

Being Joyful Together is Better Than Being Joyful Alone - New Innovations

◎ **Teacher Leung**
“Living Word” Training Teacher



From the Editor:

CCL’s “Living Word” Teacher Leung has a heart for training and passing on leadership, and concentrates all his efforts on walking with third and fourth generation leaders in the mainland. The teaching team led by Teacher Leung began as a team with only one primary teacher. Today, boldly and innovatively he teaches along with a whole team. He hopes that through participating with these teaching teams, he can train up more “Living Word” trainers -- training those who can train others. The members of the teaching team are chosen from shepherd leaders(牧人領袖), and they are trained to become team coaches(團隊教練), or even life mentors(生命師傅).

In May and June this year Teacher Leung, along with mainland partners, taught “Living Word Bible camp” training in the style of team teaching in Shandong and Jilin respectively. Each team member had different styles of teaching, meaning that the training sessions were more flexible and diverse. These experienced teachers stepped out of existing frameworks through good use of class preparation and reflection. The teachers discussed and explored different topics with the learners, and encouraged them to take up responsibilities.

Due to the limitations of space, we will be publishing this story about innovative training and application in two parts.

This article is the reflection of the writer and four partners on the teaching team from the mainland looking back and thinking about the past year, and seeing how the Lord guided each member and brought them together in serving. Although we have only partnered together for one year, we can see through different experiences the signs that God has been walking with each of us along the way.



This included Teacher L, who is an old friend and with whom I have worked for over ten years; Pastor G, whose family's misfortune we faced together, and who, after walking through that dark valley, had to face misunderstandings in the church she was pastoring before being forced to leave; There is the young leader Teacher Z, who had taken up the role of a Sunday school teacher since her university days. After her graduation, she became a full time worker in her home church. She had a brush with death when she was giving birth. Afterwards, as she was unable to accept that the pastor whom she trusted, and her spiritual mentor were sinning against the Biblical truth, she had to leave with her family; last but not least was preacher A, a post-90s who had been serving in campus ministry in East China for the past five years.



God had given each individual member unique and excellent gifts, talents, personalities, preferences and experiences. Yet, every member chose to believe that the path of serving God should not be walked alone. It is God's will that we should become fellow travellers who grow together and minister to each other.

Innovation: From Driving Force to Support and Coordination

In May and June of 2017, our five-person teaching team went to Shandong and Jilin, back to back, to serve there. In the past, I had served as the primary teacher, while other team members supported me. However, in these past two trips, we made a rather bold innovation. The fine details will not be discussed here. Most importantly, the teaching content was collectively analyzed and designed. The mission of the teachers was to design each lesson according to specific skills of each member. My role thus changed from being the primary driver to one of coordination and support.

Fresh Recruit Post-90s Preacher A's sharing:

“This second trip serving with this team was filled with understanding and joy. There was no shirking or fussing over responsibilities. Rather, we were filled with sincerity; we took joy in the helping each other and carried each other’s burdens. I think that this came about from all those meetings that we had over the internet. We eagerly looked forward to our weekly or fortnightly online Bible studies, and shared our lives with each other! We experienced our lives being renewed by the words of God, enjoyed each other’s help and companionship, and deepened our bond with each other. Each member of the group possessed the same passion, and is willing to focus on the words of God; each member had the same persistence, and is willing to spend time doing personal research; each member had the same experience, and was not obsessed with tradition, nor had mistaken faith in authority. We believed that God’s words are powerful, and that they attract every life to be closer to the Lord, and to obey Him!”



Teacher Z had similar feelings when analyzing how team teaching could be so attractive:

“The first thing is the lessons that fellow travellers learned from their own painful experiences. Different yet similar experiences lead us to reflect more deeply on our past, and become an original driving force. This gives us courage to face changes and challenges, and is therefore an urgent need in small-group learning. We can test ourselves over and over again each time we engage in the learning process and adjustments of small-group learning. This becomes a sort of virtuous cycle, and helps us to grow. The second thing is our responsibility towards our mission and calling. The old Chinese saying claims that those of different trades do not walk together, yet conversely we gather together because the path we walk is the same! The trust given to us by the Church, and our mission to return to the words of the Bible, means that we can go to faraway places; we can run to the “frontlines”. With God’s calling, the example of the teachers, and the companionship of peers, “the three interlocking rings¹” becomes the words of “rice²”.”

Conclusion

The Bible says, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Evidently, the individual “me” is not the only (teaching) individual. Team teaching is a response and submission to the communality that is found in the theology that God had created. Moreover, in God’s covenant with man, God invites different individuals to enter a committed and covenant life with others. Team



teaching is the application of just that principle. This past year, it felt like we went from using an SLR camera to learning to shoot 360-degree panoramas --- from an attitude of openness to diversity, we opened up the perspectives of ourselves and the learners, and thus received the riches of God's grace.

Note 1: "Three Interlocking Rings" of Bible teaching: "The Living Word Curriculum Series" is specially adapted to the churches' adult Sunday schools/Bible training classes. Its focus is on helping teachers connect the three aspects listed below to raise believer's interest in the Bible and knowledge in the words of God.

Ring 1: Correct Interpretation of Scripture

Ring 2: Student-Centred Learning

Ring 3: Appropriate Life Application

"Three Interlocking Rings" of Bible teaching, accompanied with the work of the Holy Spirit, a change in life will happen.

Correct Interpretation of Scripture: with Scripture at the centre, we help learners carefully examine and handle each book of the Bible according to content and core message. We also provide help in interpreting difficult passages in the Scriptures.

Student-Centred Teaching: the curriculum is designed with modern pedagogy as foundation to provide step-by-step learning in a way that is easy to understand. The different levels of learners are differentiated from one another and it eases preparation work for the teacher.

Appropriate Life Application: provide learners with examples, cases, activities and relevant issues that are meaningful, in accordance with regional situations, and the different needs of the learner in order stimulate critical thinking and reflection on the attitudes and values held by learners. This will help learners apply what they learn to everyday life.

Note2: The Way of "Cooked Rice": This is the essence of "The Living Word Curriculum Series". The purpose of the study and teaching of the Bible is to receive and then communicate "Words of Life". Merely working hard in studying the Bible just yields "raw rice", and raw rice is inedible. Thus it is also essential to maintain an intimate relationship with God -- Jesus said, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5b). Only with this, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, can we receive and communicate the "Words of Life".

Bible and study (Raw Rice) + Faith and our relationship with God (Water) + The work of the Holy Spirit (Fire) = Words of Life (Cooked Rice)

Looking at Pastors' Needs from Another Angle!

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Over the years, our team has visited many places in the mainland through our book-giving trips and come across pastors of different backgrounds living under various situations. Some of them are poor and shy, while others are educated and enthusiastic..... Indeed, their needs vary across different districts and circumstances.

The third-generation leaders: busy!

The third-generation leaders outperform their predecessors in knowledge and horizon. They are industrious, and put in their best in their work and learning. They are characterized by having a very busy life. During our book-giving trips, we saw how the brother (a third-generation leader) who received us had his daily schedule so packed that he could hardly get any sleep. For a long time, he spent little time with his family. He told us that his work schedule was made available to all members in his team, and he worked extremely hard to accomplish every task in obedience to the church. While it is right that a leader should be responsible, we are concerned about this brother's relationship with God. Did he have time to reflect upon his own spiritual life? How much longer could he go on with such a frantically busy life? This brother's case is not an exceptional one. Leading a busy life is common among mainland pastors. Should we renew this kind of work culture?



To walk hand in hand with these third-generation leaders, we travel every now and then to visit them or keep contact with them through WeChat. We provide them with various supervision and leadership courses based on their needs so that they are empowered to continue in their ministry and avoid burnout. Hopefully, they can perform even better and improve the quality of their ministry. In our classes, we have also added in a care sharing session whereby the participants can share the challenges they face in their lives, and we have become both their teachers and their friends.

The future fourth-generation leaders: puzzled!

The fourth-generation leaders are usually the only child in the family. From their role model of the third-generation leaders, they have learned how to acquire more knowledge and work efficiently. They are, however, not well cared for by the third-generation leaders as the latter simply cannot spare the time for building personal relationships with others. Yet, the key to nurturing the new generation of leaders lies not so much in impartation of knowledge, but rather in the grooming of their spiritual life.



In the photo is a group of young future leaders beaming with smiles. Yet after talking to them, they are found to be a group of shy leaders lacking confidence in expressing themselves. We doubt whether they are aware of their own qualities. Do they have any struggles in their lives? Given that this is now an online and technology-driven world, we are concerned about whether they get quality, reliable and accurate information in the open world of the Internet. With the nation's economy developing leaps and bounds, some people have gained a lot of material possessions. Will this also bring temptations to the young leaders?

Hence, it is crucial that the fourth-generation leaders' lives are rooted in the Bible. Our Book-giving Plan over the years aims exactly to achieve that. Apart from hermeneutical literature, books about family and the workplace are also donated to them. Aside from paper books, e-books are also being developed to tie in with the new generation's reading habits. Meanwhile, we are also promoting life mentor programmes by setting up a teachers' team across different ages to team up with young mainland teachers to help the latter become good teachers through having regular exchanges with them.



Support the mentorship programme

To nurture leaders, we will launch the life mentor programme, and offer training (e.g. Six Leadership Essentials course) and resources (e.g. Mainland Seminary Graduates Book-giving Plan) to mainland church leaders to help them grow up healthily. We sincerely invite you to support this ministry!

Action: Find "Give" in CCL's website, enter the "Support through Offering" page, click

on “online offering” and select “China Church Ministry”

The background and characteristics of the four generations of church leaders:
(extracted from “Clamor for Fourth Generation Leaders in “Pray for China” Issue no. 284)

The first generation

- re-opened the church and re-established many ministries
- worked hard to spread the gospel and build churches
- trained by missionaries from churches in the west

The second generation

- served mainly in rural churches
- not well-educated
- followed the “mentors” and learned while serving

The third generation

- served many in urban churches
- had a lot more opportunities to study further
- busy both in serving and studying

The fourth generation

- no large-scale political movement to clamp down on the church
- free to learn and gain information easily
- yearn for a role model and a companion in their ministry

Prayers

1. Application of Biblical truths



China's national college entrance examination sets the standards for university admissions. But it emphasizes memorization and leaves little room for creativity and applications, discouraging diversity among mainland students. Among believers, many are used to memorizing Biblical verses but have little idea of how to apply them in real life.

May the Lord help believers develop a close relationship with God on the basis of Biblical truths, and follow the Holy Spirit's guidance in applying the Word of Life in real life.

2. Care for retired pastors

Wages on the mainland have increased alongside economic growth. Yet some churches still hold the outdated thinking that preachers should expect a small salary and live on faith. As a result, many preachers face much financial pressure, not to mention making savings. At the time of retirement, many have to rely on financial support from their children or fellow believers.



May the Lord awaken mainland churches to recognize the efforts of the faithful retired servants, make regular visits and provide enough financial support for them.

3. Walking with out-of-school kids



'Mobile Children' refers to the children of migrant workers in cities. Their number grew from 42.72 million in 2000 to 106 million in 2013, which made up 38 per cent of the children in China. Without urban household permits, they are denied spots in public schools, while privately-run schools charge hefty fees. The inability to afford the fees caused many to drop out of school. Many older children are forced to join the workforce prematurely.

May the Lord use resourceful churches and believers in urban areas to help these out-of-school kids pick up skills or

work, and more importantly, help them develop proper values so as not to be lured by temptations.

4. Balancing work and church life

More and more young people, including believers, have joined the growing service industry in China. But many believers working in shifts cannot attend church service on Sundays. In recent years, financial disputes have risen from believers promoting beauty and health supplements to fellow church-goers.



May the Lord help churches create evening worship service or small group meetings during the week for believers who work on shifts. May He also give wisdom to pastors in teaching and admonishing the congregation not to see the church as a marketplace.

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