

From Rumors to Sight

■ The Hudson Taylor Memorial Museum

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The tale of British missionary Hudson Taylor committing to spreading the Gospel in China is familiar to most Christians. “If I had a thousand pounds China should have it- if I had a thousand lives, China should have them,” and thus becoming a model for Christian ministers. From hearing stories about Hudson Taylor’s life, to personally visiting the tombstones of him and his wife, my own impression of “Christ Alone” and “All for the Lord” has deepened.



The Miracle of the Tombstones

Reverend Hudson Taylor was received into the Father’s Kingdom in 1905, and was buried next to his wife Maria; she had already passed away in 1870. After periods of war and instability, the fifth generation of the Taylor family, James Taylor IV, returned to Zhejiang in 1983 looking for his ancestor’s grave and tombstone. This began a 35-year journey to seek out roots. By the mercy of God, they found the tomb, and to witness God’s faithfulness they set up the Hudson Taylor memorial museum in Zhejian City Xuande Church.



On 5th June this year, at the unveiling of the Desheng building, Reverend James Taylor IV said, “We really did not know where to start looking. The relevant local authorities said that too much time had elapsed and they couldn’t help. They told us to go to local museums for help instead. We have too many people to thank during this process of searching, especially the volunteer workers and brothers and sisters in the local church.”

Reverend Taylor shared the process of finding Maria’s tomb, “To find her tomb is quite a miracle, and quite meaningful from a certain perspective. One day, I received a Taiwanese merchant who was working in Yangzhou. One day while visiting an antiques market he saw Maria’s tombstone. He was moved to buy it and he did not know whose tombstone it was at the time. Afterwards he told me that the antiques deal actually had a taboo against buying things related to graves and coffins, but he was also moved to buy the tombstone. After looking online, the merchant found out it belonged to Maria Jane Taylor. The Taiwanese merchant was not a Christian, at least at that time.” Is this not the providence of God?

The Transfer of Heart

Miracles brings shock and surprise, but what really lasts is heart for service handed down over the generations. Reverend James Taylor IV hoped to transfer this spiritual commitment of Hudson Taylor to every one of his spiritual descendant. At the Desheng Building opening ceremony, Reverend Taylor shared five points to encourage and edify leaders and believers, as recorded below:

1. The Transfer of the Faith

Since the seventeenth century, the Taylor family has always accepted Joshua 24:15 as their family’s motto, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”. The Taylor family has been in the Lord’s grace for over nine generations, each transferring the faith unto the next. Faith is not merely passed down within the family, but also spread outside. Is this not a model that the missionaries left for us? Recall that when the Chinese people first heard the Gospel, it came at a tremendous price for the missionaries.

2. Deny yourself and follow

In finding Maria's tombstone, it was only the bottom third that was found. You could not even see her name. You could only see the names of the four children that Hudson and Maria had together. After much discussion within the family, we decided not to repair this. We hope that this serves as a reminder today to every follower of Jesus that there is a price to following Christ. You must deny yourself and your own path, you may even have to give up your life and die for Christ. We hope that this smashed coffin and broken tombstone reminds us to deny ourselves and follow Christ.

3. Christ Alone

We often remind each other in the family that Desheng building cannot become a place where the focus is on one person, one couple, or even one family. As in the China Inland Mission sending committee at the time, the reminder is to focus on Christ alone. Hudson Taylor had a line on his tombstone that comes from 2 Corinthians where the apostle Paul said, "I know a person in Christ". We may not all remain in Christ constantly, but we do not want Desheng Building to take the focus off of Christ. "In Christ Alone", we hope to remain in Christ always, to be hidden in Christ.

4. Obedience to God

Those who knew Hudson Taylor well would know how important it was for him to "Do as the Romans do in Rome". In the past when we had only found English carved on the tombstones, I was surprised to discover a Chinese tombstone as well. My great grandfather Herbert Hudson Taylor and his wife are buried next to Hudson Taylor. A wine and cigarette factory was built over the Qiqiao Public Cemetery where they were buried. Why did they keep the tombstones? In fact, that turned the tombstones around so that the words on it were not damaged. Written on them in Chinese are the words from Hebrews 11 "Though he is dead, yet by faith, he still speaks." I believe God is a faithful God. Hudson Taylor would say, "We do not need to have great faith, but we must rely on our great God."

5. Give all to the Lord

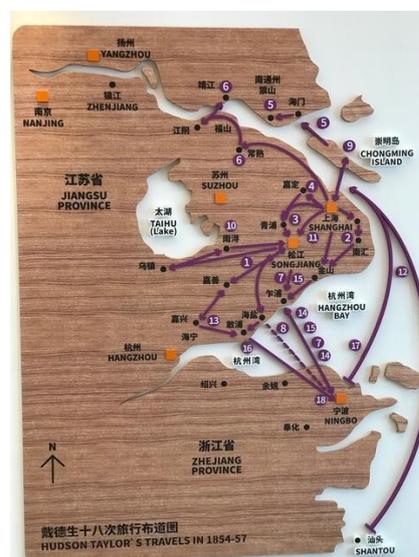
Should we sell tickets to the museum? Our principle is to make it free, with freewill offering to be collected onsite. Yet we will not place the offering box at the door. What we want is "Life offering", as the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, "For Christ's love compels

us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

The Shock for Witnesses

I have visited Desheng Building three times so far. In the latter half of 2017, when the building’s exterior was completed, they were raising funds for internal renovations. Though I could not enter the underground crypt, I could hear Reverend Yi of Xuande Church sharing the Taylor family’s journey in searching for the gravestones. In June this year, Desheng building became open to public, and I could see, hear and touch it for myself. It had a tremendous effect on me.

The English tombstones of Hudson Taylor and Maria, as well as their famous quotes, are at the front door. Afterwards there is a map showing the routes that they took during the eighteen trips they went on in sending missionaries into the interior of China while based in the east. Transportation was not developed back in those days, and with so many unknown factors, entering into the hinterlands to serve was placing one’s own life at the mercy of the Lord. After long consideration, I was convicted by their determination.



As you walk into the crypt, there is a space intentionally left there for visitors to stop, sit and meditate on the commitment that these missionaries had made. Herbert Taylor understood his father’s commitment to China. Twenty-six years later in 1931, he went back to China to raise a Chinese tombstone and carved into it those words from Hebrews 1, “Though he is dead, yet by faith, he still speaks”, in accord with his father’s heart for adopting native customs and witnessing solely for the Lord. Those words were carved into my very heart, and I was so moved I could not speak.

The third time that I visited Desheng Building was in July this year. There was a new exhibition hall about the prayer journey of the China Inland Mission. Every time Hudson

Taylor returned to Britain or the United States to encourage more missionaries to come to China, our Heavenly Father accomplished it! In his prayers, he prayed to lead eighteen, twenty and even two hundred to mission work in China. Our Heavenly Father heard his prayer and brought that many into ministry. On the wall were printed the faces of these mission workers. They were the elite soldiers of the Gospel who heard the call of the Lord to lay aside their livelihood, their enjoyment and even their lives so that China may be evangelized.

When I pressed my hand on the portrait, and read the descriptions, I felt was connected to these missionaries of yore. I only hope that we shall inherit the teachings of our forebears. May all glory and praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!



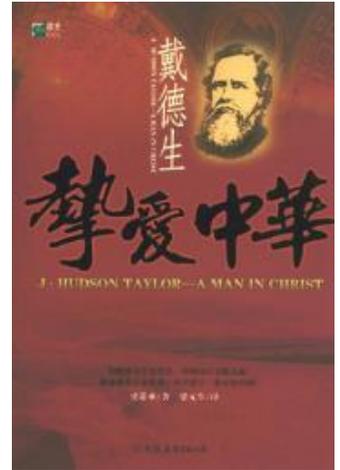
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Hudson Taylor and CCL

The Chinese name for CCL comes from the publishing branch of the China Inland Mission, which was the mission agency founded by Hudson Taylor. In the hinterlands of China, one can still see the fruits of those seeds planted so long ago. After the locals took up leadership. The seeds of the Gospel were not destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Biblical teaching and building up local ministry workers were the key to church growth under those terrible conditions. When CCL Published "J. Hudson Taylor – A Man in Christ" in mainland, the work was fraught with hardship. It began with knocking on doors everywhere, and now all by God's grace we can openly sell this book in public. The sacrifice of those early missionaries, prayer of those spiritual forebears, and the Spirit-filled words they left behind, all bear witness that the path that the church in China has walked has never been an easy one.

In all this we see the sovereign hand of God, the eye of faith and hope, the prayers of forebears and a spiritual inheritance. In the past, because of relaxed regulations, there was a lot more room to develop. Now with a tightening of regulations, God’s work will be even greater. We believe not in policy, but in the sovereign God of history. What can be too difficult for Him?

We deeply believe in blessing Desheng Building through the ministry of publishing. Thus we have committed to giving “J. Hudson Taylor – A Man in Christ” to lead the participants in reading about the life of Hudson Taylor in imitation of Christ.



Uphold Hundred-Year-Old Church, Continue Gospel Ministry

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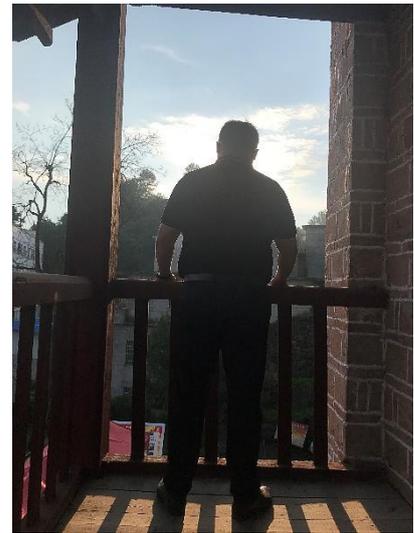
Our car passed by the treacherous mountain roads and reached a church in a small town in a mountain area in the south western region. From a distance we saw a tall and sturdy young man: he was Pastor He. Born in the 90s in a Christian family, he is a third-generation Christian. But different from most Christians born in the 90s, he is also a third-generation church leader. He told us expressively, “My grandpa is the elder of our hometown’s church, my father is a pastor, and I myself, owing to the Lord’s grace, have now become the elder of the church of this small town in the mountain area.”



He continued, “I remember that when I was a small boy, I already listened to grandpa and father preaching. When I was in middle school, I assisted in church services. Gradually the thought of being a pastor came up in my mind and it grew stronger and stronger. I started reading books on church history, apart from the Bible, every evening. Soon before graduating from middle school, I told my parents I wanted to study theology. Backed by the whole family, I entered the Bible school in south western region and graduated in 2012, commencing full time ministry since then.”

He has a particular burden for places where the church is desolate and ministry development is needed. He is of the Han ethnic origin and his wife, graduated from the same Bible school, is from the Miao ethnic minority. They gave up the possibility of working in a well-off church, and chose to serve here, more than 100 km away from their hometown and in the mountain area. Pastor He explained, “I hope to preserve this old church which is over a hundred years old, and carry on the Gospel ministry here.” Ethnic minorities inhabit the high lands here, including the Miao and Yi people. Christianity has arrived at the area for over a hundred years and the church was founded in the early 20th century by a Swiss female missionary. The lady joined the China Inland Mission after graduation from the seminary and was dispatched to China in 1899. The church was set up due to her pioneering effort.

This century-old church has borne the evangelistic mission for the ethnic minorities, but for a long period lacked full-time pastors. The young couple, Pastor He and his wife, emerged as a new momentum to the vision passed down by the previously inspired missionaries. He preaches weekly at the town's church, and then rides on a small scooter for over an hour to another church 60 km away to deliver his sermon. After 6 years of cultivation and shepherding, under the Lord's blessings, the two churches now have gathered 110 Christians.



Pastor He in front of the century-old church, gazing at this piece of land inhabited by the ethnic minorities.

Both full-time pastors, the couple have a daughter of 5 years old and a baby girl. They are serving full-time but they receive very little. The area itself is within a low-income municipality with a rural household earning only RMB400 per person a month on average. Hence, offerings from the congregation are limited. The church makes an effort to pay for the rent of the pastor and issues each of them a monthly allowance of RMB400. Looking after two distant churches plus taking care of the children means that they cannot spare the time to get any part time jobs to fend for themselves. After paying RMB400 for the daughter's kindergarten fee, they can hardly support their own living. From this year on, CCL lends a hand to Pastor He and provides a subsidy to the family. We appreciate that despite living in scarcity, the couple have a thankful heart to the Lord, and devote themselves to those desolate churches and to the Gospel mission of the Lord. Their choice of serving in the mountain area is never an easy decision. We pray that the Lord will bless them, lead them and accept their faithful dedication!

Please support the living subsidy for mainland pastors

In 2018 (3/2018 – 2/2019), CCL renders support to 15 pastors in both cities and rural areas. The level of support is based on their practical needs and local standards of living. Our fundraising target is US\$102,500, which will cover the pastors' living allowance, children's higher education allowance, ministry training in HK, etc., as well as CCL's expenditure for visiting the subsidized pastors. By the end of September, donation received has amounted to US\$52,600, and the shortfall was US\$50,000. If you are willing to help, please donate to our scheme. Thank you!

Prayers

1. Say No to the “fast-food” religious culture

Mainland churches are facing the toughest test in 30 years; aside from pressure from the amendment to the Religious Affairs Regulations, the churches are faced with an internal crisis: a “fast-food” culture. As the mainland society increasingly craves a “fast” culture, Christian believers with a weak foundation are unconsciously calculating the costs, hence drawn to a shallow, superficial and pragmatic belief. But it takes much time and perseverance to develop Christian growth and discipleship.



Photo credit@Daniel Watson/pexels.com

May the Lord keep believers from falling into the trap of a fast-food culture, help them seek spiritual growth with endurance. May He also give wisdom to pastors, help them work closely with the Holy Spirit and be brave enough to correct and guide believers when needed.

2. Entering the unsaved areas



At a time when transportation was underdeveloped, Hudson Taylor sent missionaries into the hinterlands using eastern China as the base. The missionaries put their lives at risk. How about now? While churches in coastal areas have developed quickly, evangelical work in the interior and Northwest is progressing slowly and fraught with danger. In areas like Xinjiang and Tibet, all religious activities are closely monitored.

May the Lord move mainland church workers, especially leaders of coastal churches, to serve the interior and northwestern areas, and let more unsaved souls there hear the gospel.

3. Treatment for the poor

Information from the State Council's Anti-Poverty Department shows that the average annual income of peasants was under RMB2,300, while the peasant population in 2017 exceeded 30 million. Peasant life is tough and sickness increases the hardship. A strong economy aside, a strong nation must have a sound education and health system.



May the Lord awaken more officials and social figures to show concern for, review and reform China's medical system so those in emergency situations can be treated, by removing the current practice of turning away patients who cannot afford to pay. May the Lord show mercy for poor peasants, so that they will not lose the chance of receiving treatment because of the lack of money.

4. Talking to youth about sex



More and more mainland parents and teachers understand the importance of sex education. But due to the lack of systematic sex education among themselves and long-term social suppression of the topic, sex education in China is lagging behind. In their online search, youth often only find partial information or information focused on sensual stimulations. But sex education is definitely not just about sex organs and physiology but also involves personal relationships, psychology etc.

May the Lord lead parents and schools to break away from traditional concepts, be willing to emphasize the seriousness of love and importance of responsibility in talking about sex with youth. May the Lord also provide appropriate materials for sex education.

~ THE END ~