

Sowing in the Field of Children's Hearts
Compiled by Xihe

In ancient times, there were the Three Obediences and Four Virtues for women. Today there are the Three DON'Ts and Four DOs. What is this all about? It is about the training of Christian education and children Sunday school teachers. The Three DON'Ts and Four DOs will be used in this article to make a general point.



Three DON'Ts

1. DON'T be Negligent in Education

Understanding one's own personality traits through games

CCL initiated its Professional Diploma in Christian Education (Mandarin) course in June this year. 22 people attended the training. They came from East China and South Central China. All participants were already leaders of children/youth ministry or experienced teachers, and had gone through a selection process before coming to Hong Kong to receive intensive training. Chen, a pastor's wife, had this to say when asked about her reasons for applying for this course, "I have always been searching for a suitable course. The training of Christian education is very uncommon in the mainland, and tends to be very loose and unsystematic. When I saw the course introduction, I understood that the course content contained cultivating character in children and youth, parental education, etc. Hoping to strengthen my understanding on these topics, I did not hesitate to apply. My husband had received CCL's leadership training and this time, luckily, I can experience CCL's training personally. It has deepened my abilities in ministry."

"At my church, we have a Sunday school that is especially for children of migrant workers. Their parents are often busy working; they may not have time to spend with their children, even in weekends. Therefore, they take their children to church. I strongly feel that, from a pastoral standpoint, the child and youth stages are very critical. If they don't have proper guidance, they tend to leave the church when they grow up. 'Children and youth' is a field that the church cannot afford to neglect." She continued.

“Nowadays, social impact is becoming greater and greater. For example, the challenges of homosexuality was mentioned in class. I have considered the impact of homosexuality on Hong Kong and Western countries in the past. As the society becomes more open, mainland churches will encounter severe challenges. **This spurred me into thinking about how urgently we need Christian education for our next generation. It reminds us to always be alert, and to teach the next generation with the Truth of the Bible.**”

2. DON'T Give Up. Persevere.

Sister Li, another participant, is a volunteer serving at an organization ministering to youth. She shared, “It has always been my calling to train the teachers of children Sunday school



Concentrating on learning

and youth fellowship. Apart from my work at my organization, I also teach toddler Sunday school at church and help train other teachers. In CCL’s training course, we have learnt that each child has a different personality. We need to observe their behavioral patterns and understand their needs. Those who serve also have different personalities, it reminds me to encourage other co-workers more frequently and to let them use their gifts to cooperate with each other.”

With further discussion, I came to know that Sister Li had studied education at a seminary. It has been her calling to serve in Sunday school since she was 20. She hopes to lead every child to God. She applied for CCL’s Christian education course because she wanted to further her knowledge of education theory and counseling. **She hopes to encourage others in her field. “It is not easy to build a team of Sunday school ministry! There will be many difficulties, but you must remember one word, ‘Persevere’! Do not give up easily!”**

3. DON'T Stop Support

CCL focuses on leadership training. The long-term goal of the course mentioned above is to train participants to become trainers; it is for them to cultivate new trainers after they return to their communities. Apart from this course, CCL also offers training to people who have less experience, and support them in moving forward in ministry. Earlier, we have partnered with churches in East China to run an entry-level Sunday school teacher training, which had

about 50 participants from 12 churches. Most of them had only 1 or 2 years of relevant experience in ministry. Whether they are experienced, like those who came to Hong Kong for training, or have less experience, CCL is devoted in offering training at different levels in hopes of cultivating more leaders.

Four DOs

1. DO Equip for Ministry

In the training in East China, participants were mostly sisters, with a few brothers being the exception. Brother Zhang was one of them. He is a third-generation Christian in his family, and a volunteer at church. Apart from being busy at work, he is also an assistant of a pastor. He said, “The area where our church



is located has over 40 churches. When children Sunday school started up in this area, each church did their own thing. Afterwards, we started to organize some joint activities, like summer camps and Christmas gatherings. We have gone from being scattered to being more systematic. We are very thankful to God.” He didn’t receive any formal training in the past, and this was his first time to participate in a systematic training, which was a starting point.

2. DO Refresh Concepts

Another team had 5 people, with 3 brothers and 2 sisters. They came from a small church and their children Sunday school ministry is still in its initial stages. Before they came to join CCL’s training, they didn’t understand that the teaching materials for children Sunday school should be divided into different age groups or levels. They had even purchased the wrong materials and bought upper primary materials for lower primary pupils. Our staff gave them some teaching materials for reference and they started to grasp the idea of different age groups. Even though they had no theological training, they were willing to serve the needs of the church. They refreshed their understandings and learned from their mistakes.

3. DO Walk Together

Another participant, Rev. Su, shared with our staff that, at her church, only two sisters helped in children Sunday school in the beginning. Afterwards, they had taken opportunities to attend different training, and gained better knowledge and techniques for serving. In later stages, other brothers and sisters joined the ministry and more people attended Sunday school. Now, they have divided into three classes. **She said, “I am grateful for the people who were committed to walking shoulder to shoulder beside me in battle.**



Some participants are mothers, cherishing opportunity to learn

We had the same vision and took up the ministry of serving the children and working hard together.” Rev. Su and her team all joined the training in East China and were devoted to class. Since they did not want to lose this opportunity to equip themselves, they even brought their children along with them, though they had to take care of them during class. How they treasure the opportunity to learn!

4. DO Practice What is Learnt

To observe in a church



According to the observations and personal contact that our staff have with mainland churches, it is noted that there is a lack of systematic teaching materials for mainland children Sunday school. Many materials remain on the level of explaining the Bible verses, and there is a lack of application. When Sunday school teachers use these materials, they could easily fall into a rut of just reading the words in the book. CCL’s training helps participants apply the Biblical knowledge. For example, in the training in East China, there was a session where participants were divided into groups to write a lesson plan which included application of Biblical knowledge. After writing the lesson plans, the participants discussed how to improve the plans. Then they chose some plans to practice and were given feedback by the trainers. This allowed them to practice what they had just learned.

Conclusion

Cults are rampant in the mainland. Some even come to churches to persuade believers to follow them. Solid Bible teaching is very important in helping believers identify the cults. Education in the mainland tends to focus on cramming, and is always unidirectional in transmitting knowledge. Learners often accept everything without thinking. If they don't have a solid foundation in faith, they can be easily misled by heretical teaching. When children learn the Truth from an early age, they can resist wrong values. Mainland churches are in urgent need of teaching materials and trainings. CCL will continue to support children Sunday school teachers in the mainland and promote Christian education, in order to cultivate more leaders for mainland churches and train more teachers who will sow the seeds of Truth in the hearts of children. Please remember these ministries in prayer.

We Need Your Support and Encouragements!

We want to train potential teachers to become trainers who can train others, so we don't want them to lose learning opportunities because of financial reasons. We invite you to invest in cultivating leaders for the Kingdom of God, and support those participants with financial needs so that they can study the 2-year intensive Professional Diploma in Christian Education (Mandarin) course. The amount of subsidy for each participant is USD\$770. If you are touched to make an offering, please contact us for details, thank you.

Gaining New Vigor — Inspirations from *Six Leadership Essentials*¹

Li Jing

Leader of a rural church in the mainland

On the vast territory of China, many churches have lost their traditional pasturing resources after the Cultural Revolution. This was particularly a problem for rural churches where resources are scanty and church management is relatively weak. Some church leaders are not well-educated and have not received any leadership training either. They sometimes interpret the Biblical knowledge in whatever ways they like. Consequently, believers have lost their trust and sense of



Students of mainland seminaries are delighted to be given *Six Leadership Essentials*

belonging in the church. The prospects of rural churches are indeed most worrying.

Before reading this book, I have served as a church leader for ten years. I have worked hard for the Lord, but I grew more and more perplexed under heavy work pressure. I am clear about God's calling for me and I obey His will. However, I cannot identify a good method of working and am often too tired to carry on. My patience and love are wearing thin, and I am exhausted both physically and mentally.

The book tells us that when a leader is clear about his calling and mission, and is on good terms with God, then he should proceed, step by step, under God's plan. If you can do that, your burden is a light one. The book makes me understand that, as a leader, the first thing to do is to manage one's feelings and emotions, and to have vision, action and determination in one's work.

The book discusses the six leadership essentials², which have enabled me to instill new vigor into my work. I've come to understand more about my calling, about how to build a spiritual character, and how to gain personal sustainability in one's work. No matter how busy or tired a leader is, he must always arrange time for devotion, reading the Bible, going on a retreat, and arranging gatherings with his team and small groups so that they can learn and grow together. I have come to appreciate that it is a church's major responsibility to pass on its mission. If church leaders cannot teach believers the important duty to pass on the church's mission and if a church does not attach importance to grooming spiritual leaders, the prospects of such a church are very gloomy.

My church has started discipleship-training classes, and certain parts of this book have been incorporated into our training materials. Hopefully, participants will be equipped with the knowledge of the "six leadership essentials" as well as groomed to be a key force for driving the church's growth and spreading the Gospel.

As a worker in a rural church, I am very excited to have had the chance to read this book, and I have thereby learned how to work better. Putting knowledge into practice is most crucial. I pray that the Lord will give us the wisdom to serve with our heart and for His glory!



Footnotes

1. The authors of the book are Dr. Lau Chung Ming and Dr. Otto Lui. The book highlights the fact that church leaders should exert influence both inside and outside the church, and live out their mission based on God's will. Christian leaders are the ones who guide other people to know more about God and follow Him closely, and leadership is the process of such guidance. The book sets out the "six leadership essentials" and each is discussed one by one. Theories in management and leadership are combined with cases in the Bible and real life to help readers reflect on how to enhance their leadership skills comprehensively.
2. "Six leadership essentials": identifying your calling, characters building, team collaboration, leadership strategy, personal sustainability and leadership succession.

Prayers

1. Training for Children Sunday School Teachers

Teaching children the Truth helps them develop the ability to distinguish between false and right teachings when they grow up. Children Sunday school teachers play a key role in guiding the children to learn the Truth. May the Lord raise more dedicated teachers and provide them with systematic and integrated training so they can

have more understanding of Christian educational concepts and can make good use of teaching materials in grooming future leaders for mainland churches.



2. Cultivating Christians in the Marketplace



The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Big Bay Area was a hot topic at the 11th Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Co-operation and Development Forum and Trade Fair. In line with the vision of "One Belt, One Road", the bay area concept taps into the resources of overseas Chinese and the unique positions of Hong Kong and Macau. The area is seen as a drive for economic development along

the coastal areas in Guangdong. Further economic developments can open the door for more business fellowships. May the Lord raise the awareness of church leaders about future development of the bay area and the potential for more ministries. May they use business fellowships to spread Christian values in the marketplace and sow the seeds for the Gospel, and equip leaders to nurture the spiritual growth of believers in the marketplace.

3. Safety of Left-behind Children

Chinese authorities have recently clarified regulations concerning the safety of left-behind children. For example, in Hubei province where there are more than 11,000 left-behind children with no guardians in rural villages, the regulation is that anyone who discovers any left-behind child that has been subject to domestic violence or any sort of injury should immediately report the case to the police. In Shanxi province, any guardian whose child under his/her care has been found to have been abandoned, abused or subject to domestic violence, resulting in serious physical and/or mental damage, will have his/her guardianship revoked. May the Lord protect the children's safety and move churches to look after their spiritual needs, to help them experience the peace in Christ!



4. The Revisions of Religious Affairs Regulations in the Mainland



On September 7, the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council released its *Religious Affairs Regulations Draft Revisions (Deliberation Draft)* for a one-month public consultation. As the revisions include regulations such as compulsory registration of all religious groups, some people are worried that the Chinese government might further tighten its grip over religious activities. May the Lord show mercy for Christian groups, give mainland and overseas church workers wisdom to cope with any future changes and continue with the good work.

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