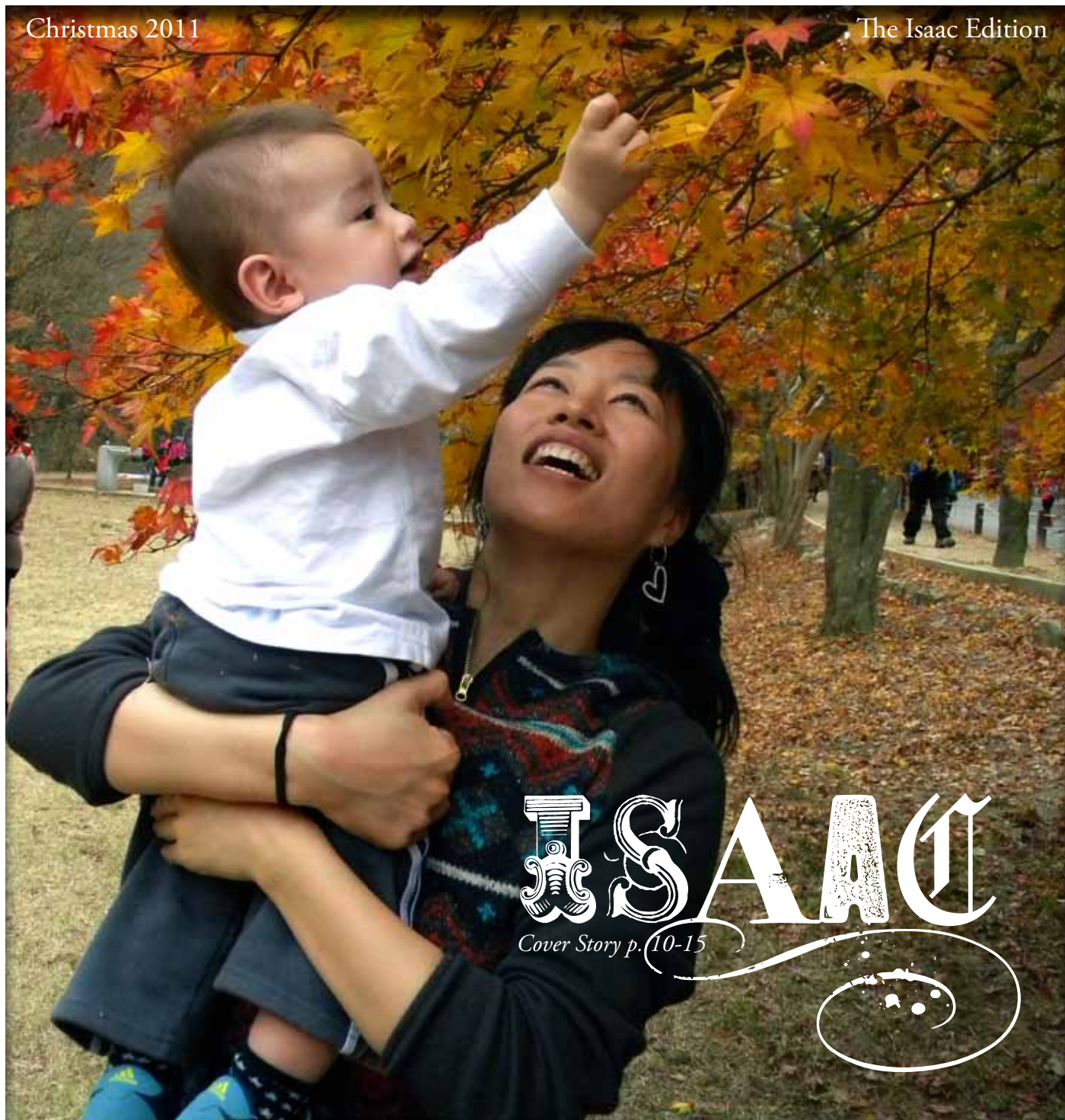


# THIS KOREAN LIFE

Christmas 2011

The Isaac Edition



# ISAAC

Cover Story p. 10-15





[blurb.com](http://blurb.com)





**T**his year has been quite an experience for us - a literal whirlwind. The stories contained herein are mostly things that I've written at various times throughout the last year.

I've discovered that I enjoy blogging quite a bit - especially with a Christian edge - so I try to write up one new article every week to post. I also design as much as I can straight from Bible verses, sermons, or for church events. Ideally, that kind of thing would be my full-time job, but it won't really pay the bills, so it's all pro-bono and volunteer as of yet.

Not many of the stories in this book are narrative in nature. Most are about what we are learning, thinking, and studying. They are more philosophical and theological, so I'll briefly narrate the year, and highlight the stories that are included in this book.

## 2011 MAJOR EVENTS

**January** 5th marks Isaac's birthday. He got a tuberculosis vaccine shot early on (apparently it's common here) - but I was sad it produced his first big scar so early.

In **February**, Sarah's thyroid kicked into overdrive producing 6 times the normal amount of hormone (post-partum thyroiditis). She was put on medicine, Isaac went on the bottle, and it still took her over 4 more months to fully recover.

In **March**, Japan suffered a massive tsunami - while my sister was staying there. I wrote my first long theological blog post in opposition to the notion that God sent the tsunami in response to Japan's sin (a common misconception even among pastors it seems).

In **April**, Sarah took her first extended trip outside since giving birth. We went to the zoo, made one loop around a small part of the park, but had to return home as she was exhausted. I graduated Grad School on April 22 as the Advanced Achiever of my class. And on April 24, we celebrated Easter as a family. I did tons of research and writing about the history and significance of Easter - one blog every day for a week - so I was really excited for the date.

A lot happened in **May**. Mom and Dad came from America for 10 days from May 16-25, and we dedicated Isaac at church on the 21st. A lot also happened with my writing. Osama bin Laden was killed and Harold Camping predicted the Rapture on May 21. Both led to long posts shooting down false Christian doctrine and wrong focuses, and led me to launch my Christian design blog: [www.iamthouart.com](http://www.iamthouart.com) in late May.

In **June**, Sarah was still not yet fully recovered - and didn't fully trust me yet either (I'd made her second priority during her during her darkness in favor of success in school). So, she decided she needed to start attending her Korean church full-time (no longer joining me in the English service) in order to more fully recover spiritually. We were also blessed with a free air conditioner from a pastor at the English service and his wife.

In **July**, we both began reading and studying the Bible daily - and learning and growing together (and closer together). I taught at a teacher's training summer camp about Computers and Debate, and our worship team at the English service started to experience a massive conflict that threatened to destroy it completely.

In early **August**, our worship team conflict was resolved (through much prayer and toil) and we experienced great growth. Sarah and I also began to study Song of Solomon together, and one of my classmates in high school with three girls was sprung with a divorce suddenly. Sarah and I began to take day trips together ("family days") and do a lot of baking. We also began to focus on raising children well and being good stewards of our money.

In **September**, I started to read Bible Commentaries to help me with my Bible study and blog writing. I find the depth of the Bible fascinating.

In **October**, I performed my first professional design job by completely branding a four church joint English worship night called "One Accord." Our worship team was strongly united and played well together. The four churches are continuing to work together and the website is located at [www.oneaccord.asia](http://www.oneaccord.asia).

In **November**, we reflected on God's plan and provision in our lives. We were blessed enough to be able to consistently give generously and sacrificially through tithe and gifts to others. Since July, we've averaged giving away 20% of our income. We took a trip to see fall leaves in Naejangsan, had Thanksgiving dinner with our worship team, and made new kimchi for the year at Sarah's family's house. I met some Jehovah's witnesses and began studying the differences between Christianity and other religions.

In **December**, we have an anniversary/Christmas/shopping trip planned in Seoul for the 19-21, and we will enjoy Christmas in church on the 25th - with presents on the 26th (or later if Megan comes soon).





# Miracle!

## Our Son is Born

At 10:00pm on January 4th, Sarah started going into labor. After the first experience of false labor we had endured, I wasn't expecting this to be the real deal either - so I kept reading in bed as I tried to help Sarah breathe calmly. That is, until contractions came at about every 5 minutes. Then I knew it was time. We grabbed our bags and headed out at midnight.

At the hospital, the nurses told us Sarah was too dilated for the antehistamine shot to dull her pain. *Well, I thought, at least this'll be over quicker than it could be - we don't have to sit here and wait for dilation.* (And secretly I was rather proud of her for enduring the whole process naturally - she's tough!)

I stuck with her to the end (but needed a coffee about 3am to keep my head in the game). I changed CDs, breathed with her, and yelled for the "Push-push-push-push-push!" like a football coach yells "Run-run-run!" after an interception (and nearly got my fingers broken as she squeezed). Just as Isaac's head crested the opening, the doc grabbed scissors and the suction cup, snipped the opening and vacuumed a body out - twisting and flipping in mid-air - to land on his outstretched forearm - at 5:53am.

Placing the child on Mommy's belly, I cut the cord as he cried.

When I look in your eyes,  
I see a million miles  
across an endless sea,  
And when I hold you in my arms,  
The beating of your heart  
is calling out to me.  
I'm holding a mystery.  
~ Steven Curtis Chapman

What amount of worldly pleasures can possibly match the unfathomable joy of hearing the cry and looking into the eyes of the baby you've felt move and grow in his mother's belly for the past nine months?

The call it the "Miracle of Child Birth" and miracle it is. The whole world seems new and fresh and wonderful. It can change a man in an instant. The images have been permanently seared into my brain (heart). Being present

and participatory in the birth of my son has been one of the greatest privileges in my whole life - and yet it doesn't feel like much of an accomplishment. I, after all, didn't really do anything.

Childbirth is a difficult thing to explain - perhaps more so for a man than for a woman.

I can see the babe, wrapped in cloths, hear his cry, touch his skin, look into his eyes, and yet, he doesn't seem like mine at all. Not in any normal sense of possession, like an iPod, or new suit. The whole thing is rather surreal. Yet, at the same time I wonder...

What will become of this tiny creature? Who will he be? His gray, swollen skin gives no clue - but his cry says it all: "I'm full of life!"

# DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

At first, I was really excited to be a mom. I was so excited! I wanted to be a perfect with everything and breastfeed well. But soon, I got a thyroid problem. My thyroid started producing 6x the normal amount of hormone. It completely drained my energy to the point that I could hardly even hold Isaac to feed him. I was stubborn to take medicine because I so badly wanted to breastfeed, but I just made it worse.

I had never gotten sick like this before, so I had a really hard time emotionally and especially spiritually. I couldn't see my faith. I felt like I'd completely lost faith and lost hope in God. I felt like my faith had totally shifted. I didn't know why I should have that problem in that moment. I started to doubt everything.

But finally, after receiving much counsel from our pastor, and starting to take some medicine (even though I had to quit breastfeeding), I could see that the hard time was to mature me as a Christian. I was a baby, but now I'm like a toddler in faith. Now, I don't only try to drink milk, but try to eat solid food as well.

That time was the most challenging moment in whole life. But because of that, now I'm thankful for everything. I think God also used that moment to teach Aaron something too.

I don't usually type up what I write about in my journal, but this was far too interesting to keep to myself. This entry is over six months since Sarah's thyroid problem, but it still provides a great deal of hope for future difficult situations. I'll introduce THREE main bits of information, then show how they are related.

## #1: God's Repeated Affirmation & Assurance of His Own Character

Today, I read Isaiah 43-45. In this short bit of Isaiah, God says of himself, *"I alone am God"* (or some variation) a total of **18 times**.

He also says, *"There is none besides me"* a total of **13 times**.

## #2: Cyrus is God's Shepherd and Anointed One?

Who is Cyrus? He is mentioned in the end of chapter 44, and the beginning of chapter 45:

44:24 *"I am the Lord..."*

44:28 *who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,  
and he shall fulfill all my purpose';  
saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,'  
and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"*

45:1 *Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus...*

Usually, when we think of God's Shepherd and Anointed One, we think of Jesus. Is this some vague and unusual reference to Jesus?

## #3: A Very Interesting History Lesson

Cyrus turns out to be Cyrus II, or Cyrus "the Great," a Persian king who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

The prophet Isaiah began prophesying during the reign of king Uzziah around 739 B.C. (Isaiah 1:1). That's a full 200 years before Cyrus would play any significant role in Israel's history!

Babylon is where the Jews were progressively exiled. The first siege of Jerusalem by Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar began



in 598 B.C. and ended with some of the Jews being deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. The second deportation of Jews happened in 588 B.C. after the second siege of Jerusalem. And the third deportation of Jews happened in 583 B.C. This final exile happens over 50 years before king Cyrus would conquer it! And yet, the deeds of Cyrus are still clearly articulated in Isaiah's prophesy 200 years earlier!

Through Isaiah, God says of Cyrus, *"He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"* And sure enough, as prophesied in Isaiah, and as documented in Ezra and Nehemiah, Cyrus wrote an Edict of Restoration to return Jews to their homeland and rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1-4, 6:3-5). Because of this, he became known as "the Lord's Messiah" among the Jews. Messiah means "anointed one" – just as prophesied in Isaiah chapter 45.

## THE VERSES THAT STUCK OUT TO ME

*Isaiah 43:1b-3a*

*43:1b "Fear not, for I have redeemed you;*

*I have called you by name, you are mine.*

*2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, **they shall not overwhelm you;**  
when you walk through fire **you shall not be burned,**  
**and the flame shall not consume you.***

*3a For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

## HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

In the above passage, God tells his people to "Fear not" for He has already saved them. The Babylonian Exile has not yet happened – it is still 150 years in the future – but it sounds like God is already preparing them for it with these words.

He says:

- *"Pass through waters"* – perhaps referring to common daily struggles – and God is *"with you."*
- *"Through rivers"* – perhaps this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem during the sieges – and *"they shall not overwhelm (or destroy) you."*
- *"Walk through fire"* – perhaps this refers to the Exile itself – and *"you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."*

Surely, God is already preparing them for what is to come in the near future. Surely, God's repeated affirmation and assurance of His own character through these 3 chapters (*"I alone am God"* 18 times, *"There is none besides me"* 13 times) is to give his people some great reassurance of His sovereignty over all the matters of men (including something as terrible as the Exile), and His divine providence – even through difficult times.

## GOD'S DIVINE PROVIDENCE

In God's divine providence, I listened to a short clip from Pastor Mark Driscoll about that very subject earlier today:

*The hard part with providence is, we only see it in the rear-view mirror. We don't see it in the windshield. We live by faith. Meaning we venture forward just trusting God's gonna be there, He's gonna figure it out. And even if it doesn't come together, He still loves me, and my righteousness is in Christ, and they can't take my greatest treasure, even if they take [everything else].*

*As you look back in your life, you will see evidences of the providence of God. "Oh, THAT'S what He was doing; THAT'S where He was leading me; Oh, THAT was the plan; that's how THIS led to THAT"... And looking back, [you realize that] God is sovereign AND good.*

This passage in Isaiah provides solid proof of God's divine providence and plan. A full 200 years before these events transpired, He had already planned – and made known – His purposes. But, as Pastor Mark said, we can only see God's providence in retrospect. So while it is easy to see His purposes with Cyrus and the Jewish Exile now, during that time, the Jews likely could not clearly see God's hand in their suffering.

Likewise, during our own suffering, we may not clearly see how God's hand is in it, but we should trust that His hand IS in it. And one day, looking back, we will surely see how His hand WAS in it. This must be why God's first words in Isaiah 43 are *"Fear not!"* He has already saved us, and He already has a plan for us – and though we may not see it at the time, we can be confident of it.

For we know that while God does not DO evil, He does USE evil for his purposes. And that there (along with Sarah's story) is proof perfect that Romans 8:28 is true: *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."*

So, how should we respond? "Fear not!"

# The End Of Grad School

## Advanced Achiever Award Speech

Full Sail Faculty, graduates, and guests, hello from South Korea. I'm sorry that I can't be with you today in person to celebrate our achievements and graduation, but I'll be knee-deep in midterm speaking tests for my own students in Korea.

First of all, let me say that I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this award. I know there are many excellent students in our graduating class, and without the support from all of you, I wouldn't have persevered in my studies as much as I did – especially from halfway around the world.

Life has been trying for all of us this year. The program was intense, but incredibly beneficial. It required long hours of study, many late nights, and long periods of mental push-ups. And for many of us in the MDMFA program, our families gained an extra member this past year. Talk about additional stress. So, before I officially congratulate our class, let me first congratulate and thank all our families and friends – who supported us through these difficult months, and waited patiently for us to finish our work. Without their support and understanding, successfully completing this program would have been much more difficult.

But here we are – at the end – victorious, successful, skilled, and finished. Now we are “officially” ready for bigger and better tasks. But let me caution you against thinking the document you receive today is a guaranteed ticket to better privilege in life. Hard work, discipline, and team collaboration are worth more in the

long run than a framed certificate – just take it from two university drop-outs: Steve Jobs and Bill Gates.

But that's what I really appreciated about my time at Full Sail. Hard work was required and it required me to be disciplined in my studies. The input from professors and peers through Discussion Boards and Wimba sessions boosted all of our work to be better than we had even expected. Ultimately it was our collaboration as a team that propelled us all to work harder, think faster, and design better. Without a team, many of us might have found ourselves up a creek without a paddle, unmotivated, undisciplined, and without even a handful of good ideas to get us through the next project. In our team, we were able to collaborate, critique, encourage, and share our lives together. And when we've gone our separate ways, and the adrenaline of final projects and graduation wears off, I hope we can all look back with pride on what we've accomplished together.

If there's one thing I've learned from living in Korea, it's that laziness and sloppiness just don't cut it. Hard work, self-motivation, and self-discipline are tools we can use to climb the ladder of success. But if there's one thing I've learned from Full Sail, it's that no one can do it alone. Working together, encouraging one another, and being a contributing member of a team is like stepping onto an escalator of success. We all go up together.

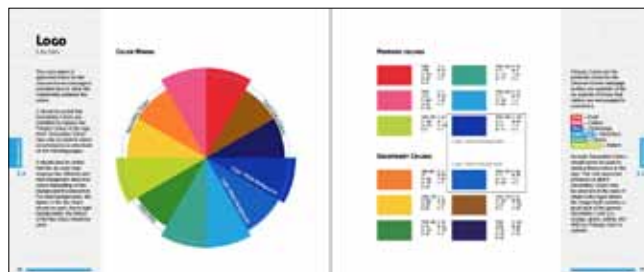
I've truly enjoyed my time at Full Sail getting to know each of you. God bless you in your future endeavors.



*Professor Don Larson reading my speech.*



This is what \$40,000 of study and 1 year of work gets you: 122 pages.





RESURRECTION



**T**he 6 Days to the Greatest Celebration in the Christian Calendar!

You thought it was Christmas? Well, that's second best to be sure. But the number one most important celebration in Christianity is undoubtedly Easter. Without that, there'd be no Christianity. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:17, *"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."*

Got that? Futile. Might as well give up being a Christian right now if there is no resurrection. Without that, all of Jesus' claims about himself, his deity, his ability to forgive sins and connect people to the Father, are worthless. Without the resurrection, all the faith or good deeds in the world are **meaningless**; all your time spent in church is **meaningless**; all the times you write "Christian" on a survey card because the other religions "just don't jive with my worldview" are **meaningless**; all the times you pray to get out of trouble (and forget to pray when things are alright) are **meaningless**; anytime you sing worship songs in church or play CCM in your car, are **meaningless**. In fact, without the resurrection, the entire tent of Christianity collapses. The resurrection is the pillar keeping this tent up.

Why is that? Because if there is no resurrection, then the entire premise of Christianity is a sham. God came to Earth to die for the sins of humanity, to restore them to a right relationship with him, so that through his Son's *life*, they might inherit *eternal life*. If Jesus only DIED, then Christianity would be like every other religion on Earth – a bunch of people following the moral teachings of a great DEAD prophet. His claims of deity – as the Son of God – would be baseless, and he would be a liar. And we might as well throw out the whole book if the VIP within it is a liar.

Jesus' death is significant, but it is only half of the story. It would be like watching *Empire Strikes Back* without seeing *Return of the Jedi* (yes, I'm a geek). The good guys are defeated at the end. But where is the light at the end of the tunnel? Answer: in Jesus' resurrection. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:20, *"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* There's the hope.

is contained within the second half of the verse, *"should not perish but have eternal life."* Just as Jesus himself did not perish, but was resurrected on the third day, as *"the firstfruits of those who have [already died]"*, neither will we, if we put our faith in Jesus (*"that whoever believes in him"*) to forgive our sins. This is God's great promise to us. Jesus is our example not only in his life and death, but also in his resurrection.

*"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* (1 Corinthians 15:54b-55). There is no longer any death, nor any fear of death for the Christian, for we know that like Jesus, we will be resurrected to join him in heaven at the end of days.

But don't just take my word for it. Let a secularist describe the situation for you as he sees it: "If one had any real evidence that, indeed, Jesus did return from the dead, then that is the beginning of a dropping of a series of dominoes that takes us to all kinds of wonderful things. It assures an afterlife and all kinds of things that we would all hope are true." (Hugh Hefner from *The Case for the Real Jesus*, page 105). He is not a Christian, true, but even he can recognize the significance and the power of the resurrection. How can we do any less?

So, I implore you – if you are a Christian; if you've ever considered yourself a Christian; if you've ever been to a Christian church (or Catholic); if you once considered yourself a Christian

but have fallen away for a time; if you're curious about Christianity; if you're absolutely confused about Jesus and Christianity, but find his story intriguing – then find a church this Easter and go to it. Easter is the pivotal day for Christianity (and also the reason the early church started worshiping on Sunday, rather than Saturday the Sabbath day). Without Easter, without the resurrection, we might as well all just sleep in on every Sunday.



You know that most famous verse: John 3:16? *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* Most people think that's talking about Jesus' death on the cross for the salvation of their sins. But I don't think so. This verse is much more about Jesus' resurrection than his death. His death is summed up in the first half of the verse, *"that he gave his only Son,"* but, his resurrection













Psalm 127:3, 5

*3 Children are a heritage from the LORD,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.*

*5 Blessed is the man*

*who fills his quiver with them!*

Being a parent is no easy task. Everyone can see the pictures of a smiling, happy baby and think it must be nothing but a complete joy to raise a child (in fact, I'm pretty sure that was Sarah's original idea before we had ours). But while much of childrearing can be a complete joy, there remain many instances (yes, even at under a year old) that cause you to just throw your hands up in the air in disbelief, frustration, or just plain confusion. Even with twenty some odd years of education up to the point of having a child, none of it prepares you for this.

## GOD AS FATHER

Sometimes being a father makes me wonder how exactly God views us from standpoint of Father - as we are His children. Do we look like drooly, snot-covered messes to God? So serious about our lives and our religion that we get upset and throw temper tantrums when we don't get our way? Does God grin or pity us when we run hurriedly toward something exciting but trip over our own feet getting there? Does God witness us constantly bumping into things, getting into trouble, and banging our heads?

I'm sure that none of us can fully understand God's point of view on his children. And he does have millions of children around the world in different stages of development. Some are bottle-fed, some eat solid food. Some starve themselves, some shun their Father and haven't called him in years. But I do remain convinced (more so every day) that human parents have a closer understanding of God's heart than most other people. They are, after all, first married and share a relationship like Christ and his church. And secondly, they have their own little bundles of joy running around to care for - just as God the Father does to us.





## MEN AS FATHERS

Men, as heads of the family, and as the first created (in Genesis), have the primary responsibility for their families welfare and growth. Women have very important jobs in the family as well, but when all is said and done, it will ultimately be the man who is held accountable before God for the way he raised and cared for his family. An example of this can be found in Deuteronomy 22 where the father is held ultimately responsible for a

non-virgin daughter - who would ultimately be stoned on his own front steps.

Stuart Scott, Associate Professor of Biblical Counseling at The Master's College in Santa Clarita, California does a great job of profiling biblical masculinity in The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. He writes that a man (father) is primarily to cultivate 4 characteristics:

❶ **Leader:** He was created first in Genesis and given instructions to oversee the Garden of Eden even before Eve was created. Eve was created as Adam's helper. Also, later in Ephesians, Paul writes that the man is to be

the head of his household. And in 1 Timothy, men are given leadership in the church.

❷ **Lover** (the 1 Corinthians 13 kind): In Ephesians, Paul writes that men should exemplify the same kind of sacrificial love Christ shows the church. And in 1 Peter, they are commanded to love their wives "in an understanding way."

❸ **Protector:** This includes two kinds of protection: physical and spiritual. The father is ultimately responsible for his family's physical health and spiritual wellbeing.

❹ **Provider:** Just as God provides for the

needs of his children, so fathers are called to provide for their families. Only an evil man would purposefully withhold from them.

Another author, Bob Lepine, shows how these 4 characteristics play out in 3 distinct roles:

As **Prophet** in the home, a father is responsible for hearing from God, setting a doctrinal foundation for the home, proclaiming God's truth, confronting sin, and reminding his wife and children of God's love for them.

As **Priest**, he is responsible for leading in worship, intercessory prayer for his family, and reminding his wife and children of God's grace and mercy.

And as **King**, he is responsible for visionary leadership, sacrificial service, providing for spiritual, emotional, and physical needs, and protecting the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of his family.

## WOMEN AS MOTHERS

It was honestly difficult for me to find such a concise list of characteristics and roles for women as mothers (partly because I'm not one, and partly because most books on the subject of gender seem to be written by men and to men - because we seem to have done a poor job of raising good ones in today's world). Still, from my collected study, and a good look at the "ideal" woman from Proverbs 31, here is a list of characteristics that mothers can aspire to:

**1 Helper:** She was created second in the Garden of Eden and given specifically to Adam as helper to help him oversee creation. This does not make her less valuable - as the two are equal partners, and equal heirs of God's grace in Christ - just different. Two ideas I read are particularly helpful for understanding her role as helper better:

She can be subordinate and submissive without being subservient. She should still be free to express herself without fear, but should remember that her husband maintains ultimate responsibility for the wellbeing of her family - and sometimes he feels the weight of that.

She is "helper" to her husband in much the same way that the Holy Spirit is "helper" to God the Father. The two are equal, but different. And just as the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a necessary part of God's work on earth, so the wife's ministry is a necessary part of her family.

**2 Nurturer:** Carolyn Mahaney sums this up rather well: "As women, we are created to be life-bearers. Our bodies have been designed with the ability to mother—to receive, carry, and bear young. In fact, our bodies prepare themselves repeatedly to conceive and bear young. We express our femininity by gratefully embracing every stage of child-bearing, receiving and nurturing each child as a gracious gift from God."

**3 Manager:** It is clear from Proverbs 31 that the woman is a good manager of her entire household. Her husband trusts her completely and doesn't concern himself with anything at home because she has been such a faithful household manager. Additionally, while the husband's primary orientation is the marketplace, the wife's is homeward. This isn't to say she can't work outside the home (because the Proverbs 31 wife obviously does) but just that it isn't to be her primary focus.

**4 Mentor:** Titus 2:3-5 instructs older, faithful women of the faith to make it their duty to mentor young women: "train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be

self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."

## CELEBRATING CHILDREN

The quote "It takes a village to raise a child" is cliché, but it makes a good point. Parenting is no task for amateurs or solo-artists. Yet, unfortunately, in the world we live in, there are far too many amateurs and solo-artists undertaking the task - though often not entirely by choice.

We just don't live in a culture that celebrates children. As Pastor Mark Driscoll has mentioned, often when people get pregnant they announce it as though they've just found out they have cancer. And the reactions of husbands (or boyfriends) aren't typically any better. Children are a huge inconvenience, but a "glorious inconvenience" as Driscoll would put it.

"Are children an inconvenience? Absolutely. It's why many people don't want to have children... But you know what? The fact that the Father loves me and he endures with me and he protects me and he provides for me and he instructs me and he corrects me, it reveals that he's glorious. He's amazing. And we, by the grace of God, get to be the children of God. We get to be that inconvenience through which he is revealed to be glorious. That's what Christianity's all about."

## CELEBRATING ISAAC

So, Isaac. Inconvenience? Huge. Responsibility? Enormous. How many messes have I cleaned up? How much money have we spent to keep him alive? How much time have I lost on just this book alone when he won't let me work and just play by himself? How much money have we given up by my asking Sarah to stay home and be a full-time mom? How much could we save? How quickly could we be out of debt? How easily could we buy plane tickets to America? And yet, none of those questions really carries any weight when you look at a bunch of laughing, smiling pictures. Or better yet, when you interact with a laughing, smiling child.

Glorious inconvenience? Definitely. Isaac's life has already caused us to change our lives completely. We've learned so much together this year about God's heart for children, God's heart for marriage, how to communicate better with one another, how to better support one another, and especially how to be good stewards.

We've grown closer and fonder of each other. We've sacrificed much more for this little one than we ever did before for each other, and we've given to others much more generously than I ever thought possible (especially living on a single paycheck).

And through all the inconveniences, Isaac has brought so much joy to our lives. That is, after all, one of the reasons we gave him the name we did: "Isaac." It means "laughter." And our lives have been filled with smiles, laughter, and love. And I think we are both starting to agree with the words of the Psalmist (127):

*"3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,  
the fruit of the womb a reward."*










1 I'm thankful...

for a wife  
who is patient  
and a good helper.

2 that my husband is silly :)  
My life is more fun  
because of my hubby :) 

**Thanks**

for a silly boy  
who pulls down pants!

 for a baby who can mostly play by himself.  
that God gave me  the cutest,  
most beautiful 



6

for Thursdays off so we can do family days.

that Aaron has Thursday off so we can have lots of family picnics this year.

7

that my two sisters got saved.

8

giving

9

that God healed  
my thyroid problem  
and made my body normal.

10

So happy that I still have energy  
after church on Sunday when we come home.

that we have enough that we can be generous with some -  
like giving things away we could sell.

baby in the world.







## (or: Prosperity Theology Offends Me)

I listened to a sermon from New Philadelphia Church in Seoul: “Increasing Your Capacity to Receive – 2 Kings 4.” The preacher (a woman) has passion. Reminds me of Joel Osteen a bit... The best parts are when she takes the focus off of herself.

### HOW THE BIBLE VIEWS MONEY.

Mark Driscoll often speaks of the difference between prosperity and poverty theology. Her sermon touched on both. Driscoll says:

- ❶ **Prosperity Theology is wrong** – God doesn’t give more and more and more because we deserve it – in fact, we don’t.
- ❷ **Poverty Theology is also wrong** – God doesn’t call us to poverty to make us holy – in fact, it doesn’t.

In fact, there are only four options when concerning blessing and money:

- ❶ **Righteous rich** – who become rich in an honorable, godly way, and who use their riches for God’s glory.
- ❷ **Unrighteous rich** – who become rich dishonestly, and who use their riches for themselves.
- ❸ **Righteous poor** – who are poor, but hardworking and fear God, and still give to God out of their poverty.
- ❹ **Unrighteous poor** – who focus on their poverty, blame God for it, covet, and keep all they can to themselves.

### WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

I have to admit, I was a bit offended by some of her comments – like this: “Do you guys know that sometimes we settle for not-God’s-provision? But for less? And when you walk around in the spirit of lack, you say, ‘Oh, man! God has provided!’ And you look at this itty-bitty little thing, and you say, ‘Hallelujah! Man, God has provided!’ And you pick that up and it’s poisonous? ‘Cause God always actually intended for you to have more!’”

I was offended mainly because of that idea: “Sometimes we settle for less than God’s provision.” What’s her point there? That we “settle” for God’s provision? Or that God’s provision isn’t adequate? It’s my understanding that all of God’s provision – great and small – is adequate. And I don’t necessarily think that finding joy in small things is “settling” for them.

### SPIRIT OF “LACK” OR SPIRIT OF HUMILITY?

There is a big distinction to be made between a spirit of “lack” as she speaks of in her sermon, and a spirit of humility. What exactly is a “spirit of lack”? Does that mean that we think we don’t deserve good stuff?

A spirit of humility on the other hand doesn’t think about what we deserve at all – rather it puts the focus on others. (Which is why I love it when she takes the focus off of herself and her stuff – her money, her new blazer, her large apartment – those were the key points that stuck with me after listening.)

When I walk around in a spirit of humility and look at an itty-bitty thing the Lord has provided – which he didn’t need to provide at all, because I didn’t even take it to him in prayer – and I say, “Hallelujah! Man, God has provided!” Of course I will pick



that thing up and count it as a blessing – not because I suffer from a spirit of “lack” – but because it was an undeserved gift regardless of the size of it. I love God’s blessings, great and small.

## “WHAT IF GOD ACTUALLY INTENDED FOR YOU TO HAVE MORE?”

She might argue (as she did), “What if God actually intended for you to have more?” In this case, I find myself taking one of two directions:

❶ Brushing that comment aside entirely because even the small gift that God gave me was something undeserved and unasked for.

❷ Pondering that comment at length, and wondering if it might be true. If only I’d held out a little longer...If only I’d prayed about it harder...If only I hadn’t “settled...” And then I’d find discontentment – even bitterness – creeping in to my view about God because he had provided a small gift, when he really wanted to give me a big gift? What kind of God is that? I’d wonder. Why would he give me this small thing, when he really wanted to give me more? Is he testing me? When will I ever know if the “more” I’m waiting for is enough? If I wait it out, and get “more” – then will that STILL be “less” than his TRUE intention for my life? You can see how this could turn into a circular pattern of logic and waiting.

And that’s why I like this verse from 1 Timothy:

*1 Timothy 6:6: “But godliness with contentment is great gain.”*

## YES, I “SETTLED.” BUT NOT FOR “LESS.”

At some point, we ALL settle for something – even billionaires settle for billions. I’d rather settle for less, be content and satisfied in God’s provision, than wait and wait and wait for more and more and more that may never come.

## DID JESUS “SETTLE FOR LESS”?

And what of Jesus? Was he settling for “less” when he died on the cross?

Here’s the logic:

If Jesus considered God’s will for his life to be one of more, more, more, don’t you think he would have questioned God’s decision to send him to the cross to die for us? If

Jesus suffered from a spirit of “lack” wouldn’t he have too quickly accepted God’s offer of death on a cross? If only he’d waited a little longer to see God’s TRUE intentions, he might have avoided death on the cross. Perhaps God could have given him “more” and had him killed by beheading – far quicker and more humane a death than death on a cross. Or, if he’d just waited longer, held out for more, prayed for more, perhaps God could have spared his life completely and found a different way to pay for the sins of the world. Again, when is God’s provision enough?

Here’s a great verse to sum up Jesus’ life:

*Philippians 2:8*

*And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself*

*by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!*

Jesus didn’t suffer from a spirit of “lack” when he took the cross upon his shoulders. But he did suffer (if it can be called that) from a spirit of humility. We should all aspire to be so ~~great~~ humble.

## NOT PROSPERITY OR POVERTY, BUT GOOD STEWARDS

If everything is God’s and everything is from God, then there is no reason to aspire to either prosperity or poverty - for neither one produces holiness nor is a sign of holiness. Our holiness and righteousness is found only in Christ, and we should therefore rather aspire to be more Christ-like. And so, with whatever God has given us - whether much or little, we should aspire to be good stewards of his generous blessings and to likewise give generously of what God has generously and freely given us.



# Merry Christmas

*People who give will never be poor.*  
- Anne Frank

*We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have.*  
- Frederick Keonig





[blurb.com](http://blurb.com)





*Aaron*

- Read (and journal) whole Bible in a year
- Get over my aversion to bodyweight exercise
- Bring Sarah up in sound doctrine
- TOPIK Test up to Level 2 or 3  
(Test of Proficiency in Korean)
- Go to America
- Deep Spring cleaning
- Keep my areas of the house clean and organized
- Not start something to only quit quickly
- Finally get a portfolio site up
- Get a “real” freelancing design job
- Bring home \$3,000 monthly
- Get something published
- Give a public speech or lecture (non-teaching)
- Advance my standing at Jeonju University

Christian  
Spouse  
Parent  
Home  
Church  
Work

*Sarah*

- Read Bible regularly, finish in a year, again
  - Work out, swimming / badminton
  - Pray hard for whole family (in Korea & out)
  - To be a good mom / wife
  - Help husband to be more organized / healthy
  - Going to America
  - Raise a healthy baby
  - Take day picnic every week like we have been
  - Start family worship with Isaac
  - Getting things more organized
  - Work for God in church – dedicated attitude
  - Be a good Sunday school teacher
  - Teaching private English lessons (think about)
  - Do something with my skills / talents.
- If I can help with finances, great.