

A Pioneer in Christian Publications –

— Elder Lu Chuanfang Who Devoted His Whole Life to the Literature Ministry

© Thomas Tang
General Secretary

Since the mid-90s of the last century, I have had the opportunity to meet the older generation of spiritual leaders who have greatly inspired me. They are like a great cloud of witnesses, making a tremendous impact on the lives of many, including the new generation of leaders.



Visiting Elder Lu (left) at Shanghai Christian Grace Church in 2014.

Rugged Path in Christian Publication Ministry

One of the older generations of spiritual leaders is Elder Lu Chuanfang of the Shanghai Christian Grace Church. He rested in peace in the Lord on 15 November 2019 at the age of 91.

Moses in the Old Testament went through three 40-year periods in his life. Like him, Elder Lu's life can also be divided into three distinctly different stages.

First Stage:

Converted at a young age and equipped to serve (1929-1957)

Elder Lu was born in Shanghai in 1929 and came to believe in the Lord in 1943 at the age of 14. He was baptized in the same year in the Shanghai Bread of Life Christian Church. Elder Lu started to serve full time in the Shanghai Bread of Life Christian Church in 1951 and was ordained an elder in 1957 when he was 28 years old. He was then young and energetic, and it was a golden period in Elder Lu's service as he was well equipped physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Second Stage:

Changing times and waiting with patience (1958-1983)

In the 50s, China saw the beginning of political movements which straddled three decades. Elder Lu was branded as a rightist and not allowed to work in the Shanghai Bread of Life

Christian Church. The provision of his living expenses was also stopped once. Then, Elder Lu was married and had a daughter. Concerned that his family might be worried about him, Elder Lu pretended to go to work every day, while in fact he spent his time in the library. Later, he was dispatched to work in the Waigang Farm in Shanghai for two years. From 1971 to 1989, he was sent to work in a printing factory. It was only in 1979 was he vindicated and reinstated as an elder. He was allowed to return to the church only in the mid-80s.

Elder Lu's family went through a most tough period in their lives for some 20 years, yet the wife of Elder Lu, Gu Jinxia, remained confident in the Lord. Amidst the extremely difficult circumstances, she did her best to look after the family and raised her two children (the younger son was born in 1961).

Third Stage:

Devoted to the Literature ministry (1984-2009)

After he was vindicated, Elder Lu continued to work in the printing factory in a management position. In 1989, Elder Lu assumed the post of vice-director in the Publication Committee of the CCC/TSPM. Though he served as a volunteer, he devoted himself whole-heartedly to the Literature ministry.

Churches started to open again in the 80s, creating a great demand for devotional literature. Publication resources were extremely scarce and the Christian publishing and printing businesses had yet to be developed. Who would have imagined that Elder Lu's 20 years' experience in the printing factory could be put to use in this circumstance? He rendered tremendous help to the publication and printing of the Bible and Christian books. In fact, he was among those who assisted with the publication of the first batch of Bibles in the mainland after churches had re-opened. These were even printed at the printing press of the People's Liberation Army!

God always has a good plan for the people that He will use. These people may not be aware of God's plan, which may sometimes even go against one's wish. However, we must stay confident and patient in whatever circumstance as God always has the best arrangements.

A Role Model --- Devoting His Entire Life to the Lord

Elder's words and deeds are well respected by all and he is a spiritual life mentor. Where his words are concerned, he attached a lot of importance to the Biblical truth and encouraged believers through teachings from the Bible. For his deeds, he was a humble servant leader and served with great diligence. Before the liberation, he had already devoted himself for a long time to Biblical teaching and



Elder Lu served diligently and was dedicated to the Literature ministry.

Sunday school in the church. In 2011, he was awarded a Master Award by the China Sunday School Association (Taiwan) in recognition of his contribution to Biblical teaching work.

Throughout his entire life, Elder Lu lived frugally. During his later years when life was more stable, he only wished to live peacefully with his wife. In 2010, Elder Lu's wife passed away, after which Elder Lu mourned and remained depressed for a few years before he recovered from his grief. As he was old and in ill health, his daughter took care of him. Yet, unfortunately, his daughter rested in peace in the Lord last year due to an illness. Brothers and sisters in the church then covered up the news, hoping not to distress him. It would be heart-breaking for parents seeing their children die before them.

Elder Lu led a most harsh life because of the political environment in China, yet he had never complained and his faith in the Lord had not wavered. On the contrary, at the age of 60, he still had the will as Caleb had, choosing to serve the Lord without reservation. To make up for the lost 20 years, he seized hold of every opportunity to serve. Despite his old age, he had a most robust spiritual life.

Passing on the Torch of the Literature Ministry

I met Elder Lu at a conference in Hangzhou in 1994 and was deeply touched by his commitment to the Literature ministry. I myself was also called to serve in the field of Literature ministry. Since CCL first published "The Bible – CGST Study Edition" in the mainland in 1995, many other books have been published there, blessing pastors, church leaders as well as brothers and sisters in the mainland. These include:



General Secretary Thomas Tang and sister Rebecca Chee met Elder Lu 25 years ago.

"The Bible – CGST Study Edition (Traditional Chinese)" (1995)

"The New Bible Commentary" (1998)

"What the Bible is All About" (1999)

"Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible" (1999)

"Commentary on the Gospel" (1999)

"The Bible – CGST Study Edition (Revised Version)" (2000)

"Pictorial Bible Stories" (2003)

Over the past 24 years, CCL has published 87 titles in the mainland, thanks to Christian publication workers such as Elder Lu. They have stayed committed to their calling and passed on their ministry from generation to generation. Thank the Lord for preparing His own servants who are faithful to the great mission and serve with all their heart to bless the church.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 is an apt description of Elder Lu's life, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing". The scripture here does not only describe Elder Lu's perseverance in the literature ministry, it is also a goal for those to whom Elder Lu has passed on the torch. Let's encourage each other!

We firmly believe that God is pleased with Elder Lu's work. I am grateful for the missionaries from China Inland Mission and the China Sunday School Association for serving the Chinese church through publications and training. We are also thankful for their dedication to the great mission. With a big vision and a broad mind, these two organizations have merged to establish CCL for passing on the baton to Chinese believers. May the Lord guide us so that we can pass on our ministry from generation to generation regardless of our circumstances!



Amazing leaders, the colder the stronger

© Xiao Dong
China Church Ministry Frontline Worker



In early December, a mainland Christian leaders' training and retreat camp was held. The instructors who organized this camp used the small group and mentorship approach. It is hoped that the Christian leaders could become future trainers. We wish not only to equip them to become training facilitators but also to stimulate their deeper reflection upon the meaning of being a leader.

Escalated turbulences, yet the Lord's grace is sufficient

It was an extremely rugged process to organize this camp. The initial plan was to hold the camp in Hong Kong last September (2019). However, it had to be cancelled due to social unrest. Then it was rescheduled to December (2019) and the venue was moved to the mainland. Due to financial constraints, it was eventually held in a campsite in the eastern region. The lowest temperature there was minus 2 degrees. Our colleagues had to use remodeled containers as sleeping units.

As for the expenditures, we prayed to the Lord as well as actively shared our plan with churches and individual brothers and sisters. We let them know the meaningful objectives of the training camp and the difficulties we were facing. Praise the Lord! We were able to raise the required fund within a relatively short period of time. This, coupled with the venue owner's willingness to reduce the rental costs, enabled the training to eventually take place.

Hearts were ignited despite the frigid ground

Although the weather was freezingly cold, when Christian workers from all over the country came together, our hearts were exceedingly warm! Starting from contemplating the intent and foundation upon which we serve, we moved on to study, to self-examine and discern,

and subsequently we discussed team building, future development planning ... every single moment was so unforgettable!

The training camp not only provided teaching on skills; more importantly, it aimed to equip mainland Christian leaders to become mentors who can give training to others. On the first day, the instructors led the participants to have a "Be Myself: Live the True Calling from God" workshop. Expounding on the Biblical passage (Ephesians 2:10), the instructor helped participants discern what their spiritual gifts, capabilities, characters, attitudes, experience, etc. might be. The instructors also encouraged participants to embrace the divine calling, live out their potential, and take up the role of mentors. The participants were challenged to reflect upon and implement what they had learned in the training.

In the following two days, the focus was on mission and direction. The participants formulated their individual mission statements with which they collectively came up with a unified vision. It says, "Being a leader, we should have clear directions. Under whatever circumstances, we have to maintain the enthusiasm to spread the gospel, and we strive to make our faith cast greater influence in our locality!" One of the Christian leaders said, 'My mission statement is "To hold hands with minority youths and grow up healthily with them.'" Although the places where the minority groups live have tightened control over religious activities, I can reach out to them by teaching them how to surf the internet, developing trade of local products and delicacies, promoting the rich cultural heritage, building up personal relationships with young people and sharing witnesses. Gradually I help shape their value system. I truly believe that they will grow up healthily in Christ.'

Enlightened leaders all set to move on

When the training camp was over, Christian leaders once again returned to various distant places where they serve. On their return journey, many sent reflection messages to the instructors.

Remarks from Pastor Ye from the southwestern region: Being able to learn from so many outstanding instructors, I am enlightened; my vision has broadened. I know for sure that the effort of one person is limited, but a rope of three strands cannot be torn. I await expectantly the "Global Leadership Summit" in March(2020) when even more Christian leaders with the same spirit and same mind, and who are involved in the unification ministry of God can come and join our efforts together!

Remarks from Pastor Luo from the eastern region: The instructors made me realize that being a group leader (mentor/facilitator), simply understanding the content of the curriculum is insufficient, I also need to comprehend fully the learning direction such that I can effectively lead the group members in their discussions. Moreover, this training reminded me that I need to get to know the differences in characteristics among the group members and tailor the materials to suit their needs as part of my preparatory work.

Remarks from Pastor Zhou from the Central Southern region: I was extremely touched upon hearing the sharing from pastors coming from various regions. I truly felt that God is protecting all who love Him wholeheartedly in different places. The teaching of the instructors also made me reflect upon my own ministry. I was challenged to make innovations and breakthroughs in order to find new ways to serve. Under the present situation, equipping oneself firmly in the word of God is pivotal!

Please support the Leadership Development Ministry!

In 2020, we target to equip 80 team coaches, so as to nurture 140 shepherd leaders and support 410 disciple markers through conducting training in the mainland and in Hong Kong. We sincerely invite you to pray for the smooth implementation of our plans and remember our ministry needs of USD179,500. Thank you!

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# Prayers

## 1. Blessings for later generations

Whether through personal examples or written records, the insights and experiences of past spiritual leaders have impacted the spiritual lives of leaders generations later. Past leaders in China went through a long, tough period upholding their faith after churches were ordered closed. With the dearth of related written materials, Elder Lu Chuanfang has brought in writings from outside China.



May the Lord bless the devotion of Elder Lu in literature ministry, so that it can encourage mainland believers, help them follow the Lord closely, and guide churches and believers in an environment of increasingly tight government control over religious activities.

## 2. Countering social values



The prevailing values on money and competitiveness is having an impact on even believers, influencing their choice of study options, career, spouse, approach of child rearing etc.

May the Lord guide pastors to provide personalized ministry, and make good use of suitable small group Bible study materials to nurture their congregations.

May the Lord bless pastors with wisdom so they see the importance of spending more time with believers, counselling, teaching and having personal exchanges with them.

## 3. Revival of Township/County Ministry

A preacher from a rural church in the Central Southern region made a sharing about the difficulty in evangelizing in rural townships: “Believers there tend to be of an older age and it’s not easy to mobilise them. Our evangelical ministry can only involve performances, gift-giving, and the evangelical and nurturing work is done solely by preachers themselves. Many villagers attend gatherings merely for personal gains.”



May the Lord show mercy to rural churches, raise up believers with the heart and drive to spread the gospel, such that they will be equipped and join preachers in promoting

evangelical work. Pray that they can engage in deep conversations and share life experiences with non-believing villagers, apart from performing and giving gifts.

#### 4. Avoiding re-emergence of 'Harmful Vaccine'



In August 2018, mainland vaccine manufacturer Changsheng Bio-Technology Co. put 650,000 counterfeit vaccines onto the market, disregarding children's safety. A year on, the mainland launched on Dec 1, 2019, the Vaccine Management Act, making unscrupulous behavior involving vaccines a criminal offence. An electronic vaccine tracking system was also implemented.

May the Lord help bring about effective supervision of vaccine manufacturing, management and vaccination processes through the law, safeguarding children's health. May the Lord also lead churches in mobilizing believers with healthcare training to organise talks and help enhance public understanding of vaccines and health protection.

~ THE END ~

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### Pray for China

Published since 1974

~ Pray for China publications can be served as a platform to express the latest situations and needs of churches and leaders in the mainland.

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