

A Teacher for Life

© Ministry Team

In 2005, the Ministry Team instructor paid a visit to the Northern region in China and met Pastor Jiang, who was still studying theology at the time. Despite being a young woman under 20, Pastor Jiang's passion and ability in biblical teaching were noticeable in the eyes of the instructor.

By God's grace, Pastor Jiang was then given training, and she became a first-generation "Living Word" teacher. She started using the "Living Word Bible Teaching Series" to equip pastors and Christian leaders in China.



The wisdom of discerning what can and cannot be changed

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in recent years has triggered considerable discussion among pastors in China. Is it possible to use AI to teach the Bible?

Pastor Jiang once harboured reservations about using AI. However, during an online course on biblical geography/historical background, her preconception changed when she saw how the Hong Kong instructor made use of AI to facilitate teaching. Then she knew that it was actually more crucial to possess the wisdom of discernment in this AI era. Therefore, Pastor Jiang started encouraging her "Living Word" students to use AI as a tool for gathering basic background information when preparing for each lesson. In class, she uses their pre-study materials to teach students how to filter and select accurate and relevant information. This approach enables them to have more time for discussing the core message of the text, its contemporary relevance, and practical application in daily life.

Thanks to the guidance of God, Pastor Jiang (one on the left) was nurtured into the first-generation of "Living Word" teacher in China.

In the "Living Word" class sessions, AI can be a useful tool to build up the knowledge base; this is especially the case for the younger generation. However, the infusion of the teacher's

warm and human touch into the instruction and the genuine exchange between teacher and student remain irreplaceable elements. Pastor Jiang firmly upholds a principle that she inherited from her mentor (Ministry Team instructor): *“Biblical truth remains unchanged, but teaching methods can evolve.”*

Teach, show, listen and affirm

For 20 years, the Ministry Team instructor has walked alongside Pastor Jiang, offering her indispensable companionship and guidance. Pastor Jiang shared a recent experience, *“In recent months, there has been disagreement among co-workers in my church, plunging me into the anguish of choosing between ‘compassion and tolerance’ and ‘decisive administrative action’. I have had several sleepless nights. I called my mentor, and he set aside his work to listen to me patiently. As I shared my thoughts, he reaffirmed my decision. Though I was under immense pressure at the time, his confirmation felt like a shot of adrenaline. He also offered guidance, giving me the courage to handle the disagreement. After that phone call, I attended a Bible study on the Holy Land’s historical context. The scriptures we read seemed to speak directly to me, giving me profound enlightenment and inspiration.”*

Over the past two decades, Pastor Jiang has been deeply convinced that teaching the “Living Word” is not merely about imparting knowledge or sharing life experiences; rather, it is a journey with waves of heart-warming and profound encounters where one life touches another.



The Sandwiched Generation (Part 1)

© Otto Lui
Associate General Secretary (Ministry)

I met Zhang during a theology course. He was around thirty and belonged to a new generation of church leaders in China whom the congregation particularly valued and encouraged to pursue further education and training. Within the church, there are older pastors and members younger than him. Zhang primarily oversees college ministry, often finding himself “caught” between these two generations. What is his view on dynamics among the three generations? Below, Zhang shares his observations and reflections from three perspectives.

An obedient generation

“Perhaps influenced by tradition, the older generation tends to be more submissive. They regard elders as spiritual parents and accept their leadership style. While this preserves tradition, it also confers a reluctance to embrace new ideas or enable young people to vocalize their individual ideas. The hymn ‘Five in the Morning, China’ asks for rising early for prayer. Such level of spirituality is no easy feat!”

“Christians of the previous generation sought stability. They strived to live responsibly; the needs of the church as a whole should outweigh personal interests and preferences, and such a mentality is considered to be living out the essence of Christ’s love. Indeed, these Christians gave everything to the church. Their dedication often motivates us, but at times it also creates pressure, a sense of never being on a par with them in terms of diligence and loyalty could emerge among the younger generation.”

Individual effort vs team work

“Christians of the previous generation placed greater emphasis on individual capability. They diligently pursued spiritual growth; they also demonstrated a strong thirst for knowledge. Consequently, many were eager to receive training, pursue further education, and return with one or two academic degrees. The younger generation also recognizes the importance of learning, but since we live in a digital age, interesting and useful information is often readily available. Thus, we see teamwork as being relatively more important. By collaborating with teams specialized in different areas, we can achieve greater impact and influence.”

“In the eyes of the previous generation, we and the even younger generation are more individualistic. However, if they truly listen to what the young generation wants to pursue, their goals are not necessarily ‘deviant’ endeavors. After all, we have access to knowledge from many different countries and cultures, so there can be greater flexibility and freedom in our expression of personal emotions and pursuit of spiritual growth. The young generation’s loyalty may manifest in their willingness to initiate innovative ministries for the church. They need to be given opportunities to experiment, and we are happy to walk alongside these young individuals.”

Appropriate concern vs excessive care

“They truly act like parents, sometimes even more so than our own parents in caring for us. Our generation is able to understand the older generation’s caring is out of goodwill. But the younger generation finds it unbearable. For instance, they care about our marriage and family life just like parents would. We get that they are anxious, but excessive concern can become disturbing. We empathize with the older generation, yet we must also encourage them to accept the different ways of thinking of the young generation. It is very challenging to handle such issues; we all need to keep learning.”

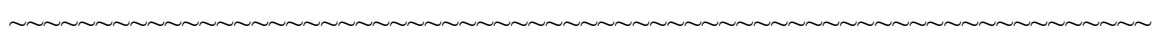
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Though Zhang does not speak for all young church leaders, he is certainly expressing the views of some young people. In our conversation, it is clear that Zhang does not resent the older generation; rather, he appreciates their hard work and worries about their physical and mental well-being. Yet he yearns to see the seniors’ willingness to “let go” and give younger people more space to grow.

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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...

**“Living Word” teachers in China passing on the mission –
your prayer and support**

“Living Word” teachers (Pastor Jiang and Pastor He) not only teach Biblical knowledge, but more importantly, provide follow-up personal care after classes – including individual visits and in-depth support. Such meticulous follow-up work is the most valuable and precious aspect in building an individual’s life!

We invite you to support the **“Peer Program”**, which includes:

1. Provide Bible teaching and study sessions

- Approximately 35 small group discussions per month **[Funding: USD 26,925]**
- 15 small group follow-up trips per year **[Funding: USD 38,462]**

2. Provide Bible teaching resources

- Publish 1 set of the “Living Word Bible Teaching Series” (1,500 copies)
[Funding: USD 32,052]
- Produce 12 Bible teaching videos (Mandarin | Simplified) **[Funding: USD 8,975]**

Please support "Leadership Development Ministry," thank you!



~ The above is part of the content of PFC issue392, if you would like to read the full newsletter, please contact us at pfc@ccl.org.hk, thank you! ~

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