

Each Fulfilling One's Own Duties

--Nurturing Parents Capable of Fostering Their Child's Growth

© Teacher Zhao
Instructor of Online Parenting Course

Foreword

Someone once said, "This is an era where the father is absent..."

Parents not only support the family financially, they also shoulder the duty of bringing up their child, having an immense impact on the child's life as a whole. How can parents strike a proper balance between these two roles? Many fathers often work at a place away from the family for a long period of time, playing a minimal role in raising their child. Do they know the role they should play? Indeed, the parents' role in the family has profound impact on how their child understands and perceives the differences between the two sexes.

Each Fulfilling One's Own Duties

The course on "Each Fulfilling One's Own Duties"¹ teaches not only the individual role of the mother and father, but also the joint responsibilities parents bear in a family. Apart from exceptional cases where a child is reared by a single parent, we encourage parents to bring up their child based on their own characteristics and complement each other in the process.

In this day and age, the role of the two genders is becoming more obscure than before. There are now few strict requirements on how the two genders should perform in terms of the way they dress, speak, behave, etc. When someone is dressed in a gender-neutral manner, would you be able to tell the person's gender? If parents can establish a clear model on how a particular gender should behave, it will help their child distinguish between the two genders and learn how to interact with and respect



Teacher Zhao focused on preparing the teaching materials for the online course: "Learning About Life 360 – Series on Parent Education".

the opposite sex.

On top of meeting the family's material needs, parents must also strive to create a loving and caring environment in the family, in which the child can feel safe and develop a good character. Couples not on good terms cannot create an ambience in the family conducive to the child's healthy spiritual growth as the child often observes closely their parents' behaviors. Parents must not only be sensitive on how their original family has impacted their upbringing, but also look critically at their own relationship with each other – whether it has withered and become functional only. If this is really the case, they should reestablish a loving relationship immediately and work together to rebuild a warm and happy family.

Weaknesses and shortcomings are part of human nature, and it is difficult for two people with different backgrounds to live and raise a family together! Some course participants said they have run into many problems in their family. As parents, we must be determined to humbly seek advice from the Bible and work hard towards becoming mature persons who can serve as respectable role models for our children!

Learning to be Parents Capable of Fostering Their Child's Growth

The demand for parenting courses in the mainland is keen. In light of the scanty resources, parents cherish every opportunity to learn. Sister Sunshine, the course coordinator, said, *“As resources to equip parents are acutely lacking in the mainland, course participants were most eager to learn. One participant came to the class the day after she gave birth to a child, while another went into labor the day immediately after she attended a class. I really admire their resolve to learn.”* I thank the Lord for such parents who attach utmost importance to their children's growth and spare no effort in bringing up their children!



Sister Sunshine, course coordinator, prepared guidelines on attending classes for participants so that lessons could be conducted smoothly.

Learning from the experience of the last course, for the course on “Each Fulfilling One's Own Duties” this time, we have strengthened our arrangement for small-group discussions which were scheduled right after the lecture. This did not only allow instructors and course coordinator to understand whether participants had properly grasped the course materials, but more importantly offered an opportunity to participants to share their own particular circumstances.

“Through the course, I have come to realize that the father and mother have their respective roles to play. Only through cooperating with each other can a healthy and harmonious family be established. Raising the child is the joint responsibility of parents.

Parents must play three roles effectively: first as a guardian, second as the family's manager and third as a manager of resources."

"I appreciate the instructor's teaching. We have learned that we should not do away with the father's role in the family, but that both the father and mother should be a source of love in driving the child's growth. Parents must become a faithful servant of as well as a good steward for the Lord! It is just so important to learn to be parents and how to bring up a child properly. I find myself lacking the knowledge in this respect. We need to attend more such classes and help other believer parents by sharing our knowledge with them. We must strive to become parents pleasing to the Lord and build a family blessed by the Lord!"

"I am particularly impressed by teachings on the father's role. The relationship between the couple can affect the child's physical and mental health. Likewise, how the father defines his role in the family, the church and the society is also vital. It is crucial that a balance be struck in these three aspects. The father should not just put all his efforts in serving the church while ignoring his family and his relationship with his wife and child. A good relationship between the couple will provide a suitable environment for the child's growth and the child will be able to feel God's bountiful love."

"During the period while I was studying in the course, I was angry with my husband but had no idea what drove me mad. In the class, I heard about the concept of 'love language' and suddenly realized that my anger stemmed from the fact that I had not received any love language from my husband. After I was made aware of this, my anger subsided. I understand that my husband and I differ in our attitude towards using love language. I need special loving moments and gifts of love, whereas he particularly dislikes such forms of expression. Now that I know how he expresses his love towards me, I no longer get mad at him, but rather bear his needs in my mind all the time."

Sharing from parents above shows that they are prepared to make changes to improve the couple's relationship and their role as parents. They also see clearly the importance of enhancing core relationships in a family. When family members can take up their respective roles and do their best to support and complement each other, they can please the Lord and put into practice the values of the Heavenly Kingdom in this world!

Striving Hard to Overcoming the Odds

Many mainland believer parents have no idea or lack confidence in establishing a harmonious family with Christ as its centre. Some have yet to see the importance of doing so. Two years ago, the instructors' team saw keen demand in this area, and focused their efforts in nurturing parents to hopefully help them taking up the responsibility of "starting children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

After the pandemic, brothers and sisters resumed a busy life in making ends meet, and some skipped classes because they had to work overtime. Even though they were determined to learn, circumstances might make it difficult for them to do so. Some parents dared not enroll in the course fearing that they lacked the requisite learning capability. To encourage more to join the course, we plan to host some one-off thematic seminars to stimulate parents' interest and make them understand that they should not evade their responsibility to bring up their children properly. We would encourage them to take the first step and learn gradually to become parents capable of fostering the growth of their child. Pray that the Lord will bless and lead us in our work!

¹ CCL started organizing the online course “Learning About Life 360 – Series on Parent Education” to teach parents how to groom their child in the family. After the first phase of learning about “Knowing Each Other”, we organized the second phase of the course “Each Fulfilling One’s Own Duties” from mid-May to early June to explore the relationship among different family members and their respective roles. Close to 40 participants from different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities attended the course online to study and have exchanges.

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# The Power of Writings:

## Strengthening Base, Rebuilding Family

© Zhang Shangen  
Book Gifting Team Member

In June, supporters of the Mainland Book Gifting Project were invited to attend a thanksgiving gathering to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Project. The Book Gifting team had the opportunity to share and discuss with several loyal supporters. Matthew Fung, Publisher (CCL Publishing House), recapped the amazing work the Lord had done throughout the years. In the discussion session, the attendees unanimously expressed their concern regarding the second-generation Christians.



Matthew Fung, Associate General Secretary (Publishing) shared with supporters the Book Gifting ministry in various parts of the mainland.

## Strengthening the base of second-generation Christians dedicated to ministry

One of the supporters asked, *“The evangelists in the book gifting photos look very young. How did the gospel become seeded and flourish in their hearts?”*

These young evangelists came from families where their grandfathers and parents volunteered as full-time leaders at the church. The diligence of their parents served as examples and deeply influenced the lives of these young people. There is a young graduate who comes from the Heiyi tribe (ethnic minority), he is in his twenties, and he is one of the few among his own tribe who can communicate in Putonghua. Despite being aware of all the challenges he might face, he still chose to return to his tribe to shepherd his own people. This is because he was deeply touched by the piety of his parents. A seminary teacher shared, *“When I was young, my parents often led gatherings at home. At that time, the church faced grave repression. We hid a Bible in the ceiling. We only took it out when we had gatherings and Bible studies. Believers also copied the Bible by hand.”* This is how his faith was nurtured and built up.

In the eighties, churches in China were given much more freedom. There appeared to be a sudden increase in the number of believers. As a matter of fact, this is the result of home-based shepherding during the past many years. In the nineties, as the living

standards in China continued to improve, the influence of parents on children on the contrary started diminishing. Contemporary Christians do not have a solid foundation in their faith, the church's greatest challenge is secularization. A Bible school teacher said, *"Secularization of the church makes Christian values appear obsolete. The spiritual community has to counteract much more social pressure. It is crucial for seminary students and evangelists to fix the anchor of their life and daily living on the Bible."*

Thomas Tang, General Secretary, shared, "Everyone has a time to come to pass, the pious grandparents and parents are no exception. No matter how transient and stringent the opportunities are, CCL would make use of them to share the best literary resources available with the mainland pastors so as to facilitate them in building up the respective spiritual communities they serve. A well-written piece of spiritual literature can be very influential, we trust that the Lord can use such materials to strengthen believers' lives.



The supporters and the Book Gifting team work together to pray for novice preachers and the Book Gifting ministry.

## The changing relationship of mainland pastors and second-generation Christians

Another supporter shared, *"Based on what I gathered from those whom I contacted, many mainland evangelists pay inadequate attention to their own family, so their families also need to be looked after."*

A second-generation individual of a mainland pastor's family expressed that he once resented the church very much because he felt the church had taken away his parents. The burden of mainland pastors is indeed very heavy. A newly graduated evangelist shares that she has to prepare over twenty sermons each month. In addition, she has to lead Bible studies, schedule visitations, conduct meetings, etc. On top of all these, in the eyes of believers, the image of a pastor is equivalent to perfection. So even though many pastors experience marriage and family problems, they dare not share them with anybody.

In recent years, when Mr. Tang attended graduation ceremonies of mainland seminaries, he sincerely shared with graduates the following important reminder, *"Your family is always your number one and most important ministry target."* On one occasion, a staff member who was servicing the Book Gifting team shared with me enthusiastically, *"My relationship with my children used to be terrible. I feel frustrated and helpless. Later on, I received the Book Gifting package and found a book called 'How To Be A Hero To Your Kids'. This book gives me*



Thomas Tang, General Secretary, shared how the Lord has led the Book Gifting team through many obstacles in the past decade and his own reflections on partnering with mainland seminaries.

*immensely great help. I followed the instructions outlined in the book and learned to get along with my children. I am extremely thankful that my relationship with my children has since then gradually improved and restored.”*

For the past two years, CCL has actively collaborated with various units to publish books on family and marriage for mainland leaders. “Integral Pre-marital Counseling” and “Love as We First Met” are two examples. They help pastor couples rebuild the spiritual life within the communal framework of their marriage. These two sets of materials are written by Chinese pastor authors. Following the guidance of the materials, readers are expected to study, share, discuss and practice what they learn together to prevent and repair the cracks in the family and marital relationship.

Like two opposite ends of an oscillating pendulum, some second-generation Christians are extremely dedicated to ministry like their parents while some are extremely hostile towards the church. Both extremes manifest explicitly within mainland pastors’ realities and point to the importance of giving family precedence in shepherding. A Book Gifting project supporter asked, *“In recent years, the newly revised Regulation on Religious Affairs in the mainland forbid evangelizing non-adults. How should this be tackled?”* Isn’t this an even clearer indication pointing to the importance of re-establishing family worships? In the past, children’s education was entrusted to the school system while the building up of their faith was entrusted to the church. Now it is time for parents to take up this essential role. They should become their children’s own mentors in life.

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## **Please support the Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project 2021:**

Funds needed: USD 307,693

Quantity of books to be gifted: 4,000 pastoral packs (given to 4,000 graduates in 50 seminaries, Bible schools and training centers. Each graduate will receive a pastoral pack containing around 20 books and materials on a mini personal learning platform. The total quantity of books gifted will be 80,000.)

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Prayers

1. Important lessons for parents

As sexual roles become increasingly ambiguous in today's world, parents play a big role in setting clear models so children can have a clear understanding of the characteristics of and differences between both sexes. Yet involving two people with different upbringing, parenting is full of difficulties.



May the Lord give mercy to parents who are under much pressure from supporting their family financially and bringing up their kids. May the Lord help them continue to grow through support and learning, and become role models for their children.

2. Ministering to one's own tribe



Ministering to ethnic minority churches that have their own unique culture, language and living habits is full of challenges, and there is a shortage of pastors for them. One coping strategy is to equip ethnic minority believers to serve their own tribes. A church worker in a church in the southwest shares, "The first step towards turning ethnic minority believers into leaders is to strengthen their Biblical knowledge, help them

have a correct understanding of the scripture."

May the Lord strengthen the work of the pastors, help ethnic minority believers be properly equipped with a proper understanding of the Bible; may He lead the believers to develop the heart for spiritual growth and be willing to meet their own tribes' evangelical needs.

3. Guiding believers with love and patience

Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion are deeply-rooted in central southern China. And the faith of believers and seekers was affected because of the lack of physical gatherings during the pandemic. A preacher in central southern China shared: "Some new believers and seekers turned to other religions, particularly folk religion, in search of spiritual comfort. After the pandemic, they have yet to return to their Heavenly Father. I feel much pain about it. We have not had any religious debate



with them but just chatted with them during continuous visits. Thank the Lord! They have gradually relinquished folk beliefs, and read the Bible with us together.”

May the Lord bless pastors with strength and patience, help them guide lost sheep back to the Heavenly Father and develop a strong foundation for faith.

4. The new normal of flexible employment



Several months ago, Premier Li Keqiang mentioned the tough employment situation and that the government would increase the number of job posts, and create flexible employment channels to help ease unemployment. The ‘flexibly employed population’ in China now numbers 200 million. Flexible employment refers to non-full time, temporary and flexible work.

May the Lord lead people at work to adjust to the new normal of working style, from being fixed at one working place to working at different venues. May the Lord give wisdom to working Christians, bless them with the chance to share their testimony and the gospel with the different co-workers they meet.

~ THE END ~

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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