he parts ways from Christ and goes his own way. He turns his back on God, thus following Satan. ... During the reign of the great red dragon, while experiencing God's work, if you are able to turn your back on the great red dragon and stand on God's side, no matter how it persecutes, pursues, or oppresses you, you absolutely can obey God and can be devoted to God to the death. Only this type of person is worthy of being called an overcomer, is worthy of being called someone who is of the same mind with God" ("The Ten Realities of God's Words That Must Be Entered in Order to Be Saved and Made Perfect" in Sermons and Fellowship IV). When I heard the words "parts ways," I felt a stab of pain in my heart. I couldn't help but think that when the Lord Jesus was working, those who followed Him and enjoyed His grace were many, but when He was nailed to the cross and the Roman soldiers were arresting Christians right and left, many people fled out of fear. This brought God great pain! But then, what difference was there between me and those ungrateful people? When I enjoyed God's grace and blessings, I was full of confidence in following God, but when I faced adversities that required me to suffer and pay a price, I was timid and afraid. How could that comfort God's heart? I thought of the fact that in order to save us, corrupt human beings, the supreme God became flesh—humbly and secretly coming to China, this atheistruled country, tolerating the pursuit and condemnation of these demons, and He personally led us onto the path of the pursuit of truth. Seeing that God had done everything to save us, why couldn't I, as someone who enjoyed the grace of His salvation, pay a small price to bear witness to Him? In my conscience I felt rebuked and I hated that I was so selfish, so worthless. I really deeply felt that God was full of hope and concern for me. I felt that He knew well that I was immature in stature and fearful in the face of Satan's despotism; He allowed me to hear this through the means of the police playing that recording, allowing me to understand His will, so that in the midst of adversity and oppression I could stand witness for God and satisfy Him. For a moment, I was so moved by God's love that tears were running down my face, and I silently said to God: "Oh God! I do not want to be someone who parts with You and hurts You; I want to stay with You through the joys and the sorrows. No matter how Satan tortures me. I am determined to stand witness and comfort Your heart."

Then there was a sudden bang as the cop turned off the player, then rushed toward me and said hatefully: "That's right, I am the great red dragon, and today I have come to torture you!" Then they ordered me to stand on the ground with bare feet and handcuffed my right hand to an iron ring in the middle of a concrete block. They asked me to stand bent over because the block was so small. They didn't allow me to crouch down, nor did they allow me to use my left hand to support my legs. I couldn't continue to stand after a while and wanted to crouch, but the police shouted: "No crouching! If you want to suffer less, hurry up and confess!" All I could do was grit my teeth and bear it. I don't know how much time passed. My feet were like ice, my legs were sore and numb, and when I truly could no longer stay standing, I crouched down. The police picked me up, brought over a cup of cold water, and poured it down my neck. I was so cold I started to shiver. They then removed my handcuffs, pushed me down onto a wooden chair, cuffed my hands to opposite ends of the chair, and opened the windows and turned on the air conditioning. There was a sudden gust of cold wind that hit me and I was shuddering from the cold. I couldn't help but have some weakness in my heart, but in the midst of this suffering I was praying nonstop, begging for God to give me the will and the strength to bear this pain, to allow me to overcome the weakness of the flesh. Just then, the words of God guided me from within: "Even when your body endures suffering, take no ideas from Satan. ... Faith is like a single log bridge, those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over without worry" ("Chapter 6" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words made me understand that Satan wanted to torture my flesh in order to have me betray God, and if I paid any mind to the flesh I would fall prey to its trickery. I kept going over these two

sentences of God's words in my mind, telling myself that I had to stand guard against Satan's trickery and refuse its ideas. Later, the police took a large pot of cold water and poured the entire thing down my neck. All of my clothing was completely soaked. At that moment I felt as if I had fallen into an ice box. Seeing the police, so despicable, so evil, I was full of resentment. I thought: This pack of demons will take any measures to get me to betray God—I absolutely will not allow their schemes to succeed! Seeing me shivering terribly, one of the evil policemen grabbed a handful of my hair and forced my head up for me to look at the sky through the window, then said mockingly: "Aren't you cold? Then let your God come save you!" He saw that I wasn't reacting, so he once again poured a large pot of cold water over me and put the air conditioner on its coldest setting, then blew right on me. Gust after gust of bone-piercing cold air blown on me along with the cold wind hit me. I was so cold I had curled up into a ball and was practically frozen solid. I felt that my entire body had hardened. My confidence started to ebb away bit by bit, and I couldn't help but think crazy thoughts: Such a cold day, but they soak me with cold water and turn on the air conditioning. Are they trying to freeze me alive? If I die here, my relatives won't even know about it. Just as I was sinking into the darkness and despair, I suddenly thought of the suffering the Lord Jesus endured while being nailed to the cross to redeem mankind. And I also thought of God's words, "Love that has experienced refinement is strong, not weak. Regardless of when or how God subjects you to His trials, you are able to lay down your concerns about whether you live or die, to gladly cast aside everything for God, and to happily endure anything for God—thus your love will be pure and your faith real" ("Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). These words from God really galvanized me—yes! That day being able to bear witness for God was Him uplifting me—how could I pay any mind to the flesh? Even if it meant losing my life, I was determined to be faithful to God. Suddenly, there was a surge in my heart and I felt very inspired. I silently prayed to God: "Oh God! You have given me this breath, I would rather die than cling to life and act as a traitor to You!" Slowly, I no longer felt quite as cold, which allowed me to really feel God's companionship and comfort. From midday all the way until around seven in the evening, the police continued to interrogate me. They saw that I wouldn't open my mouth at all, so they locked me in the interrogation room and continued to blow cold air on me.

After dinner, the police stepped up the intensity of their interrogation. They viciously threatened me, saying: "Tell us! Who is the leader of your church? If you don't tell us, we have other means, we can make you drink the juice of hot peppers, soapy water, make you eat feces, strip you naked, throw you to the basement, and make you freeze to death! If you don't talk today, we'll ask you again tomorrow. We have time on our side!" When the evil police said this, I really saw that they weren't people at all, but they were a pack of demons in human flesh. The more they threatened me that way, the more I hated them in my heart, and the more I determined to never yield to them. When they saw I wouldn't give in, they found a cloth bag, soaked it with water, and put it over my head. They pressed it down on my head and wouldn't let me move, then tightened it. I couldn't move at all because my hands were cuffed to the chair. Before too long, I was on the verge of being suffocated; I felt that my whole body had become stiff. But that still wasn't enough to dispel their hatred. They picked up a pot of cold water and poured it into my nose, threatening me, saying that if I didn't talk, I would be suffocated. The wet bag itself didn't let air through, and on top of that water was being poured into my nose. Breathing was so difficult, and it felt like death was closing in on me. I silently prayed to God: "Oh God, this breath of mine was given to me by You, and today I should be living for You. No matter how the evil police torture me, I will not betray You. If You require me to sacrifice my life, I am willing to obey Your designs and arrangements without the slightest complaint...." Just when I started to lose consciousness and was about to stop breathing, they suddenly released their hands. I couldn't help but continue to give thanks to God in my heart. I had vividly experienced that God is the Lord of everything, that He is always watching over and protecting me, and even though I fell into the hands of the evil police, God only allowed them to torture my flesh but did not allow them to grab hold of my life. After that, my confidence grew.

The next day around midday, several of the police took me and another sister into a police vehicle and took us to the detention center. One of them said to me intimidatingly: "You're not from around here. We'll lock you up for six months, then we'll sentence you to 3–5 years, in any case no one will know." "Sentence?" As soon as I heard that I would be sentenced, I couldn't help but become weak. I wondered how I could show my face if I really were sentenced to do time in prison and how people would see me; they would certainly look down on me. Just as I was in pain and weak, God once again showed me His grace. The other people in the cell I was put into were all sisters who believed in Almighty God.

Although they were in that den of demons, they didn't show the slightest fear. They encouraged and supported each other, and when they saw that I was negative and weak, they spoke with me about their personal experiences and bore witness, giving me confidence in God. They also sang a hymn to encourage me: "God humbly became flesh to save mankind, walking among the churches, expressing the truth, painstakingly watering us, guiding us every step. This He has done every day for decades, it's all to purify and perfect man. He has seen many springs, summers, autumns, winters, happy to take the bitter with the sweet. He's selflessly sacrificed all without any regret, He's given all of His love to mankind. I've undergone God's judgment and tasted the bitterness of trials. The sweet follows the bitter, my corruption has been cleansed, I offer up my heart and body to repay God's love. I go from place to place toiling, expending myself for God. Loved ones discard me, others defame me, but I will unwaveringly love God till the end. I am utterly devoted to following God's will. I endure the persecution and tribulations, experience the ups and downs of life. Even if I endure a life of bitterness, I must follow God and testify to Him" ("Repaying God's Love and Being His Witness" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). Thinking about this song, I felt the life force from these sisters, and I was greatly encouraged. It was true, we were following the true God and walking the right life path in a country under the reign of an atheist party that saw God as the enemy. We were destined to suffer many hardships, but all of this had meaning, and even sitting in jail was a glorious thing because we were being persecuted for the sake of pursuing the truth and following God's way. It was entirely different from worldly people being imprisoned for committing terrible crimes. I then thought of generation after generation of so many saints who had suffered persecution and humiliation for the sake of holding to the true path. But now, I had been freely provided with so much of the word of God—I understood truth that generations of people had not been able to understand, I knew mysteries that generations had not known, so why was I not able to tolerate a bit of suffering to bear witness to God? When I thought of this, I once again crawled up out of my state of weakness, my heart was full of confidence and strength, and I determined to rely on God and meet tomorrow's torture and demands for confession with my head held high.

Ten days later, the police sent me to the detention house alone. I saw that all the other people there were held for fraud, theft, and illegal businesses. As soon as I went in, they said to me: "Anyone who comes in here generally doesn't come out. We are all waiting for

our verdicts, and some of us have been waiting for months." Looking at these people, I was so nervous my heart was about to burst. I became afraid that they would treat me poorly, and then when I thought about the fact that the police would keep me locked up with them, I thought that they would most likely give me the sentence of a felon. I had heard that some brothers and sisters had been imprisoned for as long as eight years. I didn't know how long my sentence would be for, and I was only 29 years old! My youth couldn't possibly be spent locked in this dark cell? How would my days from here on out be spent? At that moment, it seemed that my hometown, parents, husband, and child were suddenly all so far away from me. It was like a knife twisting in my heart, and tears pooled up in my eyes. I knew that I had fallen into Satan's trickery, so I fervently called out to God, hoping for Him to lead me to escape from this suffering. In the middle of my prayer, I felt clear guidance within me: When you face this, you have permission from God. Just like Job being tested, do not complain. Right away, God's words brought enlightenment to me: "Would you rather submit to My every arrangement (even if it be death or destruction), or flee midway to avoid My chastisement?" ("What Do You Know of Faith?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). The judgment and chastisement in God's words made me feel ashamed. I saw that I was not remotely sincere toward God, but I just said that I wanted to be a good witness for Him. However, when I actually faced the peril of being imprisoned, I only wanted to escape. There was no practical ability to suffer for the sake of the truth. Thinking back to that moment when I was arrested, God was by my side at all times. He did not abandon me any step of the way for fear that I would lose my way or stumble on the path. God's love for me was utterly sincere and not at all empty. But I was selfish and self-interested, and all along thought of my own fleshly gains and losses. I was not willing to pay any price for God—how could I have any humanity? Any conscience? When I thought of that, I felt full of regret and indebtedness. I silently prayed to God and repented: Oh God! I was wrong. I can no longer pay You lip service and cheat You. I am willing to live out the reality to satisfy You. No matter what my sentence turns out to be, I will certainly stand witness for You—I only ask that You protect my heart. Just then, the head of the prisoners came in and said to me: "I don't know why you're here, but we have a saying: 'Confess for a break and you'll do time until the end; fiercely resist and you can go live out your life.' If you don't want to talk, don't talk." I gave thanks to God for this incredible arrangement and the wisdom imparted on me by the head of the prisoners, so that I knew how to deal with the interrogation that followed. Besides, the

other inmates not only did not hassle me, but actually took care of me, giving me clothing, giving me extra food at mealtimes, and sharing with me fruit and snacks they had bought themselves, and they also helped me with my daily labor. I knew that all of this was God's design and arrangement; it was God's compassion for my small stature. Facing His love and protection, I set my resolve: No matter how long my sentence is, I will stand witness for God!

In the detention house, the police would interrogate me once every few days. When they realized that taking a hard line wasn't working with me, they switched to being soft. The policemen interrogating me purposely put on an easygoing manner and chatted with me, gave me good food to eat, and said they could help me find a good job. I knew this was Satan's trickery, so every time they interrogated me I just prayed to God, asking Him to protect me and not allow me to fall prey to these tricks. One time when a policeman was interrogating me, he finally revealed their sinister intentions: "We don't have a bone to pick with you, we just want to crack down on The Church of Almighty God. We hope you can join us." When I heard these evil words, I was deeply angry. I thought: God created man and has continued to provide for and lead us all the way until now. And now He has come to save those He created and help us escape from our abyss of suffering. What on earth is wrong with that? Why is it so hated, so vilified by these devils? We are God's creation. Following God and worshiping Him is right and proper, so why would Satan thwart us this way, and try to take away our freedom of following God? Now they try to get me to become a puppet in their quest to strike down God. The CCP government truly is a pack of demons determined to defy God. They are such evil reactionaries! I was full of resentment and I hated the CCP even more, and all I wanted was to stand witness for God and comfort His heart. When the police saw that I still wouldn't talk, they started to use psychological methods against me. They found my husband through China Mobile and brought him and my child to persuade me. My husband had originally been fine with my belief in God, but after being deluded by the police, he told me over and over: "I'm begging you to give up your faith. At least think of our child if not me. Having a mother in prison will have such a terrible impact on him. ..." I knew that my husband was saying this out of ignorance, so I cut him off and said: "You still don't understand me? We lived together for so many years, when did you ever see me do anything wicked? If you don't understand something then don't just shoot your mouth off." When my husband saw that his words couldn't change my mind, he dropped these cruel words: "You're so stubborn and won't listen—I'll just divorce you, then!"

This word, "divorce," deeply pierced my heart. It made me hate the CCP government even more deeply. It was its defamation and sowing of discord that made my husband hate God's work that way and say such unfeeling words to me. The CCP government truly is the culprit that calls on the common people to offend Heaven! It was also the culprit in undermining our feelings as husband and wife! At this thought, I didn't want to say anything more to my husband. I just calmly said: "Then hurry up and take our child back home." When the police saw that this tactic hadn't worked, they were so angry that they paced back and forth in front of their desk and screamed at me, saying: "We've worked so hard and haven't gotten a single response from you! If you continue to refuse to speak we'll label you as the head of this region, as a political prisoner! If you don't talk today, there won't be another chance!" But no matter how they ranted and raved, I just prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to strengthen my faith.

During my interrogation, there was a hymn of God's word that continued to guide me from within: "In the work of the last days, great faith and great love are required of us. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness because this stage of work is different from all the previous ones. What God is perfecting is mankind's faith—one cannot see or touch it. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They need to endure incredible suffering and all kinds of torture without departing from God at any time. When they are obedient until the death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete. God's work is not as simple as you imagine it to be. The less in line it is with people's notions the deeper the significance is, and the more in line it is with people's notions, the less valuable it is, and without actual significance. Consider these words carefully" ("What God Makes Perfect Is Faith" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). Because of the faith and strength I received from God's words, while I was being interrogated I appeared very staunch. But when I returned to my cell, I couldn't help but be a bit weak and hurt. It seemed that my husband was actually going to divorce me and I wouldn't have a home anymore. I also didn't know how long my sentence would be. Amidst this pain, I thought of these words from God: "You should experience Peter's mood at the time: He was stricken with sorrow; he no longer asked for a future or any blessings. He did not seek profit, happiness, fame, or fortune in the world; he only sought to live the most

meaningful life, which was to repay God's love and dedicate what he held most precious to God. Then he would be satisfied in his heart" ("How Peter Came to Know Jesus" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I was deeply moved by Peter's deeds, and this also stirred up my will to give up everything to satisfy God. It was true. When Peter reached his most grief-stricken point, he was still able to withstand it and satisfy God. It was not for his own prospects or destiny, or his own benefit, and in the end when he was nailed upside down to a cross he bore a good and resounding witness for God. But I then had the good fortune to follow God incarnate, to enjoy God's endless provision to my life as well as His grace and blessings, but I had never paid any real price for God. And then when He needed me to stand witness for Him, I couldn't satisfy Him just that once? Would missing this opportunity be something I regretted for a lifetime? When I thought of that, I determined my will in front of God: Oh God, I am willing to follow the example of Peter. No matter what my outcome is, even if I have to get divorced or serve time in prison, I will not betray You! After praying, I felt a wave of strength rise up within me. I would no longer think of whether I would be sentenced or not or how long the sentence would be, and I would no longer think of whether or not I could return home and be reunited with my family. I would only think that another day in the demons' den was another day of standing witness for God, and even if I did serve time until the very end, I would not yield to Satan. When I did give myself up, I truly had a taste of God's love and affection. A few days later on one afternoon, a guard suddenly said to me: "Get your things together, you can go home." I simply didn't dare to believe my ears! Before being released the police made me sign a document. I saw these words written very clearly: "Not guilty due to insufficient evidence, release." Seeing this, I was immeasurably excited. I once again saw the omnipotence and faithfulness of God, that "those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over without worry." This battle in the spiritual war had been lost by Satan and God was glorified in the end!

After undergoing 36 days of detention and persecution by the CCP police, I had a true understanding of the cruel tyranny, and the rebellious and reactionary essence of the CCP government. From then on I developed a deep hatred for it. I know that during those adversities, God was always with me, enlightening me, guiding me, and allowing me to overcome Satan's cruelty and tests every step of the way. This gave me a true experience of the fact that God's words truly are mankind's life and our strength. It also made me truly recognize that God is our Lord and rules over everything, and no matter how many tricks

Satan has, it will always be defeated by God. The CCP attempted to torture my flesh to force me to betray God, to forsake Him, but its cruel torture not only didn't break me, but it strengthened my resolve and allowed me to thoroughly see its evil countenance, to experience God's love and salvation. I give thanks to God from the bottom of my heart for everything He has arranged for me, allowing me to gain the most precious riches of life! My personal resolution is: No matter what oppression or adversity lies on the road ahead, I am willing to resolutely follow God and to continue to spread the gospel as before to repay His great love!

97. Sufferings and Trials—the Blessings of Being Favored

By Wang Gang, Shandong Province

I lived in the countryside. Because my family was poor, I earned money by doing temporary jobs wherever I could find them; I thought that I could make a better life for myself through my physical labor. However, in modern Chinese society, I saw that there were no guarantees for the legal rights of migrant workers like me; my salary was frequently withheld for no reason at all. Time and time again I was cheated and taken advantage of by others. After a year's worth of hard work, I didn't receive what I was supposed to receive. I felt that this world is truly dark! Humans treat each other just like animals, where the strong prey on the weak; they contest with each other, fight hand-to-hand, and people simply can't survive. In the extreme pain and depression of my spirit, and when I had lost faith in life, a friend of mine shared the gospel of the last days of Almighty God with me. Afterward, I regularly gathered, prayed, communicated the truth and sang hymns to praise God together with my brothers and sisters. I felt very happy and liberated. In The Church of Almighty God, I saw that the brothers and sisters didn't try to outwit each other or make social distinctions; they were all purely open and got along with each other. Whenever any brother or sister encountered a difficulty, all the others showed them love and they all helped each other. Everyone was there to diligently pursue truth in order to cast off their corrupt dispositions, live out the likeness of a true person and obtain salvation. This life allowed me to experience happiness and understand the significance and value of life. I saw that I could only attain true happiness by coming before God and pursuing the truth. So that more people who lived in darkness like me could come to God to receive His salvation and see the light again, I joined the ranks of proclaiming the gospel and testifying to God. But unexpectedly, I was arrested by the CCP government for preaching the gospel and I suffered the extreme brutality of torture and imprisonment.

It was during the afternoon in the winter of 2008, when two sisters and I were testifying of God's work in the last days to a gospel target, we were reported by evil people. Six police officers used the excuse of needing to check our residence permits to charge into the home of the gospel target. As they came in the door, they roared: "Don't move!" Two of the police officers seemed completely out of their minds as they pounced on me; one of them grabbed the clothes on my chest and the other grabbed my arms and used all his strength to cinch them behind me, then he fiercely asked: "What are you doing? What is your name? Where are you from?" I asked in reply: "What are you doing? What are you arresting me for?" When they heard me say this, they got really angry and aggressively said: "It doesn't matter what the reason is, you are the one we are looking for and you're coming with us!" Afterward, the police officers took me and the two sisters, pushed us into the police vehicle and took us to the local police station.

After we got to the police station, the police officers took me and locked me up in a small room; they ordered me to crouch on the floor and arranged four of them to watch me. Because I had squatted for a long time, I became so tired that I couldn't take it. The instant I tried to stand up, they scuttled over and pressed my head down to prevent me from standing up. It was only until night time when they came to search me that they allowed me to stand up; when they found nothing in their search, they all left. Not long after, I heard blood-curdling screams of someone being tortured in the room next door, and at that moment, I became very afraid: I don't know what torture they will use on me next! I began urgently praying to God in my heart: "Oh Almighty God, I am very afraid right now, I ask You to give me faith and power, make me firm and courageous. I'm willing to stand testimony for You. If I can't bear their cruel torture, I would rather commit suicide by biting off my tongue than ever betray You like Judas!" After praying, I thought of God's words, "Do not fear, Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He has your back and He is your shield" ("Chapter 26" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Yeah, Almighty God is my support and He is with me; what else is there to be afraid of? I

have to rely on God to fight Satan. God's words removed the timidity from my heart, and my heart was set free.

A little later, four fiendish police officers came over and one of them pointed to me and yelled: "You believers in Almighty God are disturbing the order of society, and are destroying national law. You are criminals of the state!" He yelled as he pushed me into the torture room on the second floor, commanding me to squat. The torture room was arranged with all kinds of torture instruments such as ropes, wooden sticks, batons, whips, guns, etc. They were arranged in a mess. With furrowed brows and blazing eyes, a policeman grasped my hair with one hand, and an electric baton, which made wild "zapping and popping" noises, in the other hand, and made threatening demands for information: "How many people are in your church? Where is your meeting location? Who is in charge? How many people are in the area preaching the gospel? Speak up! Otherwise, you will get what's coming!" I looked at the looming danger of the electric baton and looked again at the room filled with torture instruments; I couldn't help but feel nervous and afraid. I didn't know if I would be able to overcome this torture. Just at this critical moment, I thought of Almighty God's words saying: "You too must drink of the bitter cup from which I have drunk (this is what He said after the resurrection). You too must walk the path I have walked" ("How Peter Came to Know Jesus" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). I recognized that this was something God entrusted to us and it was the way of life God personally established for us. In walking the path of believing in God and pursuing truth, one must certainly pass through suffering and frustration. This is inevitable, and in the end, these hardships bring blessings from God. Only through suffering can people grasp the true meaning of the truth and receive the way of truth granted by God. I should walk in the footsteps of God and courageously face this; I should not be timid or afraid. In thinking of this, my heart immediately produced a kind of power and I said in a loud voice: "I only believe in Almighty God, I don't know anything else!" When the policeman heard this, he became flustered and violently jabbed me on the left side of my chest with the electric baton. He shocked me for nearly a minute. I immediately felt like the blood in my body had been boiled; I was in unbearable pain from head to foot and I rolled around on the floor screaming incessantly. He still wouldn't give up on me and suddenly he started dragging me over and used a baton to lift me up by my chin, yelling: "Speak up! You won't confess anything?" He yelled and prodded the right side of my chest with the electric baton, I was so badly electrocuted that I was trembling from head to foot.

Later it hurt so bad that I passed out lying on the floor motionless. I didn't know how much time had passed by, but I woke up and heard an evil police officer saying: "Are you pretending to be dead? You're pretending! Go ahead and pretend!" He again prodded me with a baton in the face and kicked me in the thigh. Afterward, he dragged me over and fiercely asked: "Will you tell me?" I still did not answer. He then ruthlessly beat my face with his fists and one of my teeth was knocked out, another tooth was knocked loose. My mouth immediately began to bleed. In facing the insane torture of these demons, I only feared that I would not be able to bear their torture and would thus betray God, and so I desperately prayed to God in my heart. At this time, I thought again about God's words, "Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult" ("Chapter 75" of Utterances of Christ in the Beginning in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words gave me faith and power again, and I recognized that even though the evil police officers in front of me were crazed and unbridled, they were arranged by the hand of God. At that moment, God was using them to test my faith. As long as I leaned on faith and relied on God and didn't give in to them, they would inevitably fail in humiliation. In thinking about this, I summoned all the strength of my body and replied in a loud voice: "Why have you brought me here? Why are you electrocuting me with an electric baton? What crime have I committed?" The evil policeman suddenly became like a deer in the headlights and weighed down with a guilty conscience. He began stuttering: "I ... I ... Shouldn't I have brought you here?" Then they left with their tails between their legs. In seeing the disgraceful situation of Satan's dilemma, I was moved to tears. In this predicament, I truly experienced the power and authority of Almighty God's words. As long as I put God's word into practice, then I would have God's care and protection and I would see God's deeds. At the same time, I felt indebted to God because of how little faith I had. Afterward, a tall police officer came in and walked over to me and said: "You only have to tell us where your family lives and how many people are in your family, and we will immediately release you." When he saw that I wouldn't say anything, he became flustered and grabbed my hand and forced my fingerprint onto an oral confession they had written. I saw that the oral confession was not what I had told them, it was an outright counterfeit and fake evidence. I was filled with righteous indignation and I seized it and tore it to pieces. The policeman immediately burst into a rage and struck me

with his fist on the left side of my face. Then he slapped me twice in the face so hard I became dizzy. Afterward, they took me back to the small room I was in before.

After returning to the small room, I was bruised and battered, the pain was unbearable. I couldn't help but feel sick at heart and weak: Why do believers have to suffer like this? I preached the gospel with good intentions, I showed people that the Savior had come and that they had to hurry up and pursue the truth and be saved, and yet I have unexpectedly suffered this persecution. In thinking about this, I felt more so that I had been wronged. In my pain, I thought of God's words: "Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job, like Peter. ... You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?" ("Practice (2)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Almighty God's words tugged on the strings of my heart. Yes, God has watered and supplied me with His bountiful words of life, He has allowed me to enjoy His abundant grace for free and has allowed me to know the mysteries and the truth that no one since the generations of the past has understood. This is a special blessing God has given me. I should testify for God and endure all pain for God, because it is the most valuable and meaningful thing! Today, I am persecuted for preaching the gospel and not willing to suffer any physical pain for it; I feel wronged and unwilling. Haven't I grieved God in doing this? Am I not lacking conscience? How could I be worthy of God's grace, blessings and provision of life? Generations of saints have borne strong and resounding testimonies for God because they followed God's way; they lived life with meaning. Today I have all these words from God, so should I not more so offer beautiful testimonies for God? In pondering this, my body didn't feel as painful, I deeply knew it was Almighty God's word that gave me the power, allowing me to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh.

The next day, the police officers had no other strategy left to try. They threatened me saying: "Will you not say anything? Then we will imprison you!" Seeing that I did not surrender, they sent me to a detention house. At the detention house, the police officers continued to use all sorts of torture methods on me and frequently incited the prisoners to beat up on me. In the chilling cold of winter, they instructed the prisoners to pour buckets of cold water on me and forced me to have a cold shower. I was shivering with cold from head

to toe. Here, the prisoners were machines making money for the CCP and didn't have any legal rights. They had no other choice but to endure being squeezed and taken advantage of like slaves. The prison guards forced me to print paper money used as burnt offerings for the dead all day and made me work overtime in the night. If I stopped to take a rest, then someone would come over and shower me with beatings. At first, they set a rule that I had to print 2,000 pieces of paper per day, then they increased it to 2,800 pieces per day, and finally to 3,000 pieces. This amount was impossible for an experienced person to complete, let alone an inexperienced person like me. In fact, they intentionally made it so I couldn't complete it all so that they could have an excuse to torment and ravage me. As long as I couldn't meet the quota, the evil police officers would put fetters around my legs that weighed over 5 kg, and they bound my hands and feet together with shackles. All I could do was sit there, bow my head and twist my waist, not able to move. Even more despicable was that these inhuman and unfeeling police officers didn't ask or care about my basic necessities. Even though the toilet was in the jail cell, I was completely unable to walk over and use it; I could only plead with my cell mates to lift me up onto the toilet. If they were slightly better prisoners, then they would pull me up; if nobody helped me, then I would have no other choice but to defecate in my pants. The most painful time was mealtime, because my hands and feet were handcuffed together. I could only lower my head with all my strength and raise my hands and feet. This was the only way I could put a steamed bun into my mouth. I spent a great amount of energy on every bite. The shackles rubbed into my hands and feet causing immense pain. After a long time, my wrists and ankles had developed dark and shiny hard calluses. Often times I couldn't eat when I was locked up, and on rare occasions, prisoners would give me two small steamed buns. Most of the time they would eat my portion and all I got was an empty stomach. I received even less to drink; originally, everyone was only given two bowls of water per day, but I was locked up and couldn't move, so I was rarely able to drink any water. The inhumane torment was unspeakable. In total, I suffered this four times and each time I was locked up for a minimum of three days and a maximum of eight days. Every time the hunger was hard to bear, I would think of the words God spoke in the past: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Mat 4:4). I gradually began to realize that God wants to fulfill the fact that "His word becomes man's life" on me through the afflictions of Satan. In understanding the will of God, my heart was liberated and I peacefully prayed to God and

tried to understand God's words. Unwittingly, I no longer felt so painful or hungry. This truly made me feel that God's word is the truth, the way, and the life and is certainly the foundation I should rely on to survive. Therefore, my faith in God unconsciously increased. I remember one time the prison guards intentionally persecuted me and handcuffed me. For three days and three nights I didn't drink a drop of water. The prisoner handcuffed next to me said: "There was a young person who was handcuffed and starved to death like this before. I have seen that you have not eaten anything for several days and you are still in such high spirits." In hearing his words, I thought that even though I had not eaten or drunk anything for three days and three nights, I didn't feel the discomfort of hunger. I deeply felt that this was the power of life in God's words supporting me and causing me to truly see God appearing to me in His words. My heart was continually excited; in this environment of suffering I was able to truly experience the reality of the truth that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." This is truly the most precious wealth of life God has granted me, and is also my unique gift. Moreover, I could never have obtained this in an environment where I didn't have to worry about food or clothes. Now, my suffering had so much meaning and value! At this time, I couldn't help but think of God's words: "What you have inherited this day surpasses that of the apostles and prophets throughout the ages and is greater even than that of Moses and Peter. Blessings cannot be obtained in a day or two; they must be earned through great sacrifice. Which is to say, you must possess a love that has undergone refinement, you must possess great faith, and you must have the many truths that God requires you to attain; what is more, you must turn toward justice, without being cowed or evasive, and must have a constant and unabating love for God. You must have resolve, changes must occur in your life disposition, your corruption must be healed, you must accept all of God's orchestrations without complaint, and you must be obedient even unto death. This is what you ought to attain, this is the final aim of God's work, and it is what God asks of this group of people" ("Is the Work of God So Simple as Man Imagines?" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). In trying to understand God's words, I recognized that after suffering and trials come blessings from God, and these are God's most practical supply and watering of life for me. Now, even though the words God has given me have surpassed the generations of saints, I still need to have faith and perseverance to be able to be unyielding during my trials and tribulations, to submit to the arrangements of God, and receive God's salvation. Then I will be able to enter the reality of God's word and be able to see the marvelous deeds of God. If it were not for the price of this hardship, I would not be worthy to receive the promises and blessings of God. The enlightenment of God's words led me to be more firm and powerful inside; I set a resolution: Diligently cooperate with God and satisfy God's requirements in the midst of this painful environment, testify for God so that I can have the greatest harvest.

One month later, the CCP police foisted the unwarranted charge on me of "being suspected of disturbing the order of society and destroying the implementation of the law," I was sentenced to one year of reform through labor. When I entered the labor camp, the police officers disseminated rumors and nonsense among the prisoners, saying that I was a believer in Almighty God, which is worse than murder and robbery, and they incited the prisoners to torture me. Therefore I was frequently beaten up and placed in difficult situations by the prisoners for no reason at all. This made me really see that China is a living hell firmly controlled by Satan, the demon. It is dark from every angle, and no light is permitted to exist; there is simply no place for the believers in God to live. During the day, the police officers forced me to work in a workshop. If I did not meet my quota, they would let the prisoners hit me when I got back to my prison cell and proclaim "kill the chicken to scare the monkey." While I was in the workshop counting bags, I would count out 100 bags and then tie them together. The prisoners would always intentionally come and take one or several bags from what I had counted, then they would say that I didn't count right and take that as an opportunity to punch and kick me. When the warden saw me get beaten up, he would come over and hypocritically ask me what was going on and the prisoners would present false evidence that I was not counting enough bags. Then I would have to endure a barrage of stern criticism from the warden. In addition, they would order me to memorize the "rules of conduct" every morning, and if I didn't memorize it, I would be beaten; they also forced me to sing songs that praised the Communist Party. If they saw that I was not singing or that my lips were not moving, then at night I would unavoidably be beaten up. They also punished me by making me mop the floor, and if I didn't mop to their expectations, then I would be violently beaten. One time, some prisoners suddenly started hitting and kicking me. After beating me, they asked me: "Youngster, do you know why you are being beaten? It is because you didn't stand up and greet the warden when he came over." After each time I was beaten, I became angry but didn't dare to say anything; I could only cry and silently pray

to God, telling Him about the resentment and grievance in my heart because of this lawless, irrational place. There was no rationality here, there was only violence. There were no people here, there were only insane demons and scorpions! I felt so much pain and pressure living in this plight every day; I wasn't willing to stay a minute longer. Each time I fell into a condition of weakness and pain, I would think about Almighty God's words: "Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the light guiding you. You will surely be the master of all creation. You will surely be an overcomer before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs to bear witness to My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe" ("Chapter 19" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words encouraged me. I understood that, regardless of whether what God was giving to me was grace and blessings or trial and refinement, it was all done to provide for me and save me; it was to put truth into me and make truth my life. God permitted the persecution and tribulation to come upon me, and even though I suffered much physically, it allowed me to be able to truly experience that God is with me; it caused me to truly enjoy God's words becoming the bread of my life and the lamp to my feet and the light to my path, leading me step by step through this dark hell hole. This is the love and protection of God that I enjoyed and obtained during the persecution and tribulation. At this time, I was able to see that I was so blind. In believing in God, I only knew how to enjoy God's grace and blessing and didn't pursue the truth and life in the slightest degree. Once my flesh suffered a little hardship, I would whine incessantly; I simply didn't understand the will of God and didn't seek to understand the work of God. I would always cause God to feel grief and pain over me. I was truly without conscience! In feeling remorse and self-blame, I silently prayed to God: "Oh Almighty God, I can see that everything You do is to save and obtain me. I just hate that I am so rebellious, blind and have no humanity. I have always misunderstood You and have not been considerate of Your will. Oh God, today Your word has awakened my numb heart and spirit and has caused me to understand Your will. I am no longer willing to have my own desires and requirements; I will only submit to Your

arrangements. Even if I have to suffer all hardships, I will still diligently cooperate with You and will bear resounding testimonies to You throughout Satan's persecutions. I will seek to break away from Satan's influence and live out the likeness of a real man to satisfy You." After praying, I understood God's good intentions, and I knew that each environment God allowed me to experience was God's greatest love and salvation for me. Therefore, I would no longer think to cower or misunderstand God. Even though the situation was still the same, my heart was truly full of joy and pleasure; I felt that it was an honor to be able to suffer hardships and persecution for my belief in God, and it was a unique gift for me, a corrupt person; it was God's special blessing and grace for me.

After having experienced a year of hardship in prison, I see that I am so small of stature and that I lack so much truth. Almighty God truly has made up for my deficiencies through this unique environment and allowed me to grow. In my adversity, He has enabled me to obtain the most precious wealth in life, to understand many truths I didn't understand in the past and to clearly see the CCP's heinous crimes of persecuting God and tormenting Christians. I have recognized the repulsive appearance of Satan, the demon, and the reactionary essence of its resistance to God. I have earnestly experienced the great salvation and mercy Almighty God has for me, the corrupt person, and felt that the power and life in Almighty God's words can bring me light and be my life and lead me to prevail over Satan and to tenaciously walk out of the valley of the shadow of death. Likewise, I have also recognized that Almighty God leads me on the correct path of life. It is the bright path to obtain truth and life! From now on, no matter what persecution, tribulations or dangerous temptations I encounter, I am willing to diligently pursue truth and obtain the way of eternal life that Almighty God has given me.

98. Tribulation Inspired My Love for God

By Meng Yong, Shanxi Province

I am by nature a nice person. In this dark and evil society, I have always been bullied by other people, so I have tasted the coldness of the world of man and felt that my life was empty and without meaning. After I started believing in Almighty God, through reading God's words and living the church life, I enjoyed an earnestness and joy in my heart I had never

felt before. Seeing the brothers and sisters of The Church of Almighty God love each other like a family made me realize that only God is righteous, and that only in The Church of Almighty God is there light. Through several years of personally experiencing Almighty God's work, I have come to truly appreciate that the words of Almighty God can indeed change people and save people. Almighty God is love, and He is salvation. So that more people can enjoy God's love and receive God's salvation, my brothers and sisters and I all try to do our best to spread the gospel, but we never expected to be captured and persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party government.

On January 12, 2011, several brothers and sisters and I drove to a place to spread the gospel, and ended up being reported by wicked people. Not long after, the county government deployed officers from the criminal police brigade, national security forces, the anti-drug squad, armed police forces, and the local police station, to come around in more than 10 police vehicles to arrest us. When a brother and I were just about to drive away, four policemen ran over quickly and cut off our car. One of them pulled out the car key without letting us say a word, and ordered us to stay in the car and not move. By then, I saw that that seven or eight policemen wielding batons were furiously beating another brother, and that brother had already been beaten to the point that he was unable to move. I could not help but be filled with righteous indignation and rushed out of the car, trying to stop their violence, but the policemen twisted my arm and pushed me aside. I tried to reason with them: "Whatever it is, we can talk about it. How can you just start beating people?" They viciously yelled back: "Hurry up and get back to your car, you're going to get yours soon!" Later, they took us to the police station, and our car was also impounded.

After nine o'clock that night, two criminal policemen came to interrogate me. When they saw that they could not get any useful information out of me, they grew flustered and exasperated, gnashing their teeth in anger as they cursed: "Damn it, we'll take care of you later!" They then locked me in the interrogation waiting room. At 11:30 p.m., they took me into a room without surveillance cameras. I had a feeling they were going to use violence against me, so I started praying to God repeatedly in my heart, begging for God to protect me. At this time, a police officer surnamed Jia came to interrogate me: "Have you been in a Volkswagen Jetta in these last few days?" I answered no, and he furiously yelled: "Other people have already seen you, and yet you still deny it?" After saying it, he slapped me viciously across the face. All I felt was the burning pain on my cheek. He then roared loudly:

"Let's see how tough you are!" He picked up a wide belt as he spoke and kept whipping it across my face, I don't know how many times I was whipped, but I could not help but scream out in pain time and time again. Upon seeing this, they pulled the belt around my mouth. A few policemen then put a quilt over my body before beating me furiously with their batons, only stopping when they became too tired to catch their breath. I had been beaten so badly that my head was spinning and my body hurt like every bone had scattered apart. At the time I did not know why they were beating me up in this way, but later on I found out that they had put a quilt over me to prevent the beating from leaving marks on my flesh. Putting me in a room without surveillance, gagging my mouth, and covering me with a quilt—it was all because they were afraid that their wicked deeds would be exposed. The CCP police are so treacherous and vicious! When the four of them got tired from beating me, they changed to another method to torture me: Two policemen twisted one of my arms back and forcefully tugged it upward, while another two policemen lifted my other arm over the shoulder to the back and pulled it down hard. (They called this type of torture method "Carrying a Sword on the Back," which an average person would not be able to endure at all.) But my two hands could not be pulled together no matter what, so they drove a vicious knee into my arm. All I heard was a "click," and my two arms felt like they had been torn off. It hurt so much that I nearly expired. It did not take long for me to lose sensation in both my hands. This was still not enough for them to give up, so they ordered me to kneel down to add to my suffering. I was in so much pain that my whole body broke out in a cold sweat, my head was ringing, and my consciousness began to grow a little blurry. I thought: "Over all these years in my life, even though I've constantly suffered from chronic illnesses, I've never had the feeling of being unable to control my own consciousness. Am I about to die?" Later on, I really couldn't take it anymore, so I thought of seeking relief through death. In that moment, the words of God enlightened me from within: "Today, most people don't have that knowledge. They believe that suffering is without value.... The suffering of some people reaches a certain point, and their thoughts turn to death. This is not the true love of God; such people are cowards, they have no perseverance, they are weak and powerless!" ("Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words made me suddenly awaken and realize that my way of thinking was not in line with God's will and would only make God sad and disappointed. Because amid this pain and tribulation, what God wants to see is not me

seeking death, but that I can swallow humiliation and bear the heavy burden, and that I can rely on God's guidance to battle Satan, to bear witness to God, and make Satan ashamed and defeated. Seeking death would be falling right into Satan's scheme, and it couldn't be considered bearing witness for God, but would instead become a mark of shame. After understanding God's intentions, I prayed to God silently: "Oh God! Reality has shown that my nature is too weak. I don't have the will and courage to suffer for You and wanted to die just because of a bit of physical pain. Now I know that I cannot do anything to shame Your name and must stand witness and satisfy You no matter how much suffering I have to endure. But at this time, my body is in extreme pain and weak, and I know that it is very difficult to overcome the beatings of these demons on my own. Please give me more confidence and strength so that I can rely on You to defeat Satan. I swear on my life that I will not betray You or sell out my brothers and sisters." As I repeatedly prayed to God, my heart slowly became at ease. The wicked police saw that I was barely breathing and were afraid they would have to bear responsibility if I died, so they came to release my handcuffs. But my arms had already stiffened, and the cuffs were so tight that they became very hard to undo. The four wicked policemen took several minutes to release the handcuffs before dragging me back to the interrogation waiting room.

The next afternoon, the police arbitrarily pinned a "criminal offense" on me and took me back to my home to raid it, and then sent me to a detention house. As soon as I entered the detention house, four correctional officers confiscated my cotton-padded jacket, trousers, boots, and watch, as well as the 1,300 yuan in cash I had on me. They made me change into their standard prison uniform and forced me to spend 200 yuan to buy a quilt from them. Afterward, the correctional officers locked me up with robbers, murderers, rapists, and drug smugglers. When I entered my cell, I saw twelve bald prisoners eyeing me with hostility. The atmosphere was gloomy and terrifying, and I felt my heart suddenly rise up to my throat. Two of the heads of the cell walked up to me and asked: "What are you in here for?" I said: "Spreading the gospel." Without another word, one of them slapped me across the face twice, and said: "You're a religious head, aren't you?" The other prisoners all started laughing savagely and mocked me by asking: "Why don't you let your God rescue you from here?" Amid the jeering and the ridiculing, the cell head slapped me across the face a few more times. From then on, they nicknamed me "religious head" and often humiliated and mocked me. The other cell head saw the slippers I was wearing and arrogantly shouted:

"You don't know your own place at all. Are you worthy of wearing these shoes? Take them off!" As he said it, he forced me to take them off and change into a pair of their worn-out slippers. They also gave away my quilt to the other prisoners. Those prisoners fought back and forth for my quilt, and in the end left me with an old quilt that was thin, torn, dirty, and smelly. Instigated by the correctional officers, these prisoners subjected me to all sorts of hardships and torment. The light was always on in the cell at night, but a cell head said to me with an evil grin: "Turn that light off for me." As I could not do it (there wasn't even a switch), they started laughing at me and mocking me again. The next day, a few juvenile prisoners forced me to stand in a corner and memorize the prison rules, threatening: "You're going to get it if you don't memorize it within two days!" I could not help but be terrified, and the more I thought about what I had been through the last few days, the more frightened I became. The only thing I could do was to keep calling out to God and beg for God to protect me so I could overcome it. At this moment, I thought of a hymn of God's words: "... whether you face imprisonment, illness, ridicule, or slander from others, or seem to have no way out, you can still love God. This means your heart has turned to God" ("Has Your Heart Turned to God?" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). God's word gave me power and pointed out a path for me to practice—seeking to love God and turning my heart to God! In that moment, it suddenly became crystal clear in my heart: God allowing this suffering to befall me was not to torment me or intentionally make me suffer, but to train me to turn my heart to God in such an environment, so that I can resist the control of Satan's dark influences and so my heart can still be close to God and love God, never complaining, always accepting and obeying God's orchestrations and arrangements. With this in my mind, I was no longer afraid. No matter how Satan treats me, all I shall care about is giving myself to God and doing all I can to pursue loving God and satisfying God, never yielding to Satan.

Life in prison is practically hell on earth. The prison guards kept coming up with ways to torture me: When I was sleeping at night, other prisoners would crowd up against me so I could hardly turn over, and they made me sleep right up against the toilet. After being captured, I didn't sleep for several days and became so sleepy that I couldn't take it and would doze off. The prisoners on duty who were standing guard would come to harass me, intentionally flicking me on the head until I woke up before they would leave. Once, at around three in the morning, a prisoner woke me up on purpose and forcefully stole the long john top I was wearing, then gave me a dirty, ragged, and thin long john top. Those were the

coldest days of the year, but this prisoner still took away the only long john top I had on me. The people in there were as barbaric as beasts. They were vicious and sinister, without a shred of humanity, like demons who torture people in hell for fun. Moreover, the food there was even worse than what was fed to dogs and pigs. The first time, I received half a bowl of congee, and saw that there were many black spots in it. I didn't know what they were, and the color of the congee was also blackish. It was very difficult to swallow. I really wanted to fast at the time, but God's words enlightened me: "During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should go on to the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God, and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony" ("Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words were full of love and affection like the comforting of a mother, arousing my courage to face suffering. God wants me to keep on living, but I was too weak, constantly wanting relief through death. I don't even cherish myself; it is still God who loves me the most! A warmth suddenly surged in my heart, making me so emotional that tears burst from my eyes. Being moved by God's love once again gave me energy, and I must eat this meal regardless of how it tasted. So I finished off the congee in one breath. After breakfast, the cell head made me scrub the floors. These were the coldest days of the year and there was no hot water, so I could only use cold water for the cleaning cloth. The cell head also ordered me to scrub like this every day. Then, several convicted robbers made me memorize the prison rules. If I couldn't memorize them, they would punch and kick me; getting slapped in the face was even more common. Facing such an environment, I often wondered what I would have to do to be able to satisfy God's will. At night, I pulled my quilt over my head and prayed silently: "Oh God, You allowed this environment to befall me, so Your good intentions must lie therein. Please reveal Your intentions to me." At that moment, God's words enlightened me: "I admire the lilies blooming in the hills. The flowers and grass stretch across the slopes, but the lilies add luster to My glory on earth before the arrival of spring—can man achieve this much? Could he testify to Me on earth prior to My return? Could he dedicate himself for the sake of My name in the country of the great red dragon?" ("Chapter 34" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Yes, the flowers and grass and I are all God's creation. God created us to manifest Him, to glorify Him. The lilies are

able to add luster to God's glory on earth before the spring arrives, meaning they have fulfilled their responsibility as a creation of God. My duty today is to obey God's orchestration and to bear witness to God before Satan, to let everyone see that Satan harms and devours man, while God is the one true God who loves and saves man. Enduring all this suffering and humiliation now is not because I committed an offense, but is for the sake of God's name. Enduring this suffering is glorious. The more Satan humiliates me, the more I have to stand on God's side and love God. That way, God can gain glory, and I would have fulfilled the duty I should have fulfilled. As long as God is happy and pleased, my heart will also receive comfort. I am willing to endure the final suffering to satisfy God and submit to God's orchestrations in all things. When I started to think this way, I felt especially moved in my heart, and was once again unable to control my tears. I prayed to God silently: "Oh God, You truly are worthy of love! I have followed You for so many years, but never had I felt Your tender affection like I have today, or felt as close to You as I do today." I completely forgot my own suffering and became immersed in this moving feeling for a long, long time ...

On my third day at the detention house, a correctional officer took me to their office. I saw more than a dozen people staring at me with peculiar looks. One of them held a video camera in front of me to my left, while another walked up to me with a microphone, asking: "Why do you believe in Almighty God?" That was when I realized that this was a media interview, so I answered with proud humility: "Since I was little, I have often been subject to people's bullying and cold shoulders, and I've seen people mutually deceive and take advantage of each other. I felt that this society was too dark, too perilous; people were living empty and helpless lives, with nothing to look forward to and with no life goals. Later, when someone preached the gospel of Almighty God to me, I started believing in it. After believing in Almighty God, I have felt other believers treat me like family. No one in The Church of Almighty God plots against me. Everyone is mutually understanding and caring. They look after each other, and are not afraid to speak what's on their minds. In Almighty God's word I have found the purpose and value of life. I think believing in God is pretty good." The reporter then asked: "Do you know why you are here?" I responded: "Since believing in Almighty God, I have cared less about worldly name and benefits, and I feel that these things are empty and meaningless. Only if I can be a good person and take the right path can I live in a righteous way. My heart is turning more and more toward kindness, and I am more and more willing to be a good person. Seeing how Almighty God's word can truly change people

and lead people to take the right path, I thought that if all of mankind can believe in God, then our country would be much more orderly and the crime rate would drop. Hence, I decided to tell this good news to other people, but I never knew that such a good deed would be banned in China. And so I was arrested and brought here." The reporter saw that my responses were not advantageous toward them, so he immediately stopped the interview and left. At that moment, the deputy head of the National Security Brigade was so furious that he kept stomping his feet. He stared at me viciously, gnashing his teeth and whispering: "You just wait and see!" But I was not at all afraid of his threats or intimidation. Conversely, I felt deeply honored to have been able to bear witness to God on such an occasion, and moreover I gave glory to God for the exaltation of God's name and the defeat of Satan.

Temperatures were very low on the day of January 17. As the wicked police had confiscated my cotton-padded coat, I only wore a set of long johns and ended up catching a cold. I came down with a high fever and also could not stop coughing. At night, I wrapped myself up in a worn guilt, enduring the torment of illness while also thinking about the endless mistreatment and abuse of the prisoners toward me. I felt very desolate and helpless. Just as my misery reached a certain extent, I thought of Peter's genuine and sincere prayer before God: "If You give me sickness, and take my freedom, I can continue living, but were Your chastisement and judgment to leave me, I would have no way to go on living. If I were without Your chastisement and judgment, I would have lost Your love, a love that is too deep for me to put into words. Without Your love, I would live under the domain of Satan ... " ("The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). These words inspired me, giving me faith and strength. Peter was never driven by the flesh. What he loved dearly and valued was God's chastisement and judgment. As long as God's chastisement and judgment did not leave him, his heart would receive its greatest comfort. I should now follow the example of Peter's pursuit and understanding. The flesh is corrupt and will inevitably decay. Even if I encounter illness and lose my freedom, it is suffering I should bear. But if I lose God's chastisement and judgment, that is equivalent to losing God's presence and love, and also means losing the chance to be cleansed. That is what is most painful. Under God's enlightenment, I once again experienced God's love. I also hated my own weakness and worthlessness, and saw that my nature is too selfish, never showing any consideration toward God's feelings of sadness. At that moment I felt full of indebtedness to God, so I

quietly set my resolve: No matter how great my suffering, I will stand witness for God and satisfy Him. The next day, several other prisoners in the same cell fell ill, but my high fever miraculously receded. I felt God's care and protection toward me and also saw His wondrous deeds. I couldn't help but praise and thank God silently.

One night, a vendor came to the window and the cell head bought a lot of ham, dog meat, chicken thighs, and so forth. In the end, he ordered me to pay. I said I didn't have the money, so he said viciously: "If you don't have the money I will slowly torment you!" The next day, he made me wash the bedsheets, clothes, and socks. The correctional officers in the detention house also made me wash their socks. In the detention house, I had to endure their beatings nearly every day. Whenever I could bear it no longer, I would always be guided inside by God's words: "You must do your final duty for God during your time on earth. In the past, Peter was crucified upside down for God; however, you should satisfy God in the end, and exhaust all of your energy for God. What can a creature do for God? So you should give yourself to the mercy of God sooner rather than later. As long as God is happy and pleased, then let Him do whatever He wants. What right do men have to complain?" ("Chapter 41" of Interpretations of the Mysteries of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words gave me infinite power. Even though from time to time I would still be subject to the attacks, abuse, condemnation, and beatings of the prisoners, my heart was able to achieve comfort and joy. Like a powerful warm flow, God's love encouraged me to continue on, enabling me to truly feel that God's love is too great.

One morning, a correctional officer specifically delivered a sheet of newspaper. The prisoners grinned hideously as they used a mocking tone to read out words from the newspaper slandering and blaspheming Almighty God. I was so furious that I began gnashing my teeth. The prisoners came over to ask me what it was all about, and I said loudly: "This is a smear by the Communist Party!" Listening to these prisoners all just parroting what the newspaper said, saying untrue things and blaspheming God by speaking the same language as the devil, I seemingly saw the coming of their end. As the sin of blaspheming God shall never be forgiven, anyone who offends God's disposition will receive the punishment and retribution of God! By doing this, the Communist Party is taking all the people of China to their ultimate doom, completely exposing its true face as a soul-eating demon! Later the police officer in charge of my case interrogated me again. This time, he

did not use torture to try to force a confession, and instead changed to using a "kind" face to ask me: "Who is your leader? I'll give you another chance. If you tell us, you'll be all right. I will show you great leniency. You were actually innocent, but other people ratted you out. So why cover for them? You seem like such a nice person. Why give your life for them? If you tell us, you can go home. Why stay here and suffer?" These two-faced hypocrites saw that the hard approach didn't work, so they decided to try the soft approach. They really are full of cunning tricks and old masters of machinations and maneuvers! That hypocritical face of his filled my heart with hate for this pack of demons. I said to him: "I've told you everything I know. I don't know anything else." He saw my resolute stance and that he couldn't get anything out of me; he walked away dejectedly.

After being held at the detention house for half a month, I was released only after the police asked my family to pay 8,000 yuan in bond money. But they warned me not to go anywhere and that I must stay at home and guarantee to be on call. On the day I was released, the prisoners said: "Your God is amazing. We were not sick people, but we all became sick people here. You came here full of illnesses, but now you're leaving without any illness. Good on you!" In this moment, my heart became even more thankful and full of praise toward God! My uncle is a prison guard. He kept suspecting that I was released because my father has a special connection to someone powerful, or else there's no way I would have been released from a high-security prison within half a month—at the very least it should have been three months. My whole family knew very well that this was determined by God's omnipotence and that it was God revealing His wonderful work on me. I saw clearly that this was the contest between God and Satan. No matter how savage and vicious Satan is, it will always be defeated by God. From then on, I became convinced that everything I encountered was part of God's arrangement. In late May, 2011, on a groundless accusation of "disturbing social order," the CCP got me sentenced to one year of re-education through labor, to be served outside prison under surveillance, and suspended for two years.

After experiencing this persecution and tribulation, I had an understanding and could discern the devilish face and the evil essence of the atheist Communist Party of China, and developed a deep-seated hatred toward it. It uses violence and lies to protect its own position of dominance; it madly suppresses and persecutes the people who believe in God. It uses every trick in the book to hinder and disrupt God's work on earth, and hates the truth to an extreme. It is the greatest enemy of God and also the enemy of those of us who are believers.

After going through this tribulation, I can see that only God's word can bring people life. When I was at my most desperate or at the brink of death, it was God's word that gave me faith and courage, and allowed me to tenaciously hold on to life. Throughout this half-month of prison life, if God had not been with me, using His words to remind, enlighten, and encourage me, there was no way I, with a weak nature, could have stood firm in such a tribulation. If it were not for God looking after and protecting me, there was no way my weak and fragile body could have withstood the torture and ill-treatment of the CCP, which, even had it not tormented me to death, would have left my body sick and wounded. But God wonderfully protected me through those darkest, most difficult days, and even cured my original illness. God really is too almighty! His love for me is really too deep, too great! I really don't know how to express my gratitude toward God, and can only say from the bottom of my heart: "Oh God, I hope to love You ever deeper! No matter how rough and bumpy the road ahead is or how much suffering I must endure, I will obey Your orchestration and be determined to follow You to the end!"

This experience is not only a treasure, but also a new starting point for my path of faith. I feel deeply that, in the ten years I have believed in God, I have never appreciated God's love as deeply as I do today or truly felt that the value and meaning of believing in God, following God, and worshiping God is so great; and moreover, I have never been as willing to pursue loving God and offer my remaining life to repay God's love as much as I do today. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my heartfelt appreciation and praise. All glory and praise to Almighty God!

99. A Youth Without Regret

By Xiaowen, Chongqing City

"'Love' refers to an emotion that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no distance and nothing impure" ("Pure Love Without Blemish" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). This hymn of God's words was once my companion as I lived through an interminable and painful seven years and four months of life in prison. Though the CCP

government deprived me of the best years of my youth, I gained from Almighty God the truth that is most precious and most real. Therefore I have no regrets whatsoever!

In 1996, I accepted Almighty God's salvation of the last days. Through reading God's words, attending meetings and fellowshiping, I came to firmly believe that everything God says is the truth, and the highest of all life's aphorisms, and that it is entirely at odds with any theories or knowledge of this wicked world. The thing that made me even happier was that I could simply be open with my brothers and sisters in the church, I could speak my mind freely and I didn't have to be wary or engage in deception like when I came into contact with people in the outside world. I felt a happiness and joy I had never felt before, and I came to love this big family. But it wasn't long before I heard that faith in God was persecuted in China and that Christians often being arrested and persecuted was a common occurrence. I was greatly puzzled by this because the words of Almighty God are all so that people worship God, walk the right path in life, and so that people conduct themselves with honesty. If everyone believed in Almighty God, the world would know such peace. I really didn't understand: Believing in God is the most righteous undertaking. Why does the CCP government want to persecute and oppose those who believe in God, and even arrest them? In my heart, I thought: No matter how the CCP government may persecute me or how strong public opinion is, since I now firmly believe this to be the right path in life, I absolutely must follow it to the end!

After that, I began performing a duty in the church that involved delivering books of God's words. I knew that doing this duty in such a God-defying country was extremely dangerous and that every moment carried the possibility of being arrested, but I knew even more strongly that expending myself for God and performing my duties as a created being was my vocation, and that it was my incumbent responsibility. Just when I had every faith in performing my duty, a day came in September 2003 when I was apprehended by the city's National Security Bureau whilst on my way to deliver some books of God's words to my brothers and sisters.

At the National Security Bureau, I was scared, and I didn't know how to face the repeated interrogations of the CCP police, so I called out urgently to God in my heart: "Oh, Almighty God. I ask that You give me wisdom, bestow on me the words I should say, and keep me from betraying You. I ask that You give me faith and strength, and no matter how the CCP persecutes me, I will stand firm and bear witness for You." During that time, I called

out to God every day and I didn't dare to leave God even for a second in my heart. I praised God for looking after me and protecting me; every time they interrogated me, I was hiccupping constantly and I wasn't able to speak at all. Seeing God's wondrous deeds, I became fiercely single-minded: I am ready to risk it all! They can take my head, take my life, but today it is absolutely impossible for them to get me to betray God! When my resolution was set and I felt I would rather give my life than be a Judas and betray God, I felt really thankful to God for opening up the way forward for me. Every time I was interrogated, God protected me and got me through the ordeal safely. Though I said nothing to them at all, in the end, the CCP government still imposed on me the charge of "using a xie jiao organization" to destroy the application of law" to sentence me to nine years. Because of God's protection, when I heard the court ruling I didn't feel distressed, nor did I fear the people in the court. Instead, I had nothing but contempt for them. They were on high pronouncing their judgments, and I was down below saying in a small voice: "This is proof of the CCP government's defiance of God!" Afterward, public security officers came specially to investigate my attitude, and I said to them very calmly: "What's nine years? When the time comes for me to be released I'll still be a member of The Church of Almighty God, and if you don't believe me, you just wait and see! But remember, this case is on your hands!" My attitude surprised them a great deal, and they gave me the thumbs up and said: "We've got to hand it to you! We admire you! You're tougher than Jiang Zhuyun! Let's meet up when you come out, and we'll buy you dinner." At that point, I felt God was glorified, and so I was gratified. When I was sentenced that year, I was only just 31 years old.

Chinese prisons are hells on earth. The endless prison life allowed me to see very clearly the cruel and inhuman face of Satan, as well as its demonic essence that opposes God. China's police do not follow the rule of law; they follow the rule of evil. In prison, the guards don't make life hard for people themselves, but instead they encourage the prisoners to use violence to keep other prisoners in check. The prison guards also use all manner of ways to restrict people's thinking. For example, anyone who goes into prison has to wear the exact same prisoner's uniform issued by the CCP government, and each person has to wear a special serial number; they have to get their hair cut in the style the government requires, wear the shoes the government allows them to wear, take government-prescribed routes and walk at the government-prescribed pace. No matter the time of year, in wind or rain or on hot days or in freezing weather, prisoners must do as they command and are not

able to choose anything for themselves. Every day they required us to assemble together at least 15 times to number off and sing the praises of the CCP government at least five times; and then there were the political tasks, such as making us learn the prison laws and the constitution with a big exam every six months, the aim of which was to brainwash us. They also gave us exams on prison rules and discipline whenever they wanted. The prison guards not only subjected the prisoners to mental torture, but they also devastated our bodies with utter inhumanity: We had to do over 10 hours of hard labor every single day, and what's more they would crowd several hundred prisoners into a small, narrow factory building to work. Because there were so many people and so little space, and everywhere there was the loud noise of machines, no matter how healthy someone was when they entered prison, after they'd been there a while their body would suffer serious harm. Behind me was a big machine used for punching eyelets into shoes. It punched eyelets continuously every day, making an unbearable booming noise. After a few years, my hearing became seriously damaged, and it still hasn't recovered even now. The thing that harmed people even more was the large amount of dust and pollutants in the factory building, and many people became afflicted with tuberculosis and pharyngitis. Also, because we had to sit working for such a long time without being able to move, most people ended up with severe hemorrhoids. The CCP government turns prisoners into money-making machines, without any regard for whether they live or die, making people work every day from early morning until late at night. I was so exhausted all the time, and I felt very run-down. Not only this, but we also had to give our answers to all manner of spot-check examinations in the prison that could come at any time, plus weekly political tasks, manual labor and public tasks and so on. Therefore, I spent every day in a state of high mental anxiety, with nerves stretched to breaking point at all times for fear that I might slip up slightly and not keep up with every task, and then have to suffer the punishments of the prison guards. In that kind of environment, it was really not easy to get through even one day safe and well.

When I had only just begun my prison sentence, I couldn't stand this kind of cruel ravaging within the prison, and all the different kinds of high-intensity labor pressure and the ideological pressure made me feel like I couldn't breathe. Add to that coming into contact with all kinds of other prisoners and having to endure the physical and verbal abuse and insults of the prison guards and head prisoners. I was often tormented to desperation and I fell into despair many times. In particular, whenever I would think of the incredibly long prison

term of nine years, I would feel such desolation and helplessness. I don't know how many times I cried, and I even thought of death as a way to free me from this kind of suffering. Whenever I felt myself falling into extreme sorrow and I felt that I couldn't go on any longer, I would urgently pray and call on God, and God's words would enlighten and guide me: "You can't die yet. You must clench your fists and resolutely continue to live; you must live a life for God. When people have truth within them then they have this resolve and never again desire to die; when death threatens you, you will say, 'O God, I am unwilling to die; I still do not know You. I still have not repaid Your love. I must die only after coming to know You well." ... If you do not understand God's intention, and merely ruminate on your suffering, then the more you think about it, the more distressed you feel, and then you will be in trouble and begin to suffer the torment of death. If you understand truth, you will say, 'I have not yet obtained truth. I must properly expend myself for God. I must bear good witness of God. I must repay God's love. After that, it doesn't matter how I die. Then I will have lived a satisfactory life. Regardless of who else is dying, I will not die now; I must tenaciously continue to live'" ("Only by Pursuing the Truth Can You Obtain Changes in Your Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words shone like a light as soft and gentle as a mother, pacifying my lonely heart, and they were like a father's warm hands, wiping the tears from my face. At once, a breath of warmth and a breath of strength surged through my heart. I understood that though my flesh must suffer pain in this dark prison, yet it was not God's will that I should seek death; if I couldn't bear witness for God then I would become a joke of Satan. If after nine years I could walk out of this demonic prison, then that would be my testimony. God's words gave me the courage to live on and I became secretly resolved in my heart: No matter how many difficulties lie ahead, I shall live on. I shall live bravely, live strongly, and I absolutely will bear witness for God and satisfy Him.

Being overburdened with work year in year out, month in month out, my body became weaker each day, and sitting in the factory building for a long time made me sweat abnormally and profusely. When my hemorrhoids were very bad, they would start bleeding at any moment, and I would often feel dizzy due to severe anemia. It wasn't an easy thing, however, to get treatment in prison. When they were in a good mood, the prison guards would give me some cheap medicines. But when they were in a bad mood they would say I was trying to shirk my work by feigning illness, so all I could do was to endure the afflictions

of illness and swallow my tears. I would be overworked all day long, and I would drag my exhausted body back to my cell and want to have a rest. But I didn't even have the right to a good night's sleep. Either the prison guards would wake me up in the middle of the night to go do something, or they would make loud noises to wake me up. They would often play games with me to the point where I was all in a muddled trance and in unspeakable misery. Moreover, I had to endure the prison guards' inhuman treatment. I used to sleep on the ground or in corridors like a refugee, or even next to the toilet. The clothes I washed could not be air dried, but were dried by the body warmth that came from being crowded together with the other prisoners. Washing clothes in winter was especially a most upsetting thing, and many people got arthritis from wearing damp clothes for long periods. In this prison, no matter how healthy someone was, it didn't take long before they became slow-witted, rundown or wracked with ailments. We often ate out-of-season, withered old leaves that shops didn't want anymore, and if we wanted to eat something better, we had to buy the expensive food in the prison. In prison, although the guards made us study the law, there was no law in that place; the prison guards were the law. They had only to see someone they didn't like and they would come up with any old reason to deal with them, and even physically punish them for no reason at all. Even more hateful was that they classified those who believed in Almighty God as political prisoners, saying that we were worse criminals than murderers or arsonists. They were therefore especially hostile to me, treated me most harshly and tormented me most viciously. All these many kinds of evil deeds are ironclad proof that the CCP is perverse, godless and is in opposition to God! Enduring the cruel torment of the prison guards, my heart was often filled with righteous indignation and it felt such sadness and resentment: Exactly which law has been violated by our belief in God and our worship of God? Exactly what crime have we committed by following God and walking the right path in life? People are created beings in God's hands and believing in God and worshiping God is an unquestionable truth. What reason does the CCP government have to flagrantly obstruct us and do all it can to cruelly oppress us? It's plain that it is perverse and godless, opposing God in all things. It labels those who believe in Almighty God as reactionaries and it severely oppresses and ravages them, trying to catch and exterminate all who follow Almighty God. Isn't this confusing right and wrong, and being utterly reactionary? They oppose Heaven so wildly and set themselves against God, that in the end they must meet with God's righteous punishment! For there must be judgment wherever there is corruption,

and there must be chastisement wherever there is evil—these are the heavenly rules and principles as preordained by God, and no one can escape them. The CCP government is guilty of the most heinous crimes, and there can be no escape from being destroyed by God. Just as God said: "God has long since loathed this dark society to His very bones. He gnashes His teeth, desperate to plant His feet upon this wicked, heinous old serpent, so that it may never rise again, and will never again abuse man; He will not excuse its actions in the past, He will not tolerate its deceit of man, He will settle the score for every one of its sins throughout the ages; God will not be in the least bit lenient toward this ringleader of all evil,^[1] He will utterly destroy it" ("Work and Entry (8)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh).

In this demonic prison, I was no better than a stray dog in the eyes of the evil police. Not only did they abuse me physically and verbally, but they would often root through my bed and scatter my personal belongings all over the place. Also, whenever some kind of social unrest happened in the outside world, the people in the prison who were in charge of political matters would come for me and question me about my views on what had happened, and if my answer didn't please them, they would constantly rebuke me for following the way of belief in God. Whenever I had to face this kind of questioning, my heart would leap into my throat, not knowing what kind of scheme they were planning against me this time. My heart was always urgently praying and calling out to God for Him to help me and lead me through these difficult times. Day after day, year after year, all the various kinds of maltreatment, exploitation and oppression were a torment beyond words: Every day being overburdened with labor tasks, the monotonous political tasks and the afflictions of illness, plus the long-term mental oppression, brought me almost to the edge of collapse. In particular, there was a time when I saw a middle-aged woman prisoner hang herself from her cell window in the middle of the night because she couldn't bear any longer the inhuman tortures of the evil police, and a time when an elderly woman prisoner died in prison because she wasn't treated for an illness quickly enough, and at these times I would once again fall into suffocating hopelessness. Again, I would conceive the idea of death as a way to end my troubles and I felt that death was the best way to be free. I knew, however, that it would

Footnotes:

^{1. &}quot;Ringleader of all evil" refers to the old devil. This phrase expresses extreme dislike.

be a betrayal of God, and I just couldn't do it. All I could do was endure all this pain and obey God's orchestrations and arrangements. But when I thought of my interminable sentence, and of how gaining freedom was so far away in the indefinite future, I felt indescribable pain and despair, and I felt that I really couldn't go on any longer; I really didn't know how long I could keep myself going. So many times, all I could do was to get under the bed sheets and sob secretly in the dead of night, praying to Almighty God and confiding to Him all my heart's troubles. When I was in the most pain and felt the most helpless, I thought of God's words: "You, especially, have all suffered persecution and experienced difficulty in returning home; you suffer, and also have thoughts of death and an unwillingness to live. These are weaknesses of the flesh. ... You do not know what God is doing today. God has to allow your flesh to suffer in order to transform your disposition. Even though your flesh suffers, you have God's word and you have God's blessing. You cannot die even if you want to: Can you resign yourself to not knowing God and not obtaining truth if you die? Now, mainly, it is just that people have not yet obtained truth, and they do not have life. Now people are in the midst of the process of seeking salvation, so they must suffer some during this period. Today everyone throughout the world is tried: God is still suffering—is it right that you do not suffer?" ("Only by Pursuing the Truth Can You Obtain Changes in Your Disposition" in Records of Christ's Talks). God's words soothed my sad heart and enabled me to understand the meaning of suffering. God now performs the work to change man's disposition; I am still corrupt and there are many of Satan's poisons within me, so how could I attain change and purification without suffering? This pain is something I'm supposed to suffer, and is something I must endure. When I thought of these things, I felt no pain, but on the contrary, I felt that my ability to endure this persecution and to endure being imprisoned for my belief in God, and that I could suffer in the pursuit of salvation was something most valuable and most meaningful—this pain I was suffering was so worthwhile! Without being aware of it, my heart turned from grief and became joyful, and I felt an irresistible urge to sing a hymn in my heart, called "We Are Fortunate to Meet With God's Coming": "We are fortunate to meet with God's coming, we hear His voice. We are fortunate to meet with God's coming, we attend the feast of the Lamb. We know the incarnate Almighty God, we see His wondrous deeds. We understand the mystery of human life, Almighty God's words are the most precious. ... Who can be more blessed? Who can be more fortunate? God bestows the truth and life upon us, we must live for God. We must live for God. We must live for God. We obtain the truth and testify to God to repay God's love" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). I sang this hymn in my heart over and over. The more I sang the more encouraged my heart became, and the more I sang, the stronger and more enjoyment I felt, and I couldn't help but swear an oath before God: "Oh, Almighty God, I give thanks to You for Your solace and encouragement, and for making me have the faith and the courage to live on. You make me feel that You really are the Lord of my life, the strength of my life. Though I have fallen into this nest of devils, I am not alone, for You are always with me as I live through these dark days, giving me faith and the strength to live on time and time again. Oh God, supposing I can one day leave this place and am able to live free, I will still do my duty. I will no longer cause You grief, nor will I make any plans for myself. Oh God, no matter how painful or difficult the days ahead may be, I wish to depend on You and live on with strength!"

While in prison, I often thought back to the days I spent with my brothers and sisters what a great time that was! Everyone was happy and laughing. There were disputes too, but it all became a beautiful memory for me. Every time I thought back to how I used to be slipshod with my duties, I felt such guilt and so indebted; thinking of how I got into disputes with my brothers and sisters because of my arrogant disposition, I felt extremely sad and remorseful. At times like these, I would be in floods of tears, and I would sing a hymn secretly in my heart: "I've believed in God for many years but have never done my duty well, I feel such deep regret in my heart. I've enjoyed so much of God's love, but have never given anything back. God has given me so many opportunities to practice, but I approached them all in a slipshod manner, and instead single-mindedly sought status, fame and fortune and made plans for my future destiny. Filled with extravagant desires, I truly knew no shame and have wasted so much good time. ... I am so remorseful—why didn't I accept God's judgment and chastisement when I read His words? I don't know if my repentance has come too late, I am so remorseful. I don't know if God will give me another chance, I am so remorseful" ("I Am So Remorseful" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). In the midst of this pain and self-reproach, I would often pray in my heart to God: "Oh God! I really owe You so much. If You will allow it, I wish to seek to love You and, after I get out of prison, I wish still to do my duty. I wish to start over and make up for my previous debts." During my days in prison, I really missed the brothers and sisters that I grew so close to and I really wanted to see them. Yet here I was in captivity in this demonic prison, so this desire was nothing more than a

fanciful wish. Yet I would often see my brothers and sisters in my dreams, dreaming that we were together reading God's words and fellowshiping the truth, so happy, so joyful ...

When the Wenchuan earthquake happened in 2008, the prison in which we were being detained was also shaken, and I was the very last one to evacuate the scene. The aftershocks continued for days, and both prisoners and guards were all terrified and in a state of alarm all day long. But in my heart, I felt exceedingly calm and sure, for I knew that this was the fulfillment of God's words and it was the fire of God's wrath that had befallen and punished those who resisted God on earth. That earthquake was the biggest for a hundred years, and during that time God's words were always protecting my heart. I believed that life and death were in God's hands and, no matter what God did, I would always be willing to obey God's orchestrations and arrangements. The only thing that made me sad, however, was that if I died I would no longer have a chance to do my duty for the Creator, no longer have a chance to repay God's love and would no longer be able to see my brothers and sisters. My worrying was unnecessary, however. God was always with me, giving me the greatest protection, enabling me to escape death during the big earthquake and to live on safe and sound!

In January 2011, I obtained early release, and my slavish life in prison was finally brought to an end. Having obtained my freedom, my heart felt incredibly excited: "I can go back to the church again! I can be with my brothers and sisters again!" I was so excited, there was really no way I could put it into words. What I hadn't anticipated was that, after I returned home, my daughter did not recognize me, and both relatives and friends looked askance at me, hid themselves away from me and would have nothing to do with me. No one around me understood me, and they couldn't accept me. Although at this time I was no longer being subjected to the maltreatment and torment of prison, yet being given the cold shoulder, ridiculed and rejected was even harder to bear; I became weak. I couldn't help but recall the past to mind: I had only just turned 31 the year I was sent to prison, and when I came out of prison I was already 39. I spent eight winters and seven summers in prison. So many times, when I felt alone and helpless, God orchestrated people, events and things to help me; so many times, when I was in pain and despair, God used His words to comfort me; so many times, when I wanted to die, God gave me strength and made me have the courage to live on. During those endless, painful years, it was God who led me step by step through the valley of death and enabled me to live on tenaciously. And here I was facing

this bit of suffering and becoming distressed and weak, causing God to grieve—I really was a mean person, weak and useless and so ungrateful! Thinking of this, I condemned myself greatly, and I couldn't help but think of the oath I swore to God back in prison: "Supposing I can one day leave this place and am able to live free, I will still do my duty. I will no longer cause You grief, nor will I make any plans for myself." Thinking of this oath and remembering the time when I swore this oath to God, tears blurred my vision, and I slowly began to sing a hymn: "I myself am willing to seek after You and to follow You. Now even if You want to abandon me, I will still follow You. Whether You want me or not, I will still love You, and in the end, I must gain You. I offer up my heart to You, and no matter what You do, I will follow You for my entire life. No matter what, I must love You and I must gain You; I will not rest until I have gained You" ("I Am Determined to Love God" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs).

After spending some time in spiritual devotions and making adjustments, under God's enlightenment and guidance I very quickly left my negativity behind and threw myself once again into doing my duty.

Although I spent the best years of my youth in prison, during those seven years and four months I was able to suffer for my belief in God and I have absolutely no regrets. Because I came to understand some truth and I experienced God's love, I feel that enduring this pain had meaning and value, that this was God's exceptional exaltation of me and kindness to me, and God's special favor to me. Even though friends and relatives don't understand me and my daughter doesn't recognize me, yet nothing and no one can break my relationship with God; not even death can keep me from Him.

"Pure Love Without Blemish" was the hymn I most loved to sing in prison, and today I want to devote my purest love to God through taking practical action!

100. Rising Up From Dark Oppression

By Mo Zhijian, Guangdong Province

I was born in a poor, remote mountain area where we have burned incense and worshiped Buddha for many generations. There are Buddhist temples all over the land where all the families would go to burn incense; no one had ever believed in God. In 1995,

my wife and I were working in another part of the country where we started believing in the Lord Jesus; after we returned we began sharing the gospel and the number of people who accepted it slowly grew to over 100 people. Because more and more people were believing in God, it alarmed the local government. One day in 1997, the police summoned me to go to the local police station, where the chief of the County Public Security Bureau, the chief of the Security Bureau, the chief of the Bureau of Religion and the head of the police station as well as a few police officers were waiting for me. The chief of the Public Security Bureau asked me: "Why do you believe in God? Who do you have contact with? Where did the Bibles come from? Why don't you go to the Three-Self Church for gatherings?" I said: "People were created by God, everything they enjoy is created by God, such as the sunlight, air and water; it is the law of heaven and earth that people believe in God and worship Him. The national constitution also expressly stipulates that citizens have freedom of religion; why don't you permit us to freely believe in God?" The chief of the Bureau of Religion said: "There are limits to religious freedom, just like a little bird inside a cage; even though its wings and feet are not bound, it can only move within the cage." When I heard him speak these fallacies, I became indignant and angrily said: "Then the national government is lying to its people!" When they heard me say this, they knew that they were wrong and didn't have anything to say, so they just let me go home. I wasn't aware of the substance of the CCP government's resistance to God until 1999 when I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. Only through reading God's words and experiencing even more cruel persecution from the CCP government was I able to see clearly that the CCP was the embodiment of Satan the evil spirit; it was the enemy of God as spoken of in the Bible: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world" (Rev 12:9).

Just after 5:00 in the morning of June 28, 2002, I was preparing for a gathering with some brothers and sisters when suddenly we heard a pounding noise on the door. We quickly hid the books of God's word and then opened the door. Unexpectedly, when the door opened, a dozen or so police came rushing in. They had electric batons and guns in their hands and forced us together, making us squat down and put our hands on our heads. After these policemen restrained us, like bandits entering a village, they went into each room and made a mess of everything; they took our bedding and clothes and threw them all over the floor. In the past I had watched scenes on TV of organized crime and bandits looting and

robbing, but I never expected that the "people's police" would act just like the evil tyrants and bandits on TV. At that time I was extremely afraid and worried that they would discover the books of God's word. I continuously prayed in my heart and asked God to watch over and protect us. After praying, I saw the marvelous deeds of God. They rummaged through the entire house and searched and confiscated our personal belongings, but they didn't find the books of God's word. I knew that this was God's almightiness and protection and I knew that God was with us, and my faith in God increased. Afterward, they took us to the police station and at night, they transferred us to a detention education center and locked us up. Three days later, without any evidence, the police gave each of us a 300 yuan fine that we had to pay in order to be released. In seeing the CCP government act like such perverse predators that stripped people of their freedom of religion, I felt deep resentment and I couldn't help but think of God's words: "For thousands of years this has been the land of filth, it is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations,[1] being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. [2] Who can see the world beyond the skies? ... Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!" ("Work and Entry (8)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). In this demon metropolis that is China, the CCP government hangs banners promoting "freedom of religion and freedom of human rights," but they wantonly arrest and persecute people who believe in God. They don't allow people to believe in God or walk the correct path of life; they are itching to eliminate all the believers in one fell swoop. In our faith in God, we had not broken the law or done anything bad; all we did was share the gospel to allow people to come to know God and worship God, so that they could obtain the truth, be free from Satan's affliction, and break away from their lives of darkness and pain. Yet the CCP government wouldn't permit us to preach the gospel and wanted to arrest us, detain us and fine us, rather than do something about those evil people involved in

Footnotes:

^{1. &}quot;Making groundless accusations" refers to the methods by which the devil harms people.

^{2. &}quot;Heavily guarded" indicates that the methods by which the devil afflicts people are especially vicious, and control people so much that they have no room to move.

prostitution, murder and arson, and fraud and swindling; they allowed these evil people to get away with their crimes. In light of the facts, I was able to see clearly the wicked substance of the CCP government that hates the truth, resists God, blinds people, and cheats people; they are the enemy of God.

On November 28 of that same year, a few brothers and sisters and I were sharing the gospel with a religious leader. But we were reported by a wicked person and a dozen or so police surrounded our building and broke through the door. They had guns and batons in their hands and they yelled: "Nobody move! Put your hands up!" Then, they searched our bodies and robbed of our money and valuables worth over 5,000 yuan. They ordered us to put our hands on our heads and squat facing the wall. At that time, two young sisters were afraid and I said to them: "We haven't done anything bad, don't be afraid." As soon as I said that, several policemen immediately rushed upon me and beat me with their fists and feet, knocking me onto the floor. They ransacked all the rooms and turned them upside down, scattering everything around in a mess. They were more barbaric and ferocious than bandits looting a village. One sister in the room didn't come out and a policeman rushed over and grabbed her tightly and pulled her out. Another evil policeman saw that she was quite pretty and started molesting her by groping her all over. The sister helplessly wailed, and fortunately the landlord arrived just in time to put a stop to it, which allowed the sister to escape the coercion. At this time, I could clearly see that slogans such as "The people's police are for the people" and "The police are the guardians of the people" were all lies. These evil policemen were purely a gang of local ruffians and gangsters! From the bottom of my heart I felt even more disgust and hatred for these beasts!

Afterward, they locked us up in the police vehicle and took us to the police station. They then handcuffed us in the corridor for two days and two nights, giving us nothing to eat or drink. I could only persistently pray in my heart and ask God to guide us and give us faith and strength so that we would be able to stand witness for Him in this environment. Later, the police interrogated a brother, and when they were not satisfied with his answers, a few policemen firmly pushed him down to the ground while one evil policeman stuffed dog feces into his mouth. The brother's mental state had been severely provoked. In seeing this miserable situation, my heart became extremely distressed and a rage flared up inside of me. I wished I could charge up and tear them to pieces, but God's words guided me within: "I feel a bit of sympathy for My brothers and sisters also living in this land of filth, so

I have developed a hatred for the great red dragon. ... All of us are its victims. For this reason, I hate it from My very core and I cannot wait to destroy it. However, when I think again, this would be to no avail and it would only bring trouble to God, so I come back to these words—I set My heart on doing His will—loving God. ... thus live out a life full of meaning and brilliance. In this, I will be able to die without regrets, with a heart full of gratification and comfort. Would you like to do that? Are you someone with that kind of resolution?" ("The Path ... (2)" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words caused me to cool down, and in pondering God's words, I understood God's will. God already extremely despises these evil devils. He wishes to immediately destroy them all, but in order to make us complete, He needs to utilize the efforts of Satan. God uses its persecution to allow us to discern it, allowing us to thoroughly see the repulsive face and demonic substance of the CCP government. Thereby we can break relations with it and completely turn our sincere hearts to God. God is always enduring the CCP government's frantic pursuit in order to obtain better results in His work, so what is it that I should suffer a little hardship so that I can obtain salvation as a created being? The enlightenment and guidance of God's words have given me faith and strength; I want to emulate Christ and be firmly resolved to satisfy God! At this time, I only wished that God would lead and preserve us to stand witness for God through the persecutions of Satan; I wished that we could take practical action to counterattack Satan's tricks so that it would fail shamefully.

On the third night, the police transferred us to the County Public Security Bureau and interrogated us through the night. A deputy director first used flattering words to entice me, saying: "Speak up! You have wife, kids, and parents at home who need you to take care of them; if you hurry and speak up, then you can go home, OK?" After hearing these words, I was somewhat tempted, and I thought: "If I tell them some insignificant things, then I can go and wouldn't have to stay here and suffer." At that moment, I was awakened by God's words: "Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be" ("Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). Through God's majestic words, I felt like God was gazing down at me, waiting for me to reply. This also made me realize that my thoughts were betraying

God. Consequently, I quickly wiped out the thought and in stern righteousness I said: "I haven't planned on leaving since I got here!" When the policeman saw that his trick wasn't working, he exposed his original demonic face, and the deputy director lifted a bucket of pig slops over my head as if to pour it on me. I said to him: "This is the torture you are using to extort a confession." When he heard me say this, he suddenly stopped and put the slops down without pouring it on me. Another evil policeman wearing leather shoes stomped on my big toe with his heel and rolled it around and around with as much pressure as he could. The acute pain transmitted throughout my entire body and I couldn't help but cry out in pain. My clothes were soaked in sweat, but the evil policeman fumed with rage and continued to stomp and roll until my big toenail was ripped loose. By this time, my toe was already mutilated and bloody. In my extreme pain, I persistently cried out to God, asking God to protect my heart so that I wouldn't give in to Satan and so that I would be able to stand witness for Him. Thanks be to God's guidance and protection, in the end I said nothing. The evil police got none of the information they wanted from me, but were unwilling to give up. Later, they took me with a brother and a sister to the city's SWAT team for further interrogation.

When we arrived at the SWAT team, the evil police forced us to strip all of our clothes off and then they handcuffed our hands and put shackles around our feet. They then forced us to skip three laps around the courtyard to humiliate us. Afterward, they separated us into prison cells. The people locked up in the prison cells were all murderers, they were all like demons and monsters. The evil police commanded the prisoners to torment me, so I kept praying to God in my heart. Because of God's protection, the prisoners not only wouldn't bully me, they actually took care of me. After four days, the evil police tried to force me to betray God and sell out my brothers and sisters, but I wouldn't talk. They took me and another brother and dragged us into the courtyard where they handcuffed us and put fetters around our feet. Black bags were placed over our heads and they suspended us from a tree in the center of the courtyard. In a craze of cruelty, they placed ants all over the tree, which continuously crawled on our bodies biting us. The torture of thousands of ant bites was similar to the torture of thousands of arrows through the heart, which made death seem more appealing than living. I felt like I couldn't hold on any longer and I didn't know when this pain would end. In such terrible suffering, I could only pray to God to protect my heart and spirit with all my might, so that He would give me strength and the will to suffer, and

keep me from betraying Him. At this time, God's words appeared in my mind: "... so that My glory may fill the cosmos, all people suffer the last hardship for Me. Do you understand My will? This is the final requirement I make of man, which is to say, I hope that all people can bear strong, resounding testimony to Me before the great red dragon, that they can offer themselves up for Me a final time, and fulfill My requirements one last instance. Can you truly do this? You were incapable of satisfying My heart in the past—could you break this pattern in the final instance?" ("Chapter 34" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words caused my heart to be filled with strength. I thought about how God had become flesh and had come to earth and suffered being pursued in every possible way by the CCP government in order to save us. He had no place to call home. Today I am able to suffer with Christ; this is God's love and is God's exaltation for me. As long as I am able to give glory to God, I will be happy and willing to die. I relied on God's word to get through each minute and second of the pain. We were suspended on the tree for two days and two nights. On the third day, I really couldn't take it anymore. It was early winter at the time and it was raining and all I was wearing was a single unlined garment. I was hung from the tree by my bare feet and I had not had anything to eat or drink and was in great pain. The suffering of starvation and cold as well as the unbearable pain made me want to die; all I could do was pray to God with all my might. I was deeply afraid that because of the weaknesses of the flesh, I wouldn't be able to handle the torment and would betray God like Judas. In the midst of my pain, I remembered the apostle Stephen from the Age of Grace. He was stoned to death by the multitude because of spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Before he died, he asked God to accept his spirit. Then, I prayed to God: "Oh God, my flesh is too weak and now I have taken on more pain than I can bear. I desire that You would take my spirit, for I would rather die than betray You." After praying, the most unexpected miracle happened: I actually had an out-of-body experience and I was brought to a field of grass. There was lush, green grass everywhere and cattle and sheep all around. My frame of mind was especially at ease and I couldn't help but praise God aloud: "God incarnate has appeared in China, expressing the truth to judge and cleanse people. Like a sharp sword, His words are replete with authority, judging, cleansing, and bringing salvation to His people. Praise God's almightiness and wisdom for using the great red dragon in His service, making a group of overcomers, and defeating the forces of Satan. Praise God's righteous disposition

for having been completely revealed. Praise Almighty God for being humbly hidden and so lovable! Praise Almighty God! Your deeds truly are wonderful! Praise Almighty God for the glory He has gained. The lightning flashes from the East to the West, and wise virgins are drawn to the light. People of every nation and land return before God, bowing down to worship God and accepting His judgment. Praise God for returning in the last days to bestow upon humanity the way of eternal life. Praise God's righteous judgment for cleansing and bringing salvation to humankind. Praise God for having completed His great work and for His words having accomplished everything. All nations and all peoples are singing praise to dear Almighty God. God's every creation comes to praise Almighty God. Praise You, Almighty God! All come to praise You! Praise You! Praise Almighty God!" ("All Nations and All Peoples Praise Almighty God" in Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). While I completely immersed myself in this incomparable joy and lived in the boundaries of freedom, the pain, hunger and cold of being hung from the tree as well as the pain of the biting of the ants all disappeared. When I awoke, it was already the third night and the evil police took me down from the tree. I was hung for three days and not only didn't die, I was also full of spirit. This truly was the almighty power and miraculous protection of God! I gave heartfelt thanks and praise to God.

On the fourth day, the evil police interrogated me again and tried to force me to sell out my brothers and sisters; they also forced me to admit that I believed in a xie jiao, making me betray God and abandon the true way. Under the enlightenment of God, I thought of God's words: "While undergoing trials, it's normal for people to be weak, or have negativity within them, or to lack clarity on God's will or their path for practice. But in any case, you must have faith in God's work, and not deny God, like Job" ("Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement" in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words gave me the courage to put truth into practice and to testify of God. No matter what, I couldn't resist God or blaspheme against God. I was undaunted and calmly said: "I believe in Almighty God, who is the only true God ruling over all things! I don't believe in a xie jiao, you are distorting the truth and framing me!" After hearing this, one evil policeman flew into a rage and grabbed a long wooden stool and began crazily beating me to death with it. He hit me to the point that I was spitting out blood. I lay paralyzed and knocked out on the floor. Then, they splashed cold water on me to wake me up and continue beating me. During this demonic and inhuman beating, the front of my chest and my back were

completely black and blue and I had suffered much internal damage. One week later, my urine was all blood and my right kidney was seriously damaged (even today it is still very painful). One month later, the evil police couldn't find any evidence, so they made up some false materials and forced me to sign it. Then they locked me up in the city detention house. Three months later, they charged me with "undermining the enforcement of the law" and sentenced me to a year of reform through labor. At the labor camp, I lived an inhuman life. Every day I was hungry and I had to work a dozen or so hours a day. I was frequently bullied and insulted by the prison police; they were either using electric batons on me or locking me up in a small, dark room. If it were not for God watching over and protecting me, I would have been tormented to death by the evil police. On November 7, 2003, my sentence was fulfilled and I was released from the hell on earth.

After experiencing that cruel persecution, I finally saw clearly that the CCP government's proclamations "The Communist Party is great, glorious and correct" and "China has freedom of religion" among other sayings, are really expressions in a sinister plot to deceive the public and fool the citizens. It speaks fine words and does extremely evil things. In order to ban God's work of the last days and make China an atheistic place, it pursues and harms believers without restraint. Its level of cruelty has already reached great heights and has made people boil with anger! I really hate this old devil from the depths of my heart. I think back about how I was constantly cruelly tortured and forced into confession and cruelly tormented by demons during my interrogation process. I was knocked out on several occasions and if it weren't for God's protection, I would have been tortured to death by those demons. In the time of my greatest weakness, Almighty God's words continually encouraged me: "Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the light guiding you. You will surely be the master of all creation. You will surely be an overcomer before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs to bear witness to My victory. You will surely be resolute and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit the blessing that comes from Me, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe" ("Chapter 19" of God's Words to the Entire Universe in The Word Appears in the Flesh). God's words

became a firm shoulder for me to lean on. The enlightenment and guidance of God's words helped me through those darkest days that dragged on and on. Even though I have experienced being arrested and persecuted multiple times by the CCP government, and my flesh has suffered ruthless cruelty and torment, I truly understand many truths that I didn't understand in the past and I see clearly the CCP government's reactionary, evil, and demonic substance. I have also experienced God's true love for me and have tasted of God's almightiness and wisdom and wonderful deeds. Furthermore, it arouses me to seek to love God and satisfy God. Today, I still fulfill my duty in the church as I did in the past; I follow God on the correct path of life, I pursue truth and seek to live a meaningful life!

If you want to read more of God's words and know God's work of the last days, please contact us

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