

## **Ten Years of Leader Grooming with Book Gifting** — The First Decade in the Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project

© Matthew Fung  
Associate General Secretary (Publishing) / Publisher (CCL Publishing House)



With a vision received from the Lord, CCL drew up the “10-Year Leadership Development Project” in 2011 to support church leaders in the mainland and Hong Kong. Thanks to the Lord’s grace, the “Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project” was launched in 2012. During the past ten years, we have served over 31,000 leaders with 657,000 volumes of books given out in provinces and cities all over the country. During this period, we have witnessed how brothers and sisters enthusiastically responded to God’s calling, God’s abundant provisions of teaching materials to seminaries in various parts of the nation and God’s amazing miracles in our publication ministry!



Thomas Tang, CCL’s General Secretary, launched the Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project in 2012.

## Sharing the Software – Growing Together with Seminaries in the Past Decade

Since 2000, the hardware and infrastructure facilities in seminaries in the mainland have grown in leaps and bounds, just like the rapid development of the high speed rail linking cities at different levels, facilitating the flow of people and goods. Likewise, online platforms and mobile phone apps have thrived. In both coastal cities and remote regions, online shopping and entertainment have become the latest fads. This is particularly so during the pandemic. Indeed, the hardware of the church has been enhanced considerably; churches and seminaries are being refurbished and redeveloped. New gathering points have even been set up in new development areas. However, in our various visits and exchanges with church leaders and seminary workers, we learn that little has been done to improve pastors' salaries, teaching resources and training opportunities. One example is that while specific requirements have been set on the number of collections in a seminary's library, improvement is much needed in this area, owing to the limited number of devotional publications published and a shortage of funds.



The supply of spiritual resources in mainland seminaries' libraries has yet to be improved.

This being the case, students and graduates of seminaries and Bible schools have even less access to resources. Looking back at the past ten years, through the book gifting project, we have been in contact with 76 seminaries located in 30 of the total 31 provincial-level administrative regions<sup>1</sup>. Based on the mainland's classification, these Bible colleges include seminaries at the state level, Bible schools at the provincial level and Bible training centres at the regional level, all of which have a formal education system with the requisite teachers, campus and teaching curriculum. Some 30,000 graduates who have undergone one to four years of training were given pastoral book packs which have become a major resource in support of their ministries. This is particularly precious as opportunities for further study are very limited. In recent years, the number of literatures in the book pack has grown from a dozen or so to over 20, consisting of a wide range of practical resources covering subjects like exegesis, sermon delivery, apologetics, discipleship training, marriage, parenting and so on. These have been carefully selected to support frontline pastoring to meet with the changing needs of the society and the church.

## Novice Pastors Dedicating Themselves – Challenges in Growing to be a Leader

Among the 30,000 or so graduates who have connected with book gifting, some are ethnic minorities and some are second-generation Christians, while others are willing to leave their workplace to respond to God's call or dedicating themselves to God after their loved ones

have passed away. Their life stories may differ, but all of them center around Jesus' love and calling! Although they have studied for two to four years in different seminaries, they are still novices when it comes to shepherding. In face of the challenges on all sides, they have to adjust to their new capacity and environment. Through our visits over the years, we have learned that they are worried about the following: shepherding hundreds and thousands of believers, the arduous and never-ending ministry duties, taking on the new capacity as a pastor, earning a meagre salary if one is serving a rural or village church as well as challenges in pastoring believers in the workplace in large cities. Young female pastors in the Southwestern and remote regions also have to bear with the pressure coming from their parents' eager wish for them to get married. Such challenges are seldom faced by pastors overseas.



May the Lord use the publication resources to build the life of young pastors who can then pastor their flocks with a faith grounded in Biblical teaching.



The book gifting team visited seminaries to have exchanges with graduates.

Since the backgrounds, training and the areas the graduates serve differ, how can we provide support through the publication resources? First, visiting the church and seminaries to talk to frontline pastors, college principals, teachers and students are of utmost importance. Then, we also try to understand the difficulties in shepherding through observation, listening and on-site exchanges. During the graduation period, it is important to visit various seminaries to give the pastoral book packs to graduates in person and share with them how to best use such resources as well. Moreover, whenever new books are published in the

mainland in recent years, including the series on discipleship training, pre-marital counselling and building the spiritual relationship of a couple, apart from converting the text into simplified Chinese characters, we also make special efforts during the editorial process to share with mainland pastors and readers the key points in the materials, in the hope that they can apply the Word in their daily life.



The mainland editor was dedicated to the work of publishing "Integral Premarital Counselling".

## Witnessing Miracles – Constraints and Breakthroughs in the Publication Ministry

It is most preferable to understand the needs of the graduates and frontline pastors and tailor-make resources for them. However, the mainland's religious policy in the past ten

years has not been conducive to publishing, and very few publications on church ministry are found in the mainland market. While not many new books are published, re-printing of existing publications are also subject to many limitations. Moreover, retail outlets and online shops have been declining in number, making it difficult to buy devotional literature online and in physical stores. Those in the remote regions have even less access to such materials.

Thank the Lord, we have witnessed how God made rivers in a desert! Amid all the limitations, God provided us with different publication partners in the mainland. Since 2013, we have successfully published 20 CCL titles, covering topics including exegesis and sermon delivery, discipleship training, youngsters' growth, pre-marital counselling and leadership development. This is a miracle! In recent years, the number of titles in the book gifting pack increased from 10 to over 20, and the newly published titles have become the core component in the pack. Thank the Lord for His abundant grace! Indeed, the book pack is not merely a gift, but also a small library of spiritual literature, which is being brought into the church through the graduates to benefit also church leaders and the congregation.

## **Supporting Our Ministry with Prayers and Forging Ahead with Caution**

Over the years, our team has arranged for tens of thousands of books to be given to seminary graduates, which have become useful resources for the graduates as they start their ministry. We feel most grateful and joyful, as we experience God's wonderful guidance year after year. Be it waiting for approval for book reprinting or meeting the tight schedule for logistics arrangements to tie in with the graduation date, we have prayed for God's help and proceed with our work carefully. Every step along the journey is most memorable. The team has worked hard to seize every opportunity to send books which serve as spiritual food for pastors, and we tread with fear for the Lord and great caution. Looking to the future, challenges in the book gifting ministry are still expected, and we pray to God for His mercy and for Him to continue to use these resources to support the graduates!

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-06/15/content\\_18253.htm](http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-06/15/content_18253.htm)  
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Support Us

## **Render a fragrance offering by smashing the perfume jars —**

You and I are together on the Book Gifting path

© Sheung En  
Book Gifting team member

### **Perfume jars as vessels to serve**

Ever since mainland churches reopened in the 1980s, the number of believers has continued to increase. The rise was especially rapid between the late 1990s to 2000 during which mainland churches experienced vibrant growth and as a result the number of believers outweighed the shepherding capability. Up until now, in the Northwestern region, one minister still needs to shepherd 2500 believers. In other regions, ministers are also dedicating all their strength. Figuratively, they are smashing their perfume jars to serve!

The number of trained ministers is unable to keep up with the pace of growth of the number of believers. At the same time, the types and availability of shepherding resources are extremely inadequate. Since 2012, the Lord has been making use of CCL's book gifting ministry to supply a total of 8,200 books to graduates in 6 mainland seminaries. More than 600 new ministers have received support and become better equipped to meet challenges in the field. We believe that the Lord's grace is always sufficient. With donation support of the spiritual community, the book gifting team takes every step in awe and with a trembling heart. We could not compare ourselves to the woman in the New Testament who smashed her priceless jar of perfume for Jesus, nor could we compare ourselves to the mainland ministers who are carrying a heavy load every step of their way. What we have been doing is far from smashing but simply opening the lid of the jar and entrusting the outcome of our action to the Lord.

### **From opening to smashing**

When the number of graduates rose from 900 in the second year to 3,000 in the fourth year, the number of books gifted rose rapidly from 10,000 to more than 40,000. The operating cost of the book gifting ministry also increased to over 1 million annually. Yet we are seeing numerous individuals who are willing to smash their jars and copiously infuse resources into the ministry in response to the crying needs of graduates throughout the mainland.

In recent years, religious regulations continue to tighten, yet CCL still witnesses the release of new publications and reprinting of published materials as well as the fervent and escalating donation support coming from the spiritual community. Although the economy is severely hampered by the pandemic, brothers and sisters relentlessly offer their donations. The efforts enable timely delivering of precious reprinted books to the hands of graduates who are working hard to learn either online or in-person. Donations even increased by over 30% in comparison to that before the pandemic! What we are testifying is numerous individuals who smashed their perfume jars to turn the gifting books into fragrance offerings dedicated to our Lord.



To be able to publish and reprint books in the mainland is never easy nowadays. Every single book is a testimony of grace.

## Perfume jars bring blessings

This year, the graduates continue to strive hard to respond to their spiritual calls. We also witness the work of our Lord through our publications to convey His message amid difficult circumstance. We sincerely invite your participation herewith. Please support the ministry by allowing the perfumes in your jars to infuse the books that are reaching the hands of mainland seminary students.

**2021 赠书  
应用小点子**

《情如初见》  
作者屈博士分享

《合神心意》系列  
牧者心得分享

We thank the Lord that you are our comrades on this path! In the post-pandemic era, we are making careful adjustments in our implementation strategies. We have invited authors to produce video clips and sent them to the graduates to facilitate their understanding and utilization of the gifting books. **As resources are scarce, the team takes every step by faith. We hope this new endeavour can become a blessing to the mainland graduates. By the end of October 2021, the “Mainland Seminary Graduate Book Gifting Project” has raised nearly USD 160,256. We are still USD 147,435 short.**

Filming and sending video clips to graduates is a new endeavour this year. We thank the Lord that initial responses received from seminary teachers are positive!

You are sincerely invited to support this ministry by prayers and donations. Thank you!

# Prayers

## 1. The needs of church workers

China has benefitted economically from its infrastructural developments, transportation systems, IT development etc. May God bless Christian workers and entrepreneurs with financial capability so they can support the needs of frontline preachers financially and through prayers.



May God leads Christian workers and entrepreneurs to provide funds for church refurbishment or redevelopment, without depriving pastors of a decent pay, or to support believers receiving full-time theological seminary training. May the Lord give church leaders wisdom in resource allocation to ensure that the needs of the workers of Christ are met.

## 2. Equipping pastors



Amid the changing religious environment in the mainland, the chances for serving pastors to be equipped are also affected. In some places, due to their churches' inability to pay them salaries, some pastors need to grow crops or work outside to support their living. There is little chance and time for them to be equipped. Even if training sessions were held, they would be held in an intensive manner during the

nonagricultural period.

May the Lord provide spiritual nourishment for the pastors. May the training sessions for pastors be held smoothly, and the organisers be given wisdom and a pure heart.

## 3. Teach management to ethnic minority believers

May the Lord help ethnic minority churches revitalize their management culture. Ethnic minority congregations put much emphasis on relations but are weak in setting strategies and executing management decisions. Pastors need group support in implementing ministries and many ministries are stalled due to a lack of systems.



The education level of ethnic minority believers is generally not high. May the Lord bless pastors with wisdom and their management team, help them learn about management and driving ministries for the healthy long-term development of their church. May God lead them, help them remove the habit of relying on personal relations and be willing to adopt objective management principles in handling, following up and reviewing the direction of ministries.

#### 4. People's livelihood affected by soaring coal prices



The restrictions on electricity supply in the mainland has deeply affected churches and residents in remote regions, especially in winter. A preacher at a church in the Northeastern shares: "The restrictions are tied to soaring coal prices. Coal price has skyrocketed to RMB 2000 per ton, doubling that of last year. Our churches have not bought anymore because they are too expensive. At each Sunday service, we only burn them

for a while to keep warm."

Fuel is part of people's basic needs during winter time. May the Lord keep an eye on churches and residents in remote regions, and give wisdom to the government to resolve the issue of rising coal prices.

~ 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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