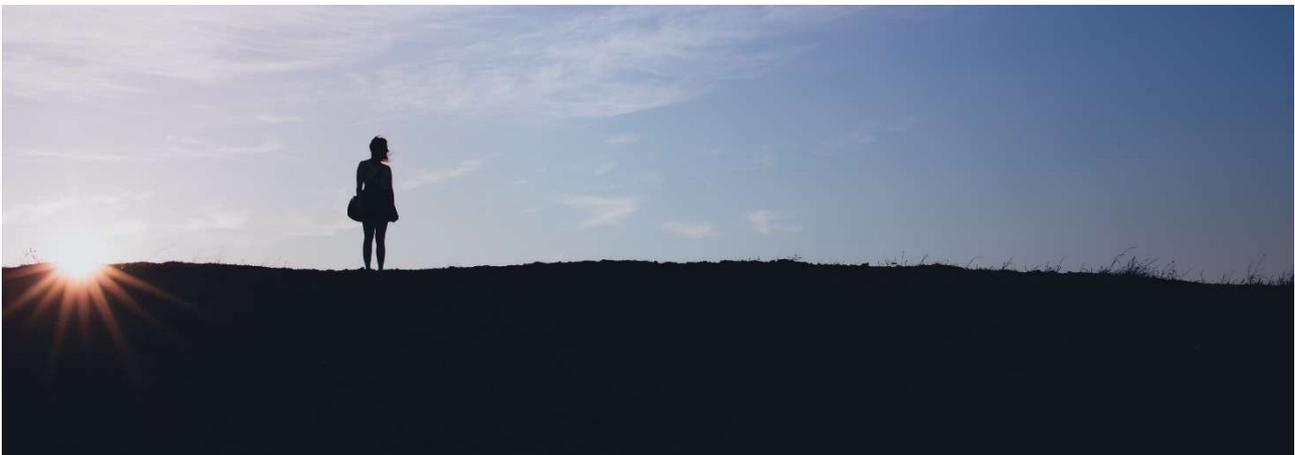


Alert! Pastors are People too
Compiled by Xihe



Foreword

In the article “Unable to Speak” of the previous issue, mainland pastor Keyin shared the experience of crisis in her marriage. Not only did she have to face the family hardship, she was also pressured from active service in the church. The families of pastoral staff don’t just deal with their own families! This article will carry on from the previous article to further explore the painful experiences that Keyin underwent in her church. We hope this will arouse readers’ care on this issue.

“Why am I Being Treated This Way?”

As Keyin was facing a breakdown in her marriage, the church where she served fell into controversy and a power struggle. Keyin found that she had become collateral damage. At the time, she asked God, “I did nothing wrong. Why am I being treated this way? O God, you brought me to this place, did you not?” A tangle of emotions welled up in her heart, and she felt that she was not as excellent and joyful as other people thought she was, nor was she as strong as she had imagined herself to be.

In the depths of her predicament, the Lord comforted her through a phone call from His servant. She said, “Through this phone call, I saw that my situation was in the hands of the Lord. Even though I could not change the environment, I could change the way that I perceived my environment. Thus, God led me to ‘digest’ the difficulties I faced in ministry

within a week. I know that He is the God who called me, who nurtured me and who sent me! He will be faithful to the end! I became more assured of the Lord's promises, and my heart to serve remained as strong as before."

Another Time of Testing

After Keyin had left the first church for a year, the Lord prepared another church in another city for her. In that church, she can serve the Lord without concerns wholeheartedly, focusing on pasturing and building up the body. She described, "I felt like I was on a soldier's drilling square. I could take those meaningful ideas and gifts that I received from the Lord and use them in the church. I started implementing some good pastoral methods and ideals. Within five years, the church changed a lot, all thanks to the grace of God."

At this time, the scope of ministry had become very broad. Keyin received more invitations from other churches to serve in different ministries, and in this way received so-called "affirmation". So had everything changed for the better? Yet she said, "Just as I thought everything was getting better and better, a lesson quietly came around. At that time, I was pregnant. I had been serving in that church for a full five years. Everything was familiar, but it was as if all of a sudden I could hear a voice saying to me, 'You are leaving. This is just training for you, a place for equipping you!'"



Keyin struggled in her heart, "How can this be? I won't leave. Even if I do leave, it will be happily and honorably! But when God does something, often He does not give you a clear timetable or instructions. Just as I was anticipating the birth of my child, suddenly there was a power struggle within the church that was even greater than the one before. This tested my faith, and even more so, it tested the unity of the brothers and sisters."

Lost Community

At the time, Keyin was to be expectant for another month or so, but because of the sudden change in her health, she had an early cesarean section. As she laid in the hospital bed crying quietly to herself, she heard a voice in her heart, "You must rest. Know that I am God!" She felt peaceful, and said, "O Lord, I am willing!" The child was born four weeks premature under life-threatening circumstances. Yet with God's protection, the baby was healthy and safe.

Not only did Keyin have to care for her child, she was frustrated with the matters in the house of God as well. The power struggles within the church never ceased, Keyin recounted, “Everything came crashing down in waves. There were all sorts of complaints, all sorts of accusations, all sorts of phone calls ... but my heart was strangely peaceful. I did not join in the fray.”

What was most difficult to endure for Keyin was not her exhausted body, but the departures of her colleagues. She said, “Pastors with whom I worked were silent and dared not speak to protect themselves. Church coworkers looked which way the wind blew and scattered in all directions. I could withstand the actions of those who opposed me, but, when those coworkers whom I had nurtured in the past left, I felt a deep pain and hurt in my heart. Once again I asked God, ‘Why would they do this? Why would the pastors act this way?’ Even though there were a few members of the body who were faithful to the Lord and stayed by my side, I felt that I had fallen into the depths of the valley! Everything was gone. The church, the coworkers, the work of many years, my ministry position ... Everything I did was back to square one again! Was all my hard work for nothing? Was it to be taken away just like that?”

“The loneliness I felt was more profound than before. The ‘pain’ was also different. But God was still with me. My desire to rely on God was more urgent than before. What man can take away is on the outside, but what God has given in life and His grace, cannot be taken away. Deep in the night, when I woke, I would pray to seek the Lord, ‘Why? May the Lord help me understand why all this has happened. What do you want me to learn?’”



Regaining a Heart That Feels the Lord

Thankfully Keyin humbled herself before the Lord. She realized that her inner life needed renewal. She shared, “The Lord shone His light upon me, so that I discovered many sins and problems inside me that I had not noticed before, such as pride. I always thought of myself as humble enough, I never argued with

anyone and I did not love vanity. However, the Lord showed me that this whole incident and the pain it caused me came from my pride. And there were all those ‘I thought so’s. I thought I loved God enough, and was carrying out His will, but I put my reputation as most important. I thought I was submissive enough and waited enough on the Lord, but it was really me setting up a timetable for God ... The Lord let me see myself so that I didn’t ‘care’ about

what others thought anymore. Praise God that He still accepts and guides me, so that I can rely on Him.”

After the painful experience, Keyin was no longer anxious about gains or losses, nor did she ask “why?” anymore. Rather, she saw everything that she experienced with peace of mind, and she experienced the moulding and shaping of the Love of the Lord. She received healing and order in her life was once again restored.

Reflections

Traditionally, pastoral staff are seen by brothers and sisters as “healers”. Whenever a church member encounters any psychological trauma, they would hope to receive comfort and help from pastors. From Keyin’s example, we can see that even pastors have psychological trauma and they need healing from the Lord. When can we lay down this “perfect expectation” regarding pastors and honestly accept the dangers that are behind a pastor answering his or her calling—confused church leaders, dissensions in the body and unbalanced ministry?



A Life that has Experienced Moulding and Renewal

Look Back on the Last Ten Years

In the past ten years, whenever Keyin faced difficulties and rough times, she would recall a verse from the Bible that always encouraged her, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10) This verse often became a reminder for her and this promise has fully and truly been fulfilled in her life and ministry.

Keyin remembered that when she was studying in seminary, a teacher had challenged them at the start of the first class to be ready and committed to changing themselves. The teacher had said, “You’ll eat what you hate to eat, listen to what you hate listening to, learn to accept others whom you might hate.” The message on the first evening prayers was that “To be the Lord’s vessel is to be shaped by Him. The more the Lord uses you, the more you will be shaped!” Keyin would often remember these words. But during her time in seminary, she did

not understand this very well. Only that she tried to be a “good student” and never forget her calling from the Lord.

Keyin experienced “accepting others” from the personnel disputes. She also learned through the crisis of her marriage and the impact of her ministry that “the more the Lord uses you, the more you will be shaped”, and she upheld her calling and walked humbly.

Pray for the Needs of the Families of Pastoral Staff

1. May the Lord protect the families of pastoral staff in China. Pray that they can treasure the time spent with their spouses on top of their time spent in pasturing the church. Pray that they will build an intimate relationship within their marriage so that Satan cannot attack their families easily.
2. There are many pastoral staff who face a crisis in their marriage, just like Keyin. Please remember them in prayer. May the Lord give strength to those who are hurt so that their hearts may be healed. May God show mercy to those who have stumbled in their marriages. Pray that they may have a chance to repent and rebuild their marriage and families.

3. Within pastoral and ministry teams, there are those who hide the ugliness and sin in their hearts. May the Lord shine a light on them. May those who serve rely on the grace of the Lord to confront sin, experience forgiveness, redemption, release and change.



4. Pray for those who walk with pastoral families, no matter if they are mentors, other pastors or lay believers. May God use them to watch over these families, to be a listening ear in times of trouble as they seek the Lord’s path together. Pray that they will protect those who serve in ministry with all seriousness.

We Need Your Support for Leadership Training!

In order to promote leadership training, CCL has planned the following bible teaching and

pastoral work: 26 Mainland and Hong Kong based trainings which will serve nearly 1,000 church leaders. This will equip 30 team coaches to train up 176 pastoral leaders, who will then support 746 disciples. CCL will also support the living expenses of 25 pastoral staff so that they can continue their ministries with a more stable standard of living.

To do this, it needs the dedication to mentoring, to walk with leaders and to promote healthy and holistic growth of leaders in order to resist wrong values, the temptation of extramarital affairs and the social impact.

We invite you to support CCL's life-on-life leadership trainings. If you are moved and would like to make an offering, please contact us for details, thank you.

Flooding Cannot Sweep Away our Hopes!

Compiled by Zhong Guoxin

In mid-July, heavy rainstorms led to devastating flooding at Xingtai City in North China. In the evening of 19 July, The Qili River burst its banks and flooded more than 10 villages. The flood rose to a level two metres above the roof, and many were killed. It was the largest flood since August 1996. According to the Xingtai municipal government, 21 counties / cities / districts were affected. While the flood took lives, would it also sweep away people's hopes?

Before the flooding, CCL's China ministry team had already planned to visit this area to



understand the needs of pastors and send them tablets with Bible studies materials donated by believers. After the flooding, the team got worried about whether the trip would be affected and whether the area was safe. After knowing more about the disaster, our team embarked on the journey in early August, confident that God would protect us and the materials to be delivered!

Around the upstream area of the Qili River, a county church five to six miles away from the river was built several years ago. The flood destroyed the church's wall on the left and the wall at the back behind the courtyard. Fortunately, the water did not get into the church itself.

While the flood destroyed structures, it could not sweep away our hopes. We delivered the tablets to a pastor safely. He was a fourth-generation believer, and returned to serve in the mountain area after graduating from the seminary in 2002. Before the county church was built, he was not paid any salary at all, and grew maize to make a living. In his ministry, he is also confronted with many challenges. Apart from delivering sermons in the county church once a month, he has to travel to different gathering points in the mountains to deliver sermons. He is now paid a meager salary, but it is still hard for him to support a family of six. Nevertheless, he still perseveres in serving the Lord.

The Needs of Support for Pastors



Pastor Tian's simple home

Further away from the flooded areas is a village north of the river which hasn't been affected by the flood. Our team visited Pastor Tian there. She was already a grandma when she was 40 years old. One of her daughters now studies theology in East China and is in need of financial support. Four years ago, Pastor Tian's husband suffered from cerebral hemorrhage and his intelligence deteriorated to that comparable to a four-year-old's. The Tian family makes a living by growing wheat. **Facing such hardship, Pastor Tian still persists in serving and thanking the Lord for His provisions. She said, "Yes, we have a busy life, but it is one filled with God's grace!" She thanked CCL's offerings over the years, and felt encouragement and companionship in the Lord.**

There are 800 to 900 believers in Pastor Tian's church. The church also runs a nursing home for more than 30 elderly people. Pastor Tian is responsible for taking care of the elderly, and is often praised for her work. However, Pastor Tian said she still has a lot to learn from other pastors on how to shepherd the elderly, and is thankful that Pastor Zhang is accompanying her in her service. Pastor Zhang suggested, "Church workers also need renewal. There should be an exchange platform for church workers, so that they can develop a forward-looking vision." Pastor Zhang promised to provide more resources to Pastor Tian. However, they met face to face one year ago, and could only communicate via telephone in the interim.



Pastor Tian (middle) and her grandson

Pastor Tian also shepherds couples and young people. When the elders asked her to work together with other colleagues, she was nervous because she thought her experience in pasturing was not enough. It's a common feeling of many other pastors in the mainland and it reflects their needs.

Please Support Mainland Pastoral Staff!

Thanks to your prayers and financial support, mainland pastoral staff have acted courageously in meeting challenges of all kinds, such as a sudden flood, a lack of financial resources, and pastoral challenges. They are still full of hope, knowing that there are people who are walking beside them! **CCL supports the living expenses of 25 pastoral staff this year, and the fundraising target is US\$77,000. We are grateful that US\$69,000 has been raised by the end of July. If you are touched to make an offering, please contact us for details, thank you.**

Prayers

1. The Children of Migrant Workers



A mainland pastor shared during a training in Hong Kong: “In our church, there are children of migrant workers who have left their home provinces to work in our area. The workers leave their children with us when they work on Sundays. We have hence opened Sunday school for the children to help them tide over their unstable growing up period with Biblical teachings.” Please pray for the children of migrant workers. May they get to know God through the

love of pastors and brothers and sisters in Christ.

2. Medical Ethics

During the National Health Conference held in Beijing in August, President Xi Jinping stressed the importance of caring for people's health. Despite the improvement in medical equipment and skills in various provinces, medical ethics remains an issue in many areas. People with no



money are often turned away by hospitals. Encouragingly, churches in Southwest China have recently opened a gospel hospital offering not just quality services but also financial subsidy for patients who can't afford the fees. This year, the local government has allowed the hospital to offer national medical check-up, enabling more people to know about this hospital set up by local churches. May the Lord continue to use more Christian healthcare workers to witness for Him by providing quality services.

3. *The Fate of Christian Literature*

A trainer shared recently: "Because of the rarity of Christian literature, some mainland churches have locked up some Biblical reference books, making it hard to borrow them. Earlier I found that the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* was locked up as a rare item." May the Lord help pastors make good use of Christian literature and that brothers and sisters can share with others what they have learned.



4. *Transition Facing Township Churches*



As reported by the *People's Daily*, *National New Urbanization Report 2015* shows that there are 238 towns with population of more than 100,000. Some of them could become new small and medium-sized cities. As township churches see a rising number of members who are intellectuals, pastors can't lead the church with the traditional "didactic" approach. There needs to be a change in leadership style. May

the Lord give pastors wisdom, help them understand and meet the needs of different believers.

~ THE END ~