

Ministry Editorial

Teaching on the Field through Words and Deeds

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In addition to assessing the teaching performance of students, the continuation of peer learning is more important. The teacher is not just a transferor of knowledge in the classroom, s/he is also the life mentor of his/her trainees. When the teacher personally immerses him/herself in the student's situation, s/he can more effectively guide the student in becoming a person who can teach others.



After a year, the main lecturer of the Professional Diploma in Christian Education course (Putonghua) Dr. Hu and her co-workers gathered again with their first batch of students from the end of September to mid-October, 2018. More than 10 students who graduated in 2017 were in East China and Central South China undergoing teaching evaluation for their graduation. After listening to the sharing of Teacher Hu and the students, I gathered the following from some of the more memorable moments.

Teaching in the Field Deepens Learning

The assessment of the class is the main dish, while the "small reunion" party arranged for the students is a dessert. The mainland is vast, and even those who are in the same city seldom get to see each other. Teacher Hu saw that at each reunion, the students would have a good time talking to each other, learning about each other's current situation, and showing concern for the students who could not attend. This scene made the teacher deeply aware that this course not only provided academic training, but also established a community of mutual support and encouragement. Though the Internet is certainly able to facilitate the sharing of news, it is not as exciting as meeting face-to-face. In the days to come, I hope that they will remain in touch, and keep up their fellowship and friendship in Christ.

Teacher Hu began to talk about the class observation: "We were worried that the students would be under pressure. After all, it is not easy to have others comment on one's

own teaching! I didn't expect the trip to be so very touching. And the students really appreciate our support for them in practicing what they learned. They really lack the guidance of instructors who can affirm them, give them advice on improvement, and even provide assistance to them in their family and ministry life. These are opportunities that they cherish."

Pastor Zhang, a graduate from Central South China, responded with enthusiasm, "In this practical assessment, I mainly trained the Sunday school teachers of the county and township churches in our region. During this training, teacher Hu and CCL staff were beside me the whole way. We feel very comforted and moved that they were willing to come all this way to be with us. In these four days they have been watching us, behind us, helping us, giving us guidance after class, and teaching us how to adjust to do better at night for our next lesson.



After completing this practical assessment, I have gained a lot. Through it, I found that the things I learned before should be learned in a more practical way. Some things I had learned well, but some things have been forgotten, and some are vague. In addition to helping us learn time management and gain new knowledge, this experience has also allowed us to get a better understanding of how communication impacts the characteristics of children, and our own biological families. We also learned more about how to apply all this in our ministry. To conclude, we practiced the theory in a deeper way, and understand more what theory is all about!"

Breaking Through Tradition, Internalizing Learning

Teacher Hu emphasized that the basic tenet of the Christian Education curriculum is that students must learn and teach in a living way. This time, she saw that the students know how to mix the courses flexibly and add materials to make the teaching content richer. It could also be seen that they try to quote other reference books as an aid. In addition to teaching theory, students also insert their own witnesses and illustrate with local examples, so that their students can more easily understand and resonate with what is taught.



Although many student teachers began to realize that they need to add students' interaction and discussion into their classes, they also knew that the design of the teaching slides should be pleasing to the eye. Nonetheless, a lecturing style seems to be the dominant method of teaching. It seems that they still couldn't let go of the "sit and learn"

paradigm of classroom teaching. In addition, students also tended to design teaching in terms of quantity. Rich content rarely considers the absorptive capacity of students and application. These aspects will take a long time to adjust to.

At the level of knowledge, students can generally master the subject content, but it takes time to digest and internalize the essence behind the knowledge. As for the subjects of practice, it takes lots of experience and time to become a master. On the other hand, I observe that both teachers and students are quick to giving the "standard" answer. This is because they have a rich knowledge of the Bible, but they lack in-depth research and analysis. Learning to apply the deeper meaning in practice will require a multi-angle thinking. Although they still have a lot of aspects of teaching to hone, the student teachers have seen progress in the field. Teacher Hu can see that in some Sunday school classes, the student teachers are trying to arrange the teaching according to the educational concepts they learned, which is obviously different from the traditional teaching mode. It is really a delightful change!

Respecting Diversity of Application in Different Environments

For course instructors, observing in the field can help them understand the students more comprehensively, and to help give more supervision for growth. Teacher Hu pointed out, "In the past, any contact with the students was mostly in the classroom. The relationship was actually quite one-sided. When we went to where they were, we realized that we could now understand them from another angle: someone who was originally quiet has become active; someone who was originally shy has become able to stand up and take control of a situation, confidently expressing on the stage what they might have previously kept silent about; someone who was quite childish is now mature..... This reminds us that it is really not easy to truly understand a person. It is because people's personality can be multifaceted. One should never judge another by their personal appearance and performance!"



This trip also gave the instructor a deeper understanding of the student's situation, as well as their background and needs. The same theory needs different considerations and application methods in different contexts and situations. Therefore, the instructor does not expect the student teachers to teach everything exactly as what they wrote down in their classroom notes. At the same time, the course instructors should reflect on whether what they teach really takes into account the level of knowledge and learning mode of the students, so that future teaching arrangements can be closer to the actual needs of the students.

Students and Teachers Swimming Upstream

Upon completing the 17-day trip, teacher Hu said, "Let us appreciate in this tour why the apostle Paul repeatedly visited the churches, though it was arduous work. The establishment of the church may be a short-term mission, but the shepherding is continuous. In addition to learning knowledge, we feel that students really need people to listen to them, to share their stress, struggles and difficulties. They also need to be reminded, encouraged and supported by the words of the Bible. And they need to be prayed for to strengthen their faith in God. I hope that there will be more Paul, Silas, Timothy, Barnabas, who will become their supporters and fellow sojourners!"

A Fellow worker also shared, "The students are under a lot of pressure. One of the students, Pastor Zhou, shared that the church she served in is located in town, but the elders are from rural areas, so the pastor is required to run adult fellowship every night, seven days a week, but other ministries are not prioritized. But after she received her Christian Education Course training, she deeply realized the importance of cultivating Christian educators, and insisted on running training classes for churches within the area during the day in addition to the busy night schedule, in order to train up Christian educators. Pastor Zhou's commitment to Christian Education has become our driving force for continuing the course!"

We pray that our Heavenly Father will bless the students to make continuous progress in spiritual life, learning and teaching skills. And to become a teacher who can be used by God, to nurture the next generation with life; to still rely on the Lord when they encounter difficulties, to remember their original convictions, and work tirelessly to become people who can teach others!

Epilogue:

The second class of twelve Professional Diploma in Christian Education course students held their course completion thanksgiving dinner on the 26th November, 2018. May the Lord lead them to becoming teachers of others, and to work hard for their graduation classroom observation in 2019.

Book Giving

Book Giving Assists in More Powerful Preaching!

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Associate Director (Development)

Recently, my friend said to me, “I am not optimistic about Hong Kong’s future. Therefore, I urge brothers and sisters to read the Bible more so that they can rise up to lead the church, should there be a day when pastors are arrested”. Perhaps someone would think that this is excessive worry. Some others also believe that we should prepare for the worst. In fact, irrespective of our circumstances, it is imperative for us to read the Bible to establish a solid foundation in our beliefs. There has been a long-term lack of systematic training for pastors in the mainland on leading Bible studies. Hence, suitable devotional literature can help them take up studies on their own. Moreover, to resist the onslaught of cults, reading books on Biblical studies and theology is also crucial. This can most certainly help mainland believers whose knowledge in the Bible is rather scanty.

We trust that the Lord will open the way for us to continue in our “2019 Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Giving Plan”. Our plan is to include in our pastoral package books on Biblical studies and theology, including “Sweeter than Honey” (Christopher J.H. Wright), “Listening: The Beginning of Theology” (Carver Yu) and “Let the Gospels Preach the Gospel” (Christopher J.H. Wright), etc. We invite you to pray for us and for the Lord to help us carry out the ministry in His time!

Response of a graduate towards “Listening: The Beginning of Theology”

Pastor Zhang

(a graduate of Hunan Bible School)

“As a graduate of theology, one of our most important services is sermon delivery. Dr. Yu stressed in his book that our sermon should originate from God’s revelation. Therefore, we must listen carefully to God’s voice and learn how to lead our lives based on God’s general and special revelation. He also reminds every pastor to preach messages about the whole and complete gospel, which is the only way to bless the believers.

‘If we just look at a single book in the Bible in isolation, it will undoubtedly reveal God’s plan and will, but it will only be part of God’s overall plan, like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle.’ Therefore, we must not quote Bible verses out of context and distort the Bible’s meaning, or we would be like the blind leading the blind and throwing believers into a pit. This brings a great reminder to me in my ministry.”



Another book, “Let the Gospels Preach the Gospel”, was authored by an Old Testament scholar. He quoted verses from the Old Testament fittingly, helping readers meditate upon Jesus’ suffering and death and enhancing their understanding of the gospel. These books are most helpful to mainland pastors in enhancing their spiritual life as well as in preparing sermons.

The author of “Let the Gospels Preach the Gospel” also discussed how he himself prepared sermons, which can inspire pastors on how to deliver sermons. The author also talked about taking a macro perspective in reading the Bible, which also offers readers a new angle on reading the Bible.



While the external environment for mainland churches is far from desirable, devotional literature on preaching can provide much support to mainland pastors who can in turn assist believers to go deeper in their faith. We hope that through our book giving plan, we can walk hand in hand with mainland pastors in shepherding believers!

Please support the 2019 Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Giving Plan

Fund Required: US\$320,500

We want to serve 50 seminaries, Bible schools and training centres, each with an average of 100 graduates. Every graduate would be given a package of pastoring resources (US\$64 is the subsidy for each package). Please pray and offer your support to the ministry and walk alongside the new pastors. Thank you!

Prayers

1. Christian education

Under the newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs, churches are not allowed to hold children's Sunday schools. But in spite of the difficulties Christian education in China faces, God's grace is abundant! Preachers with Christian education training are already prepared to preach at home, even though they cannot do so at churches. Churches have also restructured pastoral care for Christian parents, hoping that they can provide Christian education at home.



May the Lord lead the pastoral ministry for Christian parents, prepare support for church pastors to help the new generation of believers come to know Christian values.

2. Praying for pastors' families



As leaders, pastors also need nurturing, not just as individuals but also for their marriage and family relationships. Marriage and family issues can affect not just a family but also a clan or church. Pastors also need the advice of life mentors and the support of peers, and Christian books.

May the Lord protect pastors so they can get adequate support and keep them from having any spiritual gaps. May the Lord bless them with wisdom to help the congregation develop a healthy family relationship according to Biblical truth, so as to stand against the flawed values on marriage and family in the society.

3. Staying steadfast in an unfavorable environment

According to mainland preachers, many churches had to celebrate Christmas in a low-key manner, and the singing of Christmas carols was also banned in some places. They expect similar restrictions to be imposed on other festivals like Easter.



May the Lord guide mainland churches and give them wisdom to minister in different modes in the current repressive climate. Despite the limitations to outreach activities, may the Lord strengthen the ministry of family visits, help Christians live out Biblical teachings and bear good witness through showing love and concern.

4. Cherishing natural forests



Bursaphelenchus xylophilus is the agent of the most destructive disease against forests worldwide. Pine trees infected with it can die within 40 days. Early this year, the agent has spread to 18 provinces, affecting even scenic areas such as Huangshan, Taishan, Zhang Jiajie etc. The National Forestry and Grassland Administration will adopt a series of measures to tackle the problem.

May the Lord protect residents near the affected areas, keep them from landslides caused by dying trees or soil erosion, or suffering from financial losses. May the Lord also move churches to pray for the business sector and the public, so that they don't focus on their own self-interests, and avoid using pesticides or engaging in excessive industrialization resulting in ecological imbalance and pests.

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