



Clamor for Fourth Generation Leaders

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The will of the Lord is to have the Church become a lampstand to shine a light into this dark world, and it is the leadership of the churches that will be accountable to God for this. To obey the Lord's will and to lead the church into becoming light and salt in the world is the main responsibility of church leaders. Therefore, church leadership training is our core ministry. The "fourth generation" leaders mentioned in this article are those starting from the reopening of churches after the Cultural Revolution. They are the future leaders of the young generation.

Who Are the Founders of the 21st Century?

Firstly, let us return to a critical moment in the development of the church in the last century. The 1920s were a golden age in the development of mainland churches. The "Non-Christian Movement" was active in the society at the time, but at the same time the church experienced a great revival, which saw the rise of the first generation of Chinese pastors, who would then influence Chinese churches for over a century. The young pastors of that generation were Wang Mingdao, Watchman Nee, Yang Shao-tang, Jia Yuming, John Sung (Sung Shang-chieh), Andrew Gih (Ji Zhiwen), etc. Other than Jia Yuming, all of the others were youths in their early twenties, yet their teachings and writings are still being read by many today. These people can even be considered as the standard of theology and the life

of disciples. They can be considered as the founders and pioneers of the growth of Chinese churches in the 21st century. After the reopening of mainland churches, these churches have largely followed the teachings of the above pastors in theology and church management.

The church faced much opposition from the political trends between the 1950s and 1970s. This caused the number of believers to greatly decrease and many church gatherings were stopped. It is said that up to 70% of mainland Christians today have only been believers for 30 years or less, which means they became believers after churches were reopened in the 1980s. Only those with a solid foundation in the faith had gone through difficult times, and they stood firm. After the churches reopened, a generation of pastors took up the aspirations and abilities of those who came before, becoming the pioneers of the revival of the churches of today. These people, who took up responsibilities of church leadership between 1980s and 1990s, are the “first generation of church leaders” this article refers to.

From First to Fourth Generation, Taking Up Responsibilities of the Age

Senior leaders can be the companions of
younger generations

After the reopening of the churches in the 1980s, the older generation of pastors “returned” from different areas to pastoral ministry. Most were taught by the pioneers of faith as aforementioned, and reverently pursued those 30 years of lost serving opportunities. Churches were reopened, and seeing that there was much to be done, everything had to be rebuilt. These pastors put their whole heart into spreading the Gospel, church planting, and cultivating people to serve within the church.



When the first generation of leaders took up serving in their youth, they faced changes in the political situation in China and lost many opportunities to serve. Many were imprisoned for their faith. When the churches were reopened, they were already entering their middle age, being in their fifties and sixties. As for the second generation, owing to the influence of the Cultural Revolution, those believers converted to Christ between 1950s and 1960s were very few by proportion. Leaders in the second generation who were brought to faith and trained up by the first generation were also approaching their fifties and sixties from the year of 2000. At the time, rural churches were in the majority, but leaders in those churches were

less educated. They grew up when the church was developing at its fastest rate, so their thoughts were simple and pure, and they were faithful to what was committed to them.

The third and fourth generation appeared after 2000. They are the pastors from urban churches in their thirties to fifties. And the fourth generation are young leaders under thirty years of age. In the past decade, the churches have experienced rapid development in cities. The opportunities of receiving training have increased quite significantly, and these leaders serve in diverse ministries of the church under a more open social environment. Their perspective and academic knowledge are superior to those in the second generation. Perhaps it is due to their exposure to different knowledge that their familiarity and reverence for the Bible is incomparable to that of the first generation. At the same time, because they did not face the difficult times of the past, their understanding of perseverance under times of trial, and enjoyment of materialistic things are completely different from the pastors in previous generations.

The Paradox of Succession

If the first generation is said to be trained by western mission organizations, the second generation succeeded the first generation by “following the mentor”, working and learning at the same time. Perhaps some teachers from overseas provided intensive training for them,



but by and large, most of them learned how to serve in a ministry through “pouring into the mold”—they tried to emulate their teachers as precise as possible. Thus, when the third generation leaders were brought up in urban churches, they could not adapt to the “parental” style of training from the second generation.

Who will care for the fourth generation leaders?

Thus, many third generation leaders pursued further education in Hong Kong over the last decade, or even studies abroad. Many of them have completed their studies and returned to the ministry. Some of them got a master degree or even doctoral degree. They have been serving for many years at their posts, always striving to “do a good job”, “doing” and “writing papers” were more important than “getting along with people” to them. Their common characteristic was

busyness. It is not uncommon to see differences in opinions cause separation among church leaders. At the same time, all kinds of seminaries and training organizations sprouted up in the mainland, offering various degree courses. What was learned in overseas training was, like “pouring into the mold”, replicated in the mainland.

Because of this background, young workers, which are those who will become the fourth generation of church leaders, feel that there are many inadequacies. It is true that they see many capable and knowledgeable people in the third generation, but there are not many who can relate to people well or care for the fourth generation. At the same time, many of the fourth generation workers are only children, and thus require a certain level of spiritual care from their predecessors.

Building Life is Better Than the Knowledge Factory

Apart from being only children, fourth generation leaders grew up in a markedly different environment from their predecessors. They did not experience all kinds of large political movements that opposed the church, and were free to disclose their Christian identity and study abroad, they could access and purchase a huge amount of Christian resources over the Internet and through bookstores.



There is a trend towards tightening the development and spread of Christian ministries by the mainland government, but there is nothing that stops anyone from learning theology and knowledge.

In an environment of comfort relative to that of the past, what do young leaders lack? They have one wish in their hearts—awaiting companions in their spiritual life!

The young leaders are rich in theological knowledge, but the quality of their spiritual life has not been increased by knowledge. The experience of faith requires time, environment and companions. What they need is a “life mentor” who can set a good example for them in different aspects.

Can the third generation leaders become their “life mentors”? This is possible, but because they are good at “doing” and working hard in different ministries of the church, they have very little time to spend on building another person. There are still insufficiencies in building

a spiritual relationship. Therefore, the cry of fourth generation leaders for role models amongst their predecessors is ever louder. The key to training this generation is not in increasing their knowledge, but in building a spiritual relationship with them. The greatest need is for someone to walk along with them one-on-one, or in small groups, and go through the ups and downs of life and ministry together with them.



As an organization that is based outside the mainland, we must say goodbye to the “seminary” style, knowledge factory style of training, and change to a “brick maker” style, which is about one-on-one training, and building a life. The number of people trained is no longer an important consideration. The important thing is the fruit that those being trained bear, how that affects the church, and how those churches are led to influence the society.

Jesus only spent time building up twelve disciples. Quality is more important than quantity.

The Background and Characteristics of 4th Generation Leaders

	1st Generation	2nd Generation	3rd Generation	4th Generation
Background / Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reopening churches, with many issues to be resolved ● Great effort on spreading the Gospel, church planting ● Cultivating ministry workers ● Trained by western mission organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rural churches in the majority ● Less educated ● Simple thinking ● “Follow the mentor”, serving while learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City Churches in the majority ● Difficulty adapting to traditional training methods ● Great increase in learning opportunities ● Busyness with work and academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did not experience large political movements which opposed the church ● Most of them are only children ● Learning and information is easily accessed ● Seeking role models and companions

Making the Best Use of Curriculum Materials – Let “Living Word” Lay a Solid Foundation for Believers

Compiled by: Zhuo Yu

Due to the rapid growth of Christian population, mainland churches often encounter the problem of a bottleneck in pasturing. Without proper shepherding, new believers easily become “spiritual orphans”, or be led astray by cults and get hurt. Hence, it is a pressing task to help believers lay a solid foundation for their beliefs.



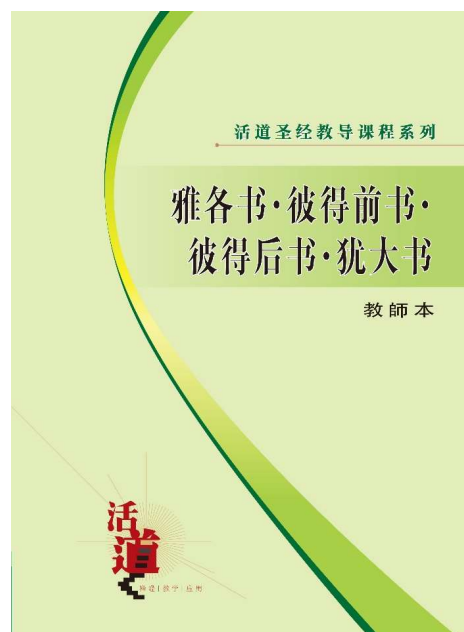
Since 2016, we have been promoting the “Living Word” Bible camp in Hong Kong, targeting Bible teachers. Veteran pastors and Bible scholars were invited to teach different hermeneutics approaches and “The Living Word Curriculum Series”. Participants had the chance to apply leading Bible studies in an interactive manner, and learned how to study the living Truth and live it out in their daily lives. In turn, the participants could train up Bible teachers and small group leaders and helped introduce the small group pasturing approach in their own churches. We must groom more teachers to satisfy the great need for Bible teachers in the mainland.

Inspiring Others’ Life and Strengthening Their Commitment

We are grateful that mainland participants found the “Living Word” curriculum and the trainings can truly groom believers!

Here is a sharing from Rev. Zhang. “I promoted the ‘Living Word’ small groups in a church in South China. Those group leaders and members who stayed till the end all said that the ‘Living Word’ curriculum has boosted their spiritual growth. They have gained more confidence and vitality in their personal life as well as service to the church, and are also more willing to serve. The design of the ‘Living Word’ curriculum is such that participants had to do preparation before the lessons. The systematic course framework also ensures quality of Bible studies and leaders. I sincerely thank CCL for organizing the ‘Living Word’ Bible camp.”

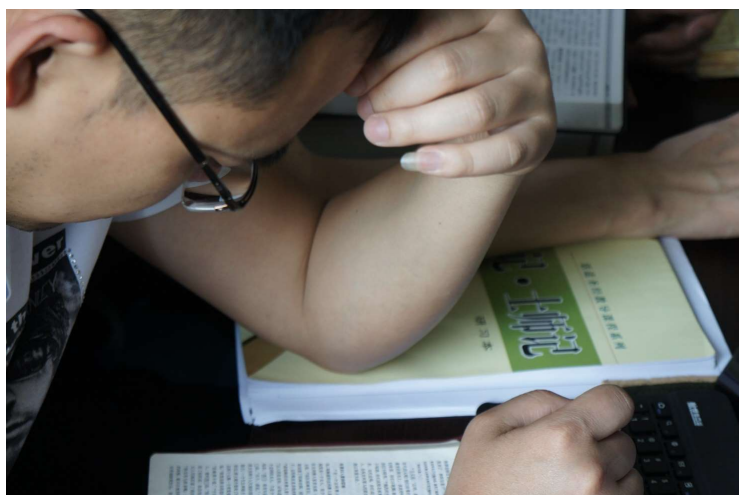
Rev. Zhou came from a church in Northeast China. She came across the “Living Word” curriculum materials some years ago and started using them in small group Bible studies. She came to Hong Kong in the first half of 2016 to take part in the “Living Word” Bible camp to learn the newly published materials: *James, I & II Peter & Jude*. Not only has she gained by refining her teaching techniques, but has also renewed her commitment to serve. After the training, in September, she had the opportunity to go to a church nearby to share how to use “Living Word” curriculum to lead Bible study groups. She has also localized her approach to better meet the needs of churches in that area.



The curriculum materials help
Rev. Zhou learn teaching skills

More Curriculum Materials Coming on Stream

In the first half of 2017, the publication of *Matthew & Mark* will tie in with the coming “Living Word” Bible camp. We aim at grooming a new group of mainland teachers. Tens of thousands of copies of the 15 volumes of “The Living Word Curriculum Series” published by CCL have continuously been used by churches in various provinces for 10 years. These churches are looking forward to the publication of new materials. The typesetting process of *Matthew & Mark* is already completed and it will be published soon, *Acts* is now in the stage



of editing, work is also being undertaken on *I & II Corinthians*, *Romans & Galatians* and *Ezekiel*. It will take several years to compile and publish one set of curriculum materials. Please continue to pray for the authors and the editorial teams.

We also invite you to walk hand in hand with us and pray for our training for mainland churches. You can

participate by making an offering for the publication of the “Living Word” curriculum for it to be completed on time. Each set, with 1,000 copies of the teacher’s guide and 4,000 copies of the study guide, costs US\$32,000, including editing and publication costs. If you are touched to make an offering, please contact us for details, thank you.

Prayers

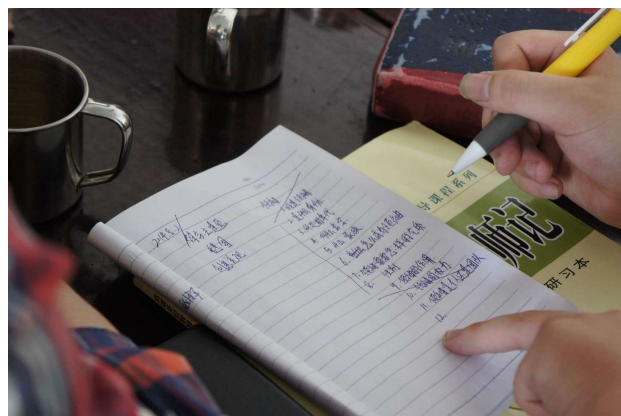
1. Novice Pastoral Staff

Some seminary graduates who have responded to the calling to serve at grassroots churches are facing many difficulties such as the lack of support from co-workers and spiritual nourishment; working alone, inadequate resources and care from pastors. May the Lord strengthen their faith, prepare for them life mentors who can guide them through the ups and downs in their ministries.



2. Relevant Teaching Materials

Chinese churches, particularly mainland churches, need Bible study materials to help believers understand the meaning of the Scriptures and the way to apply teachings of the Bible in daily life. The 15 volumes of “The Living Word Curriculum Series” published by CCL are now being used by churches in various provinces. In 2017, we will publish *Matthew & Mark, Acts, I & II Corinthians, Romans & Galatians* and *Ezekiel*. May the Lord guide the compilation and production of the books, use them to help believers “learn the living Truth, live out the Truth” through small group Bible studies.



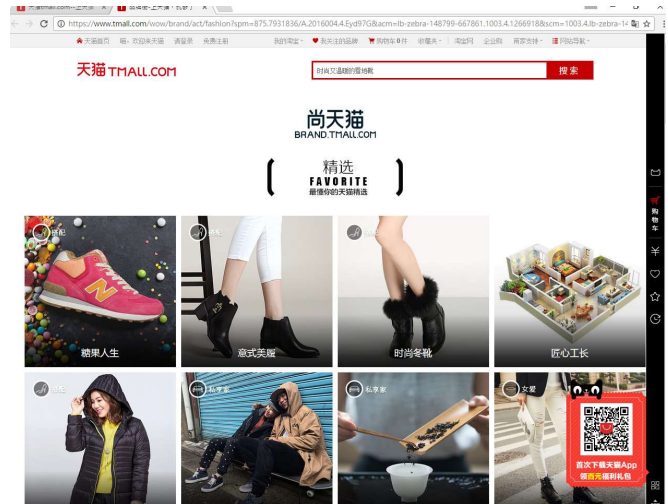
3. Travelling by High Speed Railway, Reaching Out to the Zhuang People

Ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in mountainous or remote areas, hence not easily to reach out to. However, there are more than 3 million Zhuangs living in Nanning, Guangxi, just about 4 hours of high speed railway away from Shenzhen, close to Hong Kong. Passionate people, the Zhuangs have a low level of education and are influenced by folk religions. Fewer than 0.5% of

them are Christians, most of whom with beginners' faith and little discipleship training. May the Lord strengthen the Zhuang's churches, build up the foundation of their faith, and let resourceful urban churches provide pastoral support for them.

4. True Spiritual Satisfaction

Since the online shopping mall “Taobao” (later renamed “Tmall”) launched the Singles’ Day big sale on November 11, 2009, the date of “double 11” has turned from a sales gimmick into a festival used by global manufacturers and online merchants to lure Chinese shoppers. May the Lord watch over the people, especially the singles, so they don’t have to rely on *compulsive* shopping to fill their spiritual void. May He send mainland believers to spread the Gospel, so people can get true spiritual satisfaction.



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