

Only God Can Do It!

— The Miracle of Publishing Two Million Volumes in the Mainland

© Matthew Fung
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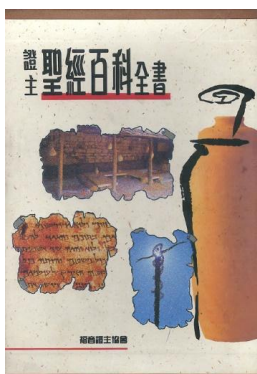
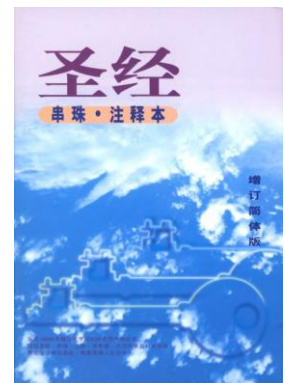
The mainland church reopened in the 80s, yet the Bible was massively burnt and destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Believers prayed fervently for God's provision of the Bible. God heard their prayers and moved the hearts of many believers overseas who donated the Bible to cater to such a need.



In the 90s, the official paper No.6 was released. To guard against foreign influence, China imposed restrictions on the freedom of publication. Only the national CCC/TSPM could publish internally a small amount of Christian literature on basic doctrines (without an ISBN number and not on sale in bookstores). God saw believers' thirst for the Word.

Beginning of Christian Literature Mission

In 1994, God touched the hearts of those in the China Graduate School of Theology and Christian Communications Ltd. (CCL); representatives were sent to attend the Chinese Christian Ministries Conference in Hangzhou, resulting in the first partnership project with the mainland church on publishing "The Bible – CGST Study Edition". First published in 1995, the book was much cherished by believers who could use this to learn the Word themselves even though they were not shepherded by a pastor.



In just several years, 200,000 copies of this publication were printed and distributed! Later, "Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible" and Warren Wiersbe's "Be Series" were also published, helping to alleviate to some extent the shortage of Biblical teaching resources. CCL heard clearly God's calling for it to supply devotional literature to the mainland church. Over the past 25 years, Thomas Tang, General Secretary, has stayed faithful to the Lord and worked diligently with the team. As shrewd as the snake, he has seized hold of opportunities amidst the

various restrictions during different periods and served as a pioneer in the mainland Christian literature ministry.

Diversity in Christian Publications

In 2000, China ascended to the World Trade Organization and its economy took off. Religion was then deemed as an effective instrument for building the society. CCL took hold of the relaxed policies on Christian publications, and published a diversity of Christian literature on subjects including personal devotion, religious practices in daily life, interpersonal relationships, etc. God also touched the hearts of mainland Christians who were called to join the literature ministry. A large number of them were passionate about reading and committed to serve in the literature ministry. During the peak period, there were over 100 bookstores in operation. In fact, the Christian publications did not only nurture believers' spiritual life, they also attracted a group of readers who would like to find out more about Christianity, despite the fact that most other books in China were written on an atheist basis.

In 2007, CCL held a thanksgiving gathering during a Beijing book fair to witness God's amazing grace in using CCL in publishing through legal channels one million copies of 42 kinds of publications. We witnessed how God took care of and protected His children against cults by sending CCL to work in a humble and low-profile manner with mainland publishers to convey the true Word to believers. The miracle of publishing one million copies happened in the first 12 years (1995-2007) of our ministry.



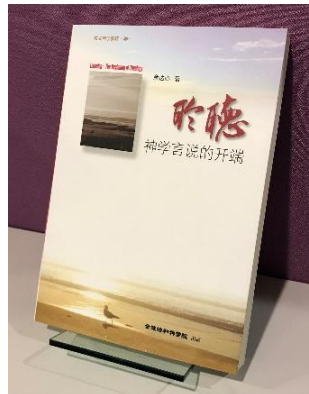
On 31 August 2007, the officiating guest used the numbers in their hands to make up the number one million to mark the total number of books published.

Building the Mainland Publishing Team

In 2007, Thomas Tang, General Secretary, penned an article to give his thanks to the Lord. He shared, "I felt a great and pressing need to nurture local Christian publication professionals and more Chinese authors." God listened to his prayers and called on people who were committed to the literature ministry and Chinese authors in the mainland to join the ministry. Prior to that, books targeted overseas readers first and were published in traditional Chinese characters, before they were turned into simplified Chinese characters for publication in the mainland. Since 2008, to build the mainland publication team, books were first published in simplified Chinese characters and were written to cater to mainland readers. In order to groom publication talents in the mainland, mainland Christian editors and designers were added to the team.

In the second 12 years (2008-2020), through CCL's publication platform, we pulled together a host of Chinese authors who were passionate about mainland ministries. They

included Pastor Carver T. Yu, Pastor Lo Lung Kwong, Professor Lau Chung Ming, Ms. Bess Tom Shiu Mei, Dr. Annie Yi Jung Pan and Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin W.H. Wat. Their books such as “Listening: The Beginning of Theology” and “Integral Premarital Counseling” were rich with Biblical knowledge and the way of life, meeting mainland pastors’ needs. We also thank the Lord for calling upon sister Chee Lai Wah and myself to serve as publishers. Amidst the changing circumstances over the years, we have been able to identify trustworthy partners and obtain the approval needed for our publications. Our partners include the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the national CCC/TSPM, seminaries and provincial and municipal CCC/TSPM. God has blessed us with an amazing network, and used His faithful and good servants within the established institutions to do His work. In the publishing operation, editors are the key persons. How to use language that can meet requirements under the stringent vetting system and yet be able to stay faithful to God’s word and keep the author’s meaning is an art in itself! God has provided CCL with an editorial team in Hong Kong which works closely with the mainland team. All along, God has shielded us in our work and the necessary approval is always given. In God, there is nothing which is impossible!



Ups and Downs in the Publication Journey

During the second 12-year period, God has seen the exponential growth of the mainland church everywhere, calling for more resources to be provided on all fronts including quality sermons, discipleship training, church management, interpersonal relationships, family education, etc. While God has opened the door for CCL in the literature ministry, it has not been just plain sailing. There was a year in which only one book was published. Yet, the team learned to work patiently. We knew that we were just sowing the seeds and what mattered most as servants was to stay faithful to God.

In recent years, given the tightened environment in which the cross was torn down and newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs implemented, our national publishing partners have reduced their number of Christian publications. While the circumstances might look difficult, God has opened a miraculous path for CCL in that we are now publishing through seminaries and provincial and municipal CCC/TSPM. In 2019, we have made contact with 56 seminaries and Bible schools all over the country to gift to each seminary graduate a pack of 23 volumes of pastoral literature. In the past eight years, we have served close to 25,000 seminary graduates through gifting away publications. Although there might be ups and downs during the second 12-year period, we have witnessed God’s tremendous grace in allowing us to publish one million copies of 46 kinds of Christian books.

God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts! During the two 12-year periods from 1995 to 2020, CCL has published two million books in the mainland. This is indeed a miracle, and goes to show how very much God cares for the spiritual needs of His children!



On 11 January 2020, the officiating guest used the numbers in their hands to make up the number two million to mark the total number of books published.



This is the 87th book published openly by CCL in the mainland. The total volume of books published so far is two million.

Sustaining and Tailor-made Pastoral Ministry

— The Experience of Frontline Teaching of “Living Word”

- © Pastor Gan
Mainland young instructor of the “Living Word”

Editor’s notes: In the past few years, young instructors in the mainland have been using the “Living Word” bible teaching materials to train Christian workers. Despite rising external pressure and restriction on religious activities, mainland instructors are overcoming distance to equip church leaders with bible teaching. For this, we are thankful to our Heavenly Father. After having accumulated frontline teaching experience in the past several years, one of the young instructors summarized and shared her experience with us.

I am exceedingly thankful to God, for someone as unworthy as me, could still be called by Him to take part in the training ministry.

A chronic issue faced by mainland churches is that there is a large number of believers and few pastors. To provide continuous and in-depth pastoral care is an unfulfilled dream of pastors. Pastors are aware of the disparity between how much fuel they need to provide to their community of believers to facilitate their spiritual growth and how insufficient they are in providing this fuel. They often ask themselves: how can we improve the existing pastoral care situation? How can church leaders be better equipped to assist their pastors on providing pastoral care? We thank God for bridging this gap with the “Living Word”. It has been shown to be an energizing tool and resource to pastors.

Students in the eyes of the instructor

In the past few years, different types of students were encountered in the classroom. Some of them were pastors, some were Christian leaders, some were seminary students, and there were also young adults who had just entered the workforce. They frequently have the following characteristics: a strong desire for learning, an interest in the dynamics of learning through an interactive small group, the need for more in-depth exposition of the bible, and a burden to see spiritual growth among brothers and sisters in their respective church communities.

With regard to the students’ learning capabilities, they are generally weak in interpreting and analyzing biblical passages; their skills and experience in leading small group bible studies are inadequate, and some of them have never had any exposure to providing pastoral care through small groups. One-way didactic teaching has been, by far, their primary mode of providing pastoral care. Members of the service teams come together mainly for ministry collaboration rather than to experience spiritual growth together.

From being unfamiliar to becoming highly devoted

With thorough understanding of the learning capabilities of the students, I could conduct targeted teaching more effectively. What happened quite often was that the majority of the students were unfamiliar with the “Living Word” in the beginning, but after they have had practical sessions of conducting bible studies in small groups, there would be noticeable improvement in their level of involvement and dedication. Upon course completion, many students expressed eagerness for future extension training. They became more than willing to start practicing what they had learned and to initiate the “Living Word” program in their own church settings. For example, a few students of a certain seminary joined the “Living Word” course because it was recommended to them by former graduates of “Living Word”. Upon course completion, these seminary students realized that “Living Word” is a practical and easily comprehensible program. They formed a small group among themselves to prolong the study momentum when they returned to the seminary. Some graduates started the “Living Word” program in their own church thereafter. We are indeed thankful to the Lord for what has been accomplished. Through the “Living Word” curriculum, the students have become better equipped in bible exposition and skills to lead small groups. Many other students could testify to having similar experiences. Their testimonies have invigorated us. We, as instructors, are reassured that our efforts are not in vain, and we praise God for what He has done.



Students are listening attentively to pastor Gan’s teaching during the “Living Word” lecture session.

A long path ahead

Looking into the future, I have a great deal of aspirations. I hope to improve on providing follow-up training (bible study, small group). Despite the constraints, I also wish to explore opportunities for visitations, for advocating the vision and mission of this ministry and for expanding the coverage of the training. At present, many churches have started implementing small group training; resources and materials are more abundant than before. From the perspective of continuity and in-depthness, “Living Word” is extremely fitting in fulfilling the needs of pastors in providing pastoral care and cultivating their team of coworkers because it gives pastoral care substance in its content and sustenance in its impact.



Pastor Gan (showing only his back) giving individual instructions to students.

We wish there would be more prayer partners for the “Living Word” ministry. We pray that God will strengthen and refine the instructors’ team, motivate more and more suitable

coworkers to dedicate themselves to the “Living Word” ministry. We also pray for God’s protection and providence. May there continue to be opportunities for the expansion of the ministry and bible teaching in the mainland!

May the Lord establish the work done by all the instructors, in whatever permissible circumstance, we strive to strengthen church leaders to become capable of teaching believers the accurate interpretation and application of the teaching of the bible. We sincerely invite you to support the “Living Word (training)”. In 2020, the fund needed is US\$90,000. Thank you!



Special Prayer Request: Pray for the Pandemic in China (Part of the Prayers)

Lord, please cleanse the land!

Pastor Tung in Hunan

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you!

Thank you for giving us daily protection and guidance. The lunar new year holidays are over, the beginning of a new year often denotes commencement of new challenges.

Lord, please cleanse the airports, the train stations, the hi-speed railways, the public bus terminals, the chartered bus terminals and the taxi cabs.

May You cleanse the air that surrounds all crowded places. Please protect the passengers on all vehicles against infection by the virus. May You reveal what Your mighty hands can do. Eliminate the virus speedily. Eradicate it completely. Let everyone be able to move around freely, including those who have been detained in certain Hubei cities. May the detention orders be lifted soon.

Lord, please watch over the Christian families in Hubei, see to it that they do not become infected by the virus. Despite the unfavourable circumstance, may they continue sharing the gospel of Your kingdom, bringing more souls back to You. We wish those who are now living under the imminent threat of death could realize that You are the true and living God. It is only through You can they be released from darkness and enter the light, overcome death and enter eternity. If anyone comes to You to confess their sins and repent, Your precious blood will cleanse all their sins allowing them to join You in heaven. You can save them even when they are in their final breaths, just like the criminal who was nailed to the cross beside Jesus. At that time, You said to him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." This is Your promise, it will never change.

May the people in Hubei, the most devastated region, see the grace of the Lord amid the disaster. May they follow You on this path of the cross which leads their spirits towards eternal life. Hallelujah, thanks and praises to the Lord.

Please listen to our prayers. We pray in Jesus' victorious name. Amen!

God is almighty

Pastor Zeng in Sichuan

Our Heavenly Father, Your children now come before you. We offer You our deepest thanks and praise for Your great mercy and love.

Our Heavenly Father! We know that we are full of weaknesses, limitations and ignorance.

Father! We have resisted and sinned against You, resulting in many unpleasant situations and incidents. You love us and so You remind us through these situations and incidents how we have harmed the good relationship between man and God, between man and man, and between man and nature. We cannot ourselves break out of this bondage of sin, spiritually, morally, or physically.

Our Heavenly Father! Thank you for reminding us through the pandemic of how limited and helpless we are. Man must come before You humbly, and submit to Your life-giving way before we can enjoy the life within Jesus Christ, Your only son.

We must openly confess that our ancestors, our nation, our countrymen, our family and ourselves have sinned against You. We have sinned because we do not recognize You as our father, we do not trust You and we do not fear you. We are seeing the consequence of our sins today. But God, you are our Heavenly Father and You are most merciful and loving.

Your children now pray to You. Please use Your almighty hand to cure our countrymen who have been infected by the novel coronavirus. You watch over and protect our healthcare staff against the virus. We also put our leaders and government officials in Your hands. Let them govern with integrity and justice, and see themselves as servants of the people. Let them uphold people's freedom. Put in them a heart to repent.

Father! We also thank you for using the "virus" (a bad thing) to teach us what to and not to eat, and what to and not to do. We understand that teachings in the Bible about what to and not to eat and what to and not to touch is a demonstration of Your love for us. Through the pandemic, we learn to treasure hygiene, our environment and our lives more.

Father! Please let people on this earth once again shoulder the responsibility to protect and maintain the land that You have so graciously given us.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray! Amen!

Lord, please look after us!

Pastor Tung in Hunan

We pray in the name of our Lord. Gracious and holy Heavenly Father, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praises to You.

Thank you, Lord, it is by Your graciousness that we could watch over one another. To be able to have an encounter with You every morning is such a blessing. We give our thanks to You. Please help us learn to pray for strength to stand firm in time of adversity. Remind us to pray in time of prosperity as well so that we will not brag about ourselves and become conceited. Teach us also to pray amid imminent danger so that we learn to rely upon You.

Lord, teach us to pray for the great magnitude of peoples of the world. At times of turbulence, we are aware that the day of Your return is near. The world is filled with violence, catastrophes are on the rise. Please remember individuals in Wuhan and everywhere else where the virus is causing diseases and spreading. Please stop this pandemic, heal everyone who has been infected. May Your hand be with the people You created, have mercy on China, save the nation.

Lord, in Psalm 91:7, You have given us this promise, "A thousand may fall at Your side, ten thousand at Your right hand, but it will not come near You." Your child hereby entrust the church and everyone who is standing on this platform as well as their families unto Your mighty hands. Whether we are at home or outside, we firmly believe that You will look after us, You will stop the pandemic, You will keep calamities away from us and from our families. Please be with us. Your children are praying in unison and we are not relying on ourselves, we are praying all these in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who surpasses all things. Emanuel! Amen!

Lord, we confess!

Pastor Zhang in Hainan

Dear heavenly father, we acknowledge Your sovereignty as creator of the earth. As humans, we have sinned by looting nature wantonly and slaughtering species out of greed, destroying the ecology. We confess our sins and repent before You. We also surrender ourselves to Your righteousness and power. You remain in control at this time when people are humiliated, suffering under the plague. Sin seems to have won but You are enthroned as the King! You will arrive and show Your love to the people, let people really know You. Heavenly father, we seek You!

Dear Jesus, You firmly said on the Cross, "Finished!" Yes, You have finished the redemption for humankind by dying in humiliation on the Cross! Although humans have committed huge sins, being born in sins, with our thoughts, words, deeds all driven by greed, selfish desires, ego and pride, You promised that You are righteous and faithful, and that if we confess our sins, You will forgive all our iniquities and mistakes. Lord, You once said there are lots of Your own people in the city! God, please listen to our plea, look at the many people belonging to You in the many cities; they have knelt down, crying out to You: "Lord, we beg for Your mercy, may You shower us with Your grace, cover this groaning piece of land with Your grace! Lord, we are crying out to You!"

Dear Holy Spirit, not bound by time and space, You always reign and work in all things. You transcend territory and time, and have never stopped in enlightening, moving, touching, working in people's hearts. When people are consumed with thoughts about themselves, missing Your whispers, You sigh for them; when people are immersed in sins, rebel and act as enemies against You, You let them reap the consequences of their deeds! But our hearts are towards You, Holy Spirit, may You melt stone hearts into soft hearts; may people cease being numb after this serious reprimand, be awakened and return to You. I can hear the prophets' call in ages past: "Return, faithless people."

Yes, the faithless children of God, return! Return to His arms; He will, He is willing to heal our wounds! He will show mercy, restore this land! God, You can, You are also willing! We look to You alone! Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning! Glory belongs to You! Power belongs to You! Hope comes from You! Salvation comes from You! We wait upon You alone! Please hear our cries. In the name of the Lord, Amen!

Lord, I beg You!

Pastor Liu in Tianjin

Lord of grace, please hear the cries of Your people:

In this plague caused by the novel coronavirus, all work and ministries have stopped. The whole world seems to have come to a halt amid grief and fear. This is a chance You have given Your people to reflect. We believe Your anger lasts only a moment, but Your favor lasts a lifetime, because You are the Lord who created the universe, You are the great and awesome God, our refuge and hope. In You are mercy and grace!

Please Lord! Help people see how fragile life is, know the master of life, and go through this time of plague peacefully. May the Lord help frontline medical workers, keep them from being infected and give them the strength, love and patience in treating and caring for those infected. May the Lord show grace and mercy to those infected, so they can be cured.

I beg You Lord! May You cleanse and use churches to spread the truth so more people will abandon sin, believe in You and receive salvation. May the Lord raise up servants to encourage, comfort, guide, bless and spread the gospel in various harvest fields. In this dangerous time, people are consumed by fear and anger, and only the Lord's love can comfort them and give them peace.

Please, Lord! Please help Your people, help them humble themselves, to repent, and return to You rather than focusing on the plague. May our Lord draw us near to You, help us concentrate on Your word and witness Your glory. May the Lord strengthen believers' confidence in You, help them believe that You are with us in whatever circumstances!

In Jesus Christ's name, Amen!

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## Other Prayers

### 1. The difficulty facing Christian Literature publishing

With the tight religious atmosphere in the mainland, Christian publications are a matter of concern. Aside from the year 2018 ban on online sales of the Bible, according to a preacher in the Northeast, “School textbooks introducing foreign literature have avoided religious terms such as God, Bible etc.”



As young people have fewer chances of coming into contact with Christian literature, may the Lord give wisdom to church leaders and congregations, help them to bear witness personally, flexibly and share the gospel with young people. May the Lord also open the doors for Christian publishing despite the constraints.

### 2. Protecting the environment in the business sector

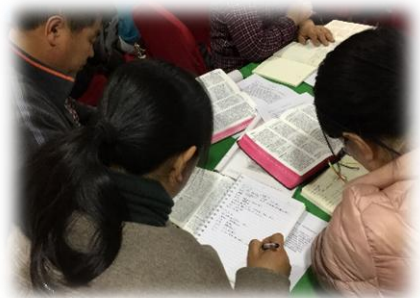


Complying with international trends, mainland manufacturers have paid more attention to using environmentally friendly materials. They have taken a good step forward though their concepts of environmental protection lags behind that of the West.

May the Lord lead the development of 4P enterprises, i.e. enterprises focusing on profit, people, planet and peace, and help mainland Christian businessmen infuse their work with Christian values.

### 3. Continuous tailor-made pastoral ministry

In spreading the gospel in the mainland, continuous tailor-made pastoral ministry is worthy of concern as it is critical for spiritual growth. And yet with a full itinerary everyday, mainland pastors may not be able to minister and cater to the specific spiritual needs of different believers continuously.



May the Lord lead pastors working individually to ministering in groups, as mentors for selected group leaders, equipping and encouraging the leaders to provide relevant pastoral care to believers at different spiritual stages.

#### 4. Food safety enhanced by IT



Across China, there are more than 500,000 schools and kindergartens, of which 380,000 are equipped with canteens. In a bid to ensure students' safety and enhance the standard of food safety control, the State Administration for Market Regulation has in recent years utilized modern IT technology to make more information is available online.

May the Lord bless the food safety monitoring work, so it can be continued and help raise food safety awareness among schools, parents and students.

~ 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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