

The Best-Loved Items in Book Gifting

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Ministry Team

When the book-gifting team visits seminaries in different provinces in China, do you know which book the pastors most frequently mentioned when talking about Book Gifting?

Answer 1: “Be Series”¹

Interestingly, based on our records, the “Be Series” is no longer included in the Book Gifting packages delivered to seminary graduates since 2018, yet they remain extremely popular among pastors in China. I remember when I visited a Bible school in the **Southwestern region** in 2023, one of the pastors shared, *“Twenty years ago, after I graduated from the Bible school, I traveled across the country to serve, and I brought this set of Bible study books with me. Not only has the content of this set of books helped me in preparing sermons and bible studies for over 10 years, but its pocket-sized design makes it convenient to carry around, so I really appreciate the thoughtfulness of the CCL co-workers. (Jokingly he continues) Without this set of books, I would not be where I am today!”* Today he is one of the leaders of the Bible school. He expressed his wish that the new generation of pastors could continue to have such a wonderful tool. The writer visited the **Northern region** in the same year, including paying a visit to a training center in the **Central South region** last month, the same request was heard there.



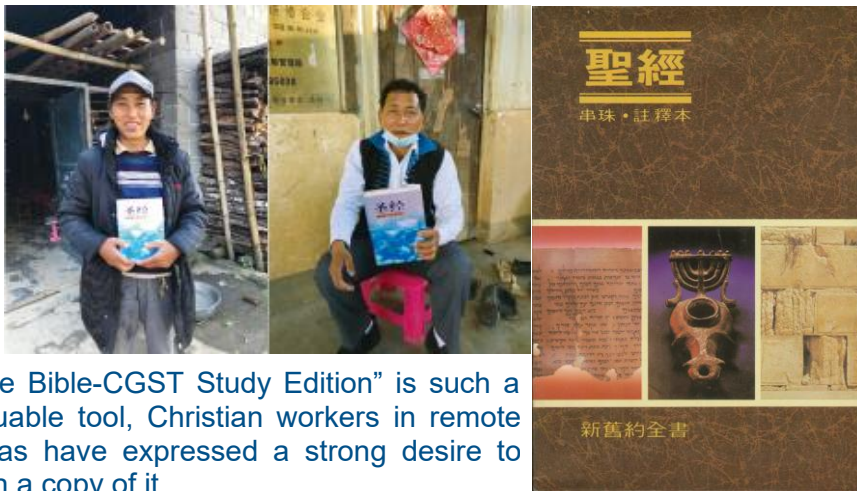
The graduates of a school in the Northern region were very excited when the book “Be Series—Be Faithful” was once again included in the Book-Gifting packages they received.

The “Be Series” is in the library collections of seminaries in China. It has always been regarded as important reference books providing resources for preaching and bible study.

¹ “Be Series” is an exegesis on the Old and New Testaments written by Reverend Warren W. Wiersbe.

Answer 2: "The Bible-CGST Study Edition"²

This study Bible was co-authored in the 1980s by CCL and the China Graduate School of Theology. It was officially published in China in 1995 through the China Christian Council. Initially, the Bible was printed in traditional Chinese, and the first 20,000 copies were sold out in less than three months. In the following two years, a total of 220,000 copies were printed, which set a record for CCC & TSPM at that time. In 2000, a Revised Edition in Simplified Script was published. After more than 20 years, this edition is still very popular as it contains a lot of supplementary information useful for bible study, and it is a valuable reference for pastors in China. It also contains inspiring questions useful for personal reflection and group discussion. Frankly speaking, this study Bible has been shown to benefit pastors, both in their own spiritual lives and in shepherding their flocks. To this day, many training centers, especially those in remote areas, have expressed the wish that CCL would offer this study Bible to frontline workers.



"The Bible-CGST Study Edition" is such a valuable tool, Christian workers in remote areas have expressed a strong desire to own a copy of it.

This is the first edition of "The Bible-CGST Study Edition"; it contains a lot of supplementary information useful for bible study.

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Today, China seems to be changing rapidly in all aspects, but when it comes to spiritual resources, they are still inadequate. Pastors indicate that supplying bible study materials to churches in China is still of top priority. This is also the first step towards nurturing Christian leaders in China!

Additional remark: In response to the request, we have added back the "Be Series" into our Book Gifting packages beginning in 2024. As for "The Bible-CGST Study Edition", fundraising is still in progress. We pray that the Lord will meet the needs of His workers!

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<sup>2</sup> "The Bible-CGST Study Edition" (Revised Edition in Simplified Script)

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2025 Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project

| | Target | Already received the Book Gifting Packages [as of early July] |
|----------------------|--------|---|
| Number of seminaries | 50 | 37 (74%) |
| Number of graduates | 3000 | 1,790 (60%) |

Feature Column

Spiritual Exercises

© Otto Lui
Associate General Secretary (Ministry)

Despite it being our first meeting, I hit it off with Teacher Jin instantly, and we talked about nearly everything. He is eager to promote spiritual exercises in seminaries and churches. **What does the term “spiritual exercises” mean to pastors in China?**

Teacher Jin said that when he heard of spiritual exercises in the past, he thought it was a way to do daily devotion. Churches in China emphasize compliance with fundamental traditions such as bible study, prayer, fasting, ministry, and evangelism, while on the personal level, suffering, sacrificing self-interest, and even renunciation of material needs are stressed. The practice of “All things in common” as described in Acts is considered the ideal model. There is a group known as the “Family of Jesus”, whose members donate all their personal assets to the church. Watchman Nee’s hymn, “*Let Me Love and Not Be Respected*,” best represents this tradition. The first four verses of the hymn go like this:

*“Let me love and not be respected;
Let me serve and not be rewarded;
Let me labor and not be remembered;
Let me suffer and not be regarded.”*

Spiritual Exercises = Training to Endure More Suffering?

Under the tradition described above, everything that one does to meet “self” interest is considered unspiritual. Putting on a more fashionable outfit is a sign of loving the world and not loving God. Having emotional issues is an indication of having spiritual problems; sometimes, the affected individual can even be seen as being disturbed by the evil spirits. The only solution for all problems is reading the Bible and praying. If the problems still persist, then the involved person must be lacking faith. Suffering is the best training for faith, and the most extreme thinking is that there is nothing bad but only good about suffering. Nowadays, some evangelists jokingly say that, in addition to the three solas of the Protestant Reformation, there is a fourth sola in the Chinese church, the sola of suffering, and that the more one suffers, the more spiritual one becomes! Therefore, the training of spiritual exercises is to make a person more capable of enduring suffering.

The mentality described above is not wrong; rather, it is a matter of focus and intensity. Nevertheless, some rural and older churches continue to uphold such a mentality. As a young co-worker who had studied overseas, though Teacher Jin does not quite agree with how “older generation” pastors see spirituality, he is reluctant to openly query their views in the seminary. At the same time, he is worried that young believers would go to the other extreme, that is, the tendency to admire material abundance and even the theology of success, believing that the more successful individuals are more blessed by God, and thus they are more spiritual. Since the reform and opening up of China, which started decades ago, the young generations are brought up under more affluent conditions and tend to be more materialistic. The mass media promote the pursuit of a more luxurious lifestyle, making it a norm for everyone to go after.

When there is danger, there is opportunity!

Teacher Jin sees both dangers and opportunities in the current situation. Materialism is affecting the new generations, and the church is not exempt. Spiritual exercises, including meditation on God's word, personal and group retreats, meditation on Christ's suffering, self-examination, etc., are all useful remedies to counteract materialism. In recent years, urban churches have become more open to spiritual exercises, even to the point of being feverish. This is the best time to adjust the pendulum so that it does not swing to either extreme.

In the midst of our excited conversation, Teacher Jin turned on his cell phone and asked me if I had ever used an English spirituality app. He was a bit surprised when I said I had never heard of it. Then we continued the discussion on which apps are better. We both agree that the perception and practice of spiritual exercises may change as time goes on, but the fact that spiritual exercises help Christians know the Heavenly Father more deeply and integrate what they believe into their daily lives is very important and will not change over time.

Contemporary Church leaders in China can be grouped into the following generations
(Simple Classification)

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>First Generation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They started serving at the church in China when it was reopened and was in need of a major overhaul • They became Christians before the Cultural Revolution • They received basic training (provided by western mission organizations) • At the beginning of China's reform and opening up, they led the church, tried their best to spread the gospel and plant churches • Now these leaders have either retired or rested in their heavenly home | <p><u>Second generation (over 60 years old)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They grew up during the Cultural Revolution, had minimal education, and attended churches in rural areas • They started serving at the church in the 1980's • They learned how to preach and nurture the congregation through apprenticeship with older pastors • They witnessed the rapid growth of the church • Most of them have now retired |
| <p><u>Third generation (41-60 years old)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were born in the 1970's and grew up in the city • Most of them have a college degree, some even have a Master of Divinity degree or higher • They have difficulty adapting to the traditional (apprenticeship) mode of training • They are often busy juggling work and academic advancement • They are the current church leaders | <p><u>Fourth generation (30-40 years old)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of them were born in the 1990s and are mostly the only child in the family • Many of them have travelled or lived abroad or have exposure to foreign churches and access to theological information through social media • They have no experience facing major political campaigns against the church of any kind • They have a strong desire for role models and peer support |



We sincerely invite you

To support...

Do you hear the calling from afar?

This is a message from a training center in the Northeastern region: *“Teacher, thank you for your arranging book gifting for those of us from afar. We particularly would hope to receive ‘The Bible-CGST Study Edition’¹. I heard that it was published by CCL. Thank you!”*

Special Appeal!

Supporting 1,000 frontline workers
Priority given to those in remote regions
Providing a copy of “The Bible-CGST Study Edition”

Funds needed: USD 16,000
(USD 16 per copy,
including the delivery cost)



The person in charge drove to the foot of the mountain to bring a box of “The Bible-CGST Study Edition” up the mountain to distribute to the ethnic minority workers there. These workers are located in such a remote area that logistics can only be delivered to the transfer station at the foot of the mountain.

Note:

1. Please make a donation and indicate “The Bible-CGST Study Edition”. Thank you!
2. If the fundraising goal is exceeded, additional copies of “The Bible-CGST Study Edition” will be donated to pastors in China.

¹ “The Bible-CGST Study Edition” (Revised Edition in Simplified Script)

~ The above is part of the content of PFC issue387, if you would like to read the full newsletter, please contact us at pfc@ccl.org.hk, thank you! ~

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