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Is Business as Mission Honest?

Stephen Bailey

By now the mission community is almost in danger of making a mantra out of the 10/40 Window concept (Johnstone 1998). But it has served to push us to realign resources and personnel to reach the remaining unreached people in our world. The 10/40 Window idea is well known and while it has its critics few argue with the figures that tell us that if the remaining unevangelized people in our world are to hear the gospel Christians will have to enter nations that restrict religious activity. Many of the people that still have not heard the gospel live in countries that are religiously confident with long traditions in Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. They are generally poor nations (see Myers 2003). They are nations that do not allow foreign Christians into their countries for the purpose of propagating what they consider to be a foreign religion and a disruptive western way of thinking. Some of us refer to these nations as "creative access nations" or CANs.

My wife and I spent six years attempting to enter a CAN that actively persecuted local Christians for their faith. Finally we were allowed to enter the country as foreign investors in a handicraft company that was established with some local business people who were not believers. Some fourteen years later that company is still operating today. It is completely run by local people and makes a small profit most years. After four years of involvement in the handicraft company we entered into a second joint venture with local investors. This company worked with farmers who produced

silk as a cottage industry with the purpose of developing local silk products and establishing markets to sell them to increase the incomes of village farmers. The primary means of accomplishing these goals was the establishment of a for-profit silk company. As a tentmaker in mission my primary motivation for involvement was a religious conviction that the people of this nation needed to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In hindsight I understand how grossly underprepared I was for this strategy of business as mission. But experience is a wonderful teacher, and so while we never got it perfect we did learn a great deal and made a number of midstream adjustments. Today I believe our efforts were fruitful and honoring to God and the local people. Nevertheless, doing business as mission is a highly complex path that requires us to consider carefully what we are doing. In this article I reflect on my efforts at mission through our silk company in light of dilemma faced in the areas of ethical integrity. I want to address the question, "Is business as mission honest?"

The ethical controversy regarding doing mission through the platform of a local business is a familiar one to tentmakers at this point. Even Time Magazine (Biema 2004) has discussed the issue in the public forum. The basic question is whether it is ethical to present yourself to a local government as a businessperson without disclosing your missionary

agenda when the government is clearly opposed to the propagation of Christian faith by foreigners. Rather than address this at the abstract level I want to reflect on my personal experience in dealing with this dilemma.

First, it was very clear to the government that I was a Christian and that I worked for a Christian non-government organization (NGO). While they never asked me in an official meeting if I was Christian they did ask indirectly and they directly asked me if I was working for the CIA. Of course the Party line in the government was that the US government was using Christian missionaries to stir up political resistance. Their case study was Poland where the Catholic Church had played a key role in bringing the communist led government to its knees. I was asked directly by government people later and in an informal context if I was a Christian. I made a decision early in this game to always be upfront and sincere with the government. I always communicated directly that I was a Christian and that Christian people had sent me to try to contribute to the development of their nation. The government kept tabs on all foreign Christians and occasionally they would call us in to let us know that we were crossing lines that might threaten the renewal of our visas.

I think the reality is that when a CAN allows tentmakers into their country they do so with "eyes wide open." The idea that these governments are some how ignorant

to the Christian faith of the people to whom they grant business, diplomatic, and expert status visas, is nonsense. Thinking otherwise only reveals that we see this issue with a worldview that most of these governments do not share. In most CANs governments regularly say things for political (and sometimes geo-political) reasons and then act differently. The practice of looking the other way when something violates policy but benefits the nation is a common occurrence.

Most tentmakers, on the other hand, consider the issue with a very black and white understanding of law and ethics. They assume that if the government knows you are a Christian with a religious agenda they will enforce the law and throw you out. I suggest that these governments throw people out of their countries more often for reasons related to honor and respect than they do because tentmakers violate their laws. Law plays a different role in these societies than it does in the west. Authority does not rest in the abstract legal system but is directly placed in the hands of real people. These societies remain steeped in a tradition of personal power and are only beginning to adjust to the idea of abstract concepts of law.

This begs the question, "Why did they tolerate our presence in the country even when they did not completely feel confident about why I was there and were certainly opposed to my desire to share the gospel with their people?" There were

I believe several reasons.

First, the government became convinced that we were worth having in the country. The business we started was developing an ancient local skill making it productive for the nation and for villagers who needed to generate income. Since most of the buyers of the silk were foreign people or businesses, badly needed foreign currency was brought into the country. By investing in this sector we had demonstrated our sincere desire to assist the nation. Most foreign investors would not consider handicrafts or silk because it was so underdeveloped that making it a profitable venture simply required too much investment. The risks from a business perspective were simply too high for most business people.

We were serious about developing the silk industry in the country and serious about contributing to the prosperity of the nation because we were Christians. The ethic of the Kingdom required us to be concerned for our neighbors, risky venture or not. Acting on this Christian impulse taught us a more holistic sense of Christian vocation. We became thoroughly convinced that our work in the company was an act of worship to God and of witness to the people. Our work with silk farmers was our ministry. It was every bit as important as anything we said. Any identity conflict that we initially felt evaporated in the context of doing our work. So many tentmakers struggle with their identity. Are they a

businessperson or are they a missionary? Which should take priority? How should they allocate their time?

The answer to the ethical questions regarding business as mission is found first of all in our ability to understand what a Christian vocation is all about. Whatever Christians do they do to the glory of God. A double minded person will not only be frustrated in a tentmaking role but fail the ethical test. A double minded person sees a silk company as just a platform for ministry. They do it because they have to and not as unto the Lord and in service to others. Tentmakers who do not understand Christian vocation almost always have an identity crisis when serving in so-called secular roles. They have something to hide. But when we embrace the idea of a Christian vocation we are free to see ourselves as Christian businesspeople. We are in mission because all Christians are to be in mission and to live by the principles of the Kingdom that require Jesus' disciples to care about their neighbors.



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Abstract from the book "*Strategies Lead to Success*"

Chapter 5: "*The Strategy of Tent-making*", written by Cyrus Lam

Abstracted and translated
by editorial team

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Involvement in missions is not just the privilege of full time missionaries. Some important spiritual giants in the New Testament, for example, Luke the physician, and Paul who supported himself and the expenses of the missionary group were tentmakers. At present most of the missionary troops that go to China and Muslim areas go as teachers, businessmen, professors and scientists.

Tentmaking is using a profession or position to cross over area or culture to fulfill the Lord's Great Commission. At present tent-making is one of the most effective strategies in mission. For those moved to do tent-making, there are 73 missions agencies that have tent-making departments. Tent-makers can participate in the following ways:

(1) Tent-making in open or developing countries in cooperation with full time missionaries.

(2) Tent-making in closed countries (At present one-third of the world's population live in countries that forbid church activities. 69 countries, mostly Moslem, include 54 Restricted Access Nations (RAN) of which the largest is led by Saudi Arabia and 15 Creative Access Nations (CAN).

(3) Short-term tent-making: using a short time, e.g. a few weeks, to help in the mission fields using their own professions. These people forsake vacations to participate in teams that go to the mission fields with missionaries. This is meaningful and very effective.

The Advantages Of Tent-making Include :

(1) ***Easy to participate***

It is easier to explain to your family about tent-making.

(2) ***Multiply manpower***

Tent-makers can fill a lot of spots. To urgent needs of the fields and tired missionaries they are most welcome. Tent-makers raise the percentage of the use of human resources to 1/20 or 1/10 or even

higher.

(3) ***Open closed doors***

In over ten thousand areas with unreached groups, especially Muslim countries, missionaries are not welcome. However they do welcome professionals to help them to develop communities, economies, technologies, academics and more.

(4) ***Increase channels***

Each profession is needed by the mission fields. Everyone can get involved in the fields through his or her own channel.

(5) ***Bridge preparation***

Tentmakers can greatly help to bridge between the gospel and the community as they contact and witness widely and deeply. Their witnessing in life and work is more easily accepted.

(6) ***Economical***

If professionals are partly or fully self-supported, that is helpful to churches and mission agencies, and they do not have to wait until money is raised.

(7) ***Maintain profession***

Using their professions to go to mission fields would help them to maintain and even gain their professional expertise.

(8) ***Making an impact***

It is easy for professionals to reach out to local professionals.

(9) ***Fulfills role in missions***

More and more missiologists feel that missions not only fulfills spiritual needs but also sociological and developing needs.

The Problems Of Tentmaking Missions Include:

(1) ***Insufficient training***

Tentmakers tend to lack theological or biblical training. A way to remedy this probably is to encourage tentmakers to get some theological training early.

(2) ***Living standard too high***

Tentmakers are used to their living standard, but at least they should be highly aware and sensitive to the living standard of the locals.

(3) ***Difficult in fund raising***

Tentmakers have to raise funds, and it tends to be harder than for those who serve full time. If tentmakers are going to sensitive countries and cannot be open and publicize, they may find raising funds difficult.

(4) ***Dual responsibilities***

Tentmakers are workers who need to have good witness while at their jobs.

(5) ***Lack of fellowship***

Tentmakers mostly aim for closed countries, so their teams cannot be big. They have to work alone, be far from their teammates, or cannot see one another often because of government pressure.

(6) ***Unseen results***

Especially in Muslim or tyrannical countries. Follow-ups are in secret; personal work is difficult.

(7) ***Short-term mentality***

Tentmakers tend toward short-term commitments of one or two years. The desire to return home and pressure from all directions may shorten the missionary lives of tent-makers.

Tentmaking: A Viable Way to Mission

Philip Chu

In the New Testament, we can find that most of the disciples had "secular" jobs. Peter was a fisherman, and Paul was a tentmaker. The term tentmaking is derived from the ministry pattern of the Apostle Paul and his two coworkers, Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, in which they supported themselves with their professions as tentmakers and preached the gospel at the same time. Following this pattern, people who support themselves through their secular professions and carry out evangelism at the same time are generally called tentmakers nowadays.

But wasn't the Apostle Paul also a missionary? What, then, is the difference between a missionary and a tentmaker?

Ruth E. Siemens once made a comparison between tentmakers and traditional missionaries. According to her, *"tentmakers are mission-motivated Christians who support themselves in secular work as they do cross-cultural evangelism on the job and in free time... [Their] main work is evangelism on the job. Their secular positions (or study programs if they are students) are not an*

inconvenience that robs time from their main goal of evangelism, but are the necessary God-given contexts in which the evangelism takes place." In comparison, traditional missionaries *"receive donor support channeled through a mission agency or church. They are perceived as religious workers even if they use skills like nursing or teaching because they work under the auspices of Christian institutions."*¹ Traditional missionary and tentmaker are both biblical models for missions. Siemens is right in distinguishing tentmakers from missionaries. But are tentmakers effective in the mission field?

One of the often cited advantages of tentmaking is that tentmakers who are professional experts can gain access into creative access countries because tentmakers with backgrounds sought by the target mission field can be strategically placed to maximize the evangelistic effort. This is very true. In these mission fields, tentmakers can carry out personal witnessing and pre-evangelistic activities in their free times. They soften the soil and pave the path for traditional missionaries to conduct mission ministry when the

time is right. In countries where traditional missionaries are welcome, on the other hand, tentmakers can collaborate with traditional missionaries by using their gifts in specialized ministries, such as providing social and medical services to the host country or discipleship to national churches. In the mission field, tentmakers also have the advantage of meeting people of various professional and social backgrounds because people have the tendency to relate to others with similar background or interest to their own.

Beside access, tentmakers contribute toward holistic mission. Nowadays, holistic mission is a commonly appreciated approach through which missionaries, both traditional and tentmaker, meet people's spiritual needs as well as other felt needs. While traditional missionaries with adequate theological and pastoral care training excel in addressing spiritual needs, not all of them are equipped to meet needs in the non-spiritual aspects. To this regard, tentmakers with a proper skill set can come in and address the needs handily. For example, a traditional missionary with no medical training

may come up short in tending to the mission field's need in healing physical illness, whereas a physician tentmaker can jump in and quickly attend to the people. Because of their background and training, tentmakers have the specialties and more resources to deal with the physical and emotional needs that fall into the primary focus of their professions. Therefore, a team of carefully put together traditional missionaries and tentmakers is an ideal tool to accomplish holistic missions.

While all these sound great and rosy, one of the strong concerns for tentmaking as a mission model is that tentmakers might have insufficient time for ministry apart from work. A typical example is the hi-tech industry where an average work week can top 60 to 70 hours. *"Most people who have counseled tentmakers agree that lack of time is their biggest limitation, and that squares with my experience,"* reports a tentmaker who works in a Muslim country. *"We had time for making friends and for doing what might be called pre-evangelism. We also had time to get the language and the culture. But it is extremely difficult to do church planting, unless you sacrifice your family life."*² The reality of tentmaking, at least for certain types of tentmakers, is that their job takes more of their time than they would like. Since the job pays their salary, however, they have to put in such a great amount of time in working that it leaves little time for ministry. As a result, their working situation restricts their witnessing mainly at their

workplace if they are working for non-Christians. This is a real life dilemma for tentmakers. Its solution lies on a tentmaker's answer to a simple question: What is the primary objective of going abroad - work or ministry? Once the priority is sorted out, then actions must be taken to reduce the work hours. For example, a tentmaker can willingly work as a consultant or a self-employed entrepreneur instead of a full time employee so as to allow more time for ministry. To take this approach one step further, tentmaking consultants or entrepreneurs in a similar trade can form a network to refer business to each other. Since the objective of tentmakers is to make enough money to sustain the business and at the same time carry out ministry, such an arrangement can provide a solution for the dilemma. After all, objective is the key to differentiate tentmakers and ordinary expatriates.

A lot of today's Christians are professionals. They are specialized in a wide spectrum of trades such as engineers, scientists, businessmen and women, social workers, physicians, agriculturists, athletes, just to name a few. The beauty is that most of these specialties are sought and welcome by today's mission fields. When Christian professionals respond to the Lord's call to serve while staying in their professions, tentmaking is an ideal means for them to join in the mission force.

There is more than one way to Rome. If Rome is a mission field,

tentmaking is certainly a viable way to get there.

Endnotes:

1. Siemens, Ruth E. *Why Did Paul Make Tents?* 1996, updated on 24 September 2002. Available from <http://www.globalopps.org>.
2. "Tentmaking: The Road to People's Hearts," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 28:1 (January 1991).



Philip Chu currently serves as the Director of Development for China Professional Services (CPS). He was an engineer by training and had worked in several capacities in Hong Kong and Silicon Valley throughout his 30-year tenure in the electronic industry. In 2003, he quitted his job and joined CPS in Hong Kong as a response to the Lord's calling for full time ministry. At CPS, he is responsible for developing service and ministry opportunities in China and mobilizing Christians back home in the North America to take part through professional services.

English Speaking Meeting in CCA Annual Meeting

Darren L. Lim

On July 12-15, 2005, the Chinese Churches Association held their annual conference, but this year's conference was different. Since joining the C&MA and CCA in 1996, there has never been a session set aside for those co-workers serving our English-speaking ministries. In the past, certain Chinese-speaking brothers or sisters were asked to sit next to our English-speaking co-workers and translate the meeting for them. Because of this there was not much representation from our English-speaking co-workers. But for the first time since I joined the Chinese Churches Association, there were meetings designed specifically for those ministering to our English-speaking congregation co-workers. The meeting was attended by at least 20 co-workers serving throughout the United States.

Dr. John L. Ng, Professor at Alliance Theological Seminary, who pastored English-speaking congregations in our Chinese Churches in America for many years, led the first and second sessions. He shared about issues of leadership in the Chinese Church in North America - how our spiritual life, our family life and our church life needs to be balanced. He also shared some of his personal

successes and failures in church ministry. Some issues that were raised in our discussions were what we need to keep our life balanced for the Kingdom, how we can work with our Chinese-speaking leaders and help our English-speaking leaders work with the Chinese-speaking leaders for His glory.

In our third session, Rev. John Young, missionary to Spain, shared with us how the Lord led him and his family to Spain. He also challenged us of the need for native English-speaking Christians to come and help teach English in Spain. From our time together, many wanted to see if there was a possibility for our English-speaking congregations to join together and go to Spain on a short-term missions adventure. There was a kindred spirit in wanting to get involved for the work of worldwide missions.

Rev. Victor Quon, who has done youth ministry for many years and now is a church planter at the Haven, shared with those attending the fourth session how we can help Chinese cultured parents work with American cultured youth. A number

of issues were raised such as generational gap and how spiritual life is expressed differently within each generation.

The final session was a break-out session on how the meetings went and what they would like to see in the future. In general, those who attended were very positive and desired to return next year.

At the end of our conference, we are taking the feedback from those who attended our meetings and assimilating it into the planning of the 2006 meeting. Speakers are being secured, and scheduling is being arranged. Our hope and prayer is that more of our English-speaking co-workers will attend and participate because we believe it will be a wonderful opportunity to connect with those serving the English congregations of our Chinese Churches in America. Who knows what will happen next?

(Rev. Darren L. Lim, Th.D, Associate Pastor of English-speaking Congregation at Christ Community Chinese Alliance Church, Hayward, California)

So I Have Come To Be A Godly Imitator

Rumin Zhang (First Year Student)

"To learn theology is to study God" (the deeper meaning for "to study God" in the original Chinese word play is "to be an imitator of God," specifically, an imitator of Christ our Lord). What Rev. Philip Teng said ten years ago still rings clearly in my ear. Rev. Teng was the founding director of the Chinese Bi-cultural & Pastoral Ministries Program at Alliance Theological Seminary (ATS). During his tenure at ATS, he taught extension theological courses at my church in central New Jersey. I had the good fortune of chauffeuring Rev. and Mrs. Teng two or three times after the classes and listening to his personal wit and instructions. We even had dinner together in a Chinese restaurant off the expressway. I remember that Rev. Teng, who was born in Shandong, China, took a special liking to pan-fried dumplings.

It never occurred to me then that ten years later I, at the age of 40, would become a new seminary student enrolled in ATS for part time study while working full time to support my family and still taking up a good load of church ministry. Thus my family of five has four students, one each in elementary, middle, high school and

seminary. Confucius once said a man attaining 40 rises above any confusion. But what really motivates and calls me to begin theological training for future full time ministries? Being middle-aged is a trying time abounding with risks and perils. Elder Huang of my church once remarked in a sermon that middle-aged people have largely lost their hopes. How true that is! The dreams after dreams of our childhood give way to harsh reality in our adulthood. We walk the usual path of life by going through schooling, finding jobs, getting married and raising children. Looking back, we lose the courage to reminisce about our years of emboldened dreams. Looking ahead, we are mindful of a life of solitude during the empty-nest stage after our children leave home, and we may be dreadful of old age when assisted living is no fun to smile about.

What is it that is worth our living and dying for then?

The faith proclamation and practice of the Apostle Paul is resonating ever more strongly in my heart over the years. "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us

dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." (Romans 14:7-8) "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself to me. (Galatians 2:10) "Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:20b-21) "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him." (Philippians 3:8-9a) "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 3:13-14)

Before death, Paul assessed his life with satisfaction and hope of glory. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown

of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day ν and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

I have been deeply attracted by the life of Paul and the lives of countless spiritual giants that walked before me. I am awestruck by the biblical revelation of the beautiful future for the new humanity in the new heaven and new earth. I challenge myself time and again. Am I willing to finish a life well worth its years? Will the Lord commend me upon my return by saying "good and faithful servant, come and share your Master's happiness"?

My forty years of life have been crowned with God's abundant grace. Even before I was born, the Lord protected my lot of fortune. He miraculously protected my mother from death by drowning, the evil practice of infanticide for girls at birth in old China. While my mother was widowed with three young children after her husband's untimely death, my father was unjustly imprisoned for nine years, losing his wife and daughter. Two broken hearts were later united, providing the chance for me and my brother to come in this world. I escaped death on many occasions due to severe sickness. I barely turned down the toll call of death after drowning in a pond to unconsciousness. Without question, God has looked after me all the way through.

Yet I was a prideful sinner that rejected God. After my first visit to a

Chinese church while a new graduate student in Buffalo, NY, I discourteously vented my arrogance toward God by declaring to a Christian friend who gave me a ride home: I'd rather go to Hell. But God patiently sent his many messengers to me and opened my mind's eyes. My wife and I became children of God in 1987. Salvation in Christ also saved my rocky marriage (as a result of my hot temper and frequent quarrels) from disintegration. I am indeed a stick saved out of fire. All is owing to God's grace.

Over the 18 years since conversion, the Lord has continually molded me to be more humble and compassionate, to serve Him and man. The Lord also gave me the spiritual gifts of teaching and evangelism, making me a fisher of man. The Lord has placed the burden of global missions in my heart, sending me on short-term mission trips to a number of countries so that I may pay the gospel debt to my fellow countrymen. During a coworkers retreat in February 2004, God further instilled in my heart the vision of reaching the least-reached people groups. Church pastors and elders and my wife have encouraged me to pursue seminary training. After careful study and prayer, I decided to apply to ATS, thanks to the biblical faith of C&MA, the closeness of its location, the well balanced and conveniently scheduled curriculum, the good quality of the faculty, and the unique program of Chinese bi-cultural and pastoral ministries.

Thus, with the laptop computer, a gift from my parent-in-laws, I have come to ATS to study God, that is, to be an imitator of Christ our Lord.



Work In Progress

Rong Hua Chen
(Translated by translation team)

The Christian life is like a painting being painted by a master artist. Looking back with hindsight I can see God's brushstrokes shaping and forming me. I immigrated with my family in 1983 at the age of six. The life I lived was very typical of an immigrant Chinese family. My parents worked in a restaurant and were not involved with my life. Everything changed when I entered into high school. In my youthful rebellion, I joined a gang called the Flying Dragons in Chinatown. In my youthfulness and immaturity, all I thought of was being "cool." My life was a mess when I reached 16. I had dropped out of school and put all my efforts into the gang life.

When I reached 19 years old, I was simply tired of my lifestyle and decided to leave the gang life. I did not realize it at that time, but it was God's grace that enabled me to leave the gang without any complications. After leaving the gang, my brother and I decided to start an import and export company. But, after a year the business failed. While I was pondering what to do with my life, I decided to take up my father's offer and work in the family's restaurant business.

I was invited to a fellowship meeting at Chinese Evangel Mission Church. I was not really much of a church person, but at the request of a friend I decided to give it a try. Many of the fellowship members were intimidated by me and were afraid to approach me. I did not know why I stayed. But, the fellowship meetings were beginning to reveal many questions about my life. One day while the counselor was closing up our small group meetings, he asked everyone to pray. When he asked what I would like to pray for, I told him, "I am not a Christian, so I do not believe in prayer." We had a long discussion, and he shared with me the gospel. I struggled much with what he said. For many nights I was unable to sleep.

After many sleepless nights, I decide to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior on July 28, 1997. After asking God for forgiveness, I felt the burdens of sin and failure lifted off my shoulders. Not long after my salvation, I was convicted to set my life straight. I went on to obtain my GED and was accepted into St. John's University. I wanted a normal life like everyone else: graduate from

college and work a 9-5 job. But, God had other plans for me

I felt the Lord's calling at camp in 1998. It was the first time I was serving our Lord. I was a staff on the kitchen team. It was the only thing I felt I was capable in; after all I was working as a part-time cook at my father's restaurant. I did not want to be a part of the small groups because I felt my knowledge of scripture would be a hindrance in sharing the gospel. After 3 days of intense physical labor, I had enough time to join the Easter Sunday Morning Service. It was at this service where I received the Lord's calling into full-time ministry. I remember the speaker asking all those who had accepted Christ to stand up. At that moment, time seemed to have stood still. I heard a voice saying to me, "This is what it means to serve me; come and follow me." As I drove home from camp, all that occupied my mind was becoming a pastor.

This desire plagued me entirely; all I could think was becoming a pastor. I finally decide to approach my pastor about how I felt. I remember my pastor telling me that I was probably on a "spiritual high." If

it is the Lord's calling I should spend some time praying over it. He told me that after a year of faithfully praying, if I still had the strong desire to enter into ministry then I should go and follow it. From that day on I started to pray about my calling into full-time ministry.

The time I spent in prayer was not easy. I began my first semester at St. John's University with much hesitation. Fears of not being able to keep up with other students haunted me; I was a high dropout and had not attended school for over 5 years. A crisis arose in my relationship with my girlfriend at the time. I was hoping for a resolution for my problems: my calling and my relationship. I was hoping to "kill two birds with one stone." In my immaturity of faith, I prayed a "golden fleece" prayer. I said to God, "If she breaks up with me then I know that that it is your confirmation to my calling." The very next week God answered my immature prayer and my girlfriend ended our relationship. God used this crisis to help me to take a step of faith and follow the calling.

I then officially applied at Nyack College to start my training for full-time ministry. Many doubts started to rise after I made my decision. My parents were very upset when they heard the news. My Father was so upset that he did not speak to me for a year; for that whole year, I was dead and non-existent in his eyes. It was a very difficult time; I remember crying many times in my prayers

about the situation. God confirmed my calling through the situation. Every obstacle that rose up, God removed them. I was financially cut off by my parents, with no means of paying for school, but God removed the hurdle by providing for me through caring brothers and sisters from my home church. By my senior year, my father began to accept that I was going to become a pastor; he even came to my graduation. My parents now are actually proud of me and no longer are ashamed to tell my relatives that I am a pastor. I praise God for removing every obstacle that rose up.

I graduated from Nyack College in May of 2002. I remember walking up to receive my diploma, and saying to God, "I will go wherever you send me." My experience at Nyack College helped me to lay three key foundations for my life. The first is being a man who has an intimate relationship with God (Acts 13:22). The second is being a man who will faithfully submit and complete God's calling for my life (Acts 13:36). The third is to lead God's people with skillful hands and integrity of heart (Psalm 78:72).

My original plan was to enter Alliance Theological Seminary right after graduation, but God had other plans. Three month after my graduation, I began my first pastorate at The Church of Grace to Fujianese in Chinatown. My task was not a simple one, to start an English ministry. By God's grace the ministry was able to grow. After about a year, I realized that I need to return to school. I started

to take classes as a part-time student at Alliance Theological Seminary in January of 2004.

My prayer before entering ATS was to be able to find a mentor. My first encounter with Mei-Fong was a blessed one. I shared with Mei-Fong how I been praying for a mentor since I started at CGF. I was connected to a mentor; Dr. John Ng's mentorship has been a blessed one. My time spent so far at ATS has been an eye opener. At Nyack College, I learned much in how to form a heart of integrity. My training at ATS has taught me to lead and minister with skillful hands.

Being an English Pastor in a Chinese Church has shown me much in the OBC/ABC conflict. The Chinese Studies Program has helped me in being more open-minded to my OBC counterparts. It has taught me that it is not always about right or wrong, but more about right and left. I have come to realize that the forms of communication are different between OBC's and ABC's. It has allowed me to look at my OBC counterpart through cross-cultural lens. I encourage all ARC/ABC's who have been called to the Chinese Church to come to the Chinese Studies Program; it will enrich you and your ministry.

Looking with hindsight, I can see that each hurdle and crisis was simply God's way of adding another brushstroke to my life. Each hardship and hurdle was God's way of forming

and shaping me. Looking to the road ahead, I realize that I am far from being completed by God; that I am still a work in progress. I know that my calling as a pastor is clear because there is nothing else that I want to do except being what God has called me to be; a pastor.



Blessings From Above

Jun Ren (Third Year Student)

Before I left my country I had hardly heard of Jesus Christ. I just remember that when I attended university in TienJian, my English teachers came from America. From their introductions of Thanksgiving and Christmas, I heard for the first time. In 1992 I began to work in Xiamin. I felt empty after zeal for country was aborted in the student movement of 1989. I also experienced the ups and downs of society through the government and the business world. As a result, I was tainted in the melting pot of society.

After I got to America in 1997, I became troubled, malicious and self-condemnatory. I was a loner and did not associate with Christians who cared about me. When I met a Christian couple from Taiwan, I became the badminton partner of the husband. He cared for me and counseled me. In the winter of 1998 he brought me to the Gospel Camp of Eastern U.S. During the camp the love of Christ moved me greatly, encouraging me to receive Jesus as my savior and Lord. I was baptized in 1999 in Rutgers Community Church in NY. In the autumn of 2000 God showed me clearly that I still have a lot

of hurts and shackles. As a result I earnestly asked the Lord to heal and release me. In the spring of 2001 I was filled with the spirit in a meeting. I made an overseas call to my father to tell him the gospel, leading him to Christ. Two months later he went to be with the Lord. It happened suddenly, so for 40 days I forewent dinners; fasting led to cleansing. In the summer of 2001 I developed the habit of quiet time and was helped greatly by my American co-workers who led a Bible study and Jucky Pullinger (author of a book about drug addicts) who came to preach in N.Y. Both asked me why I would not go back to China to evangelize. I felt I had not prepared and I wouldn't know what to preach. In February 2002 my company had cutbacks, and I returned to school. Two days before school I started I was notified by the university that I got a scholarship.

In September 2002 I went to school fulltime and also took a course at Alliance Theological Seminary. Before that I had worked over one year but was also unemployed over one year and had little savings. I considered studying God's word precious, so I used my savings to

study theology. In my fellowship a brother was laid off. God moved me to pray with him often, sharing with him how God led me after I had been laid off, passing those days with him. Later he found a new job and let me stay with him when I had financial hardship. Truly God works all things together for those who love Him (Rom 8:28). In September of 2003 God wonderfully provided for me to study theology full time to equip myself. In January of 2004 God led my present wife to my fellowship. We had become acquainted in a wedding banquet when the bride arranged that we sit together. Twice over two years couples intentionally invited us to have special meetings at their houses. Even though I could not go on both times because my car had broken down, we grew together by serving the Lord in the church. Later I found out she is also a student at my seminary. In January of this year we were married. At the end of the year our daughter will be born. She is called Mercy to remember God's mercy and love.

I myself experienced the pain of sin and have been saved and healed. How I wish to share with others the fathom of Christ's love (Eph 3:18) so people may really know Him, (Eph 1:17), to rely on Him to live victoriously, and to have His abundant life (John 10:10). May God lead me as I follow His steps, love Him, and serve Him all my life.



Winterim 2006

An intensive class "Mission Outreach in the Chinese Church" was taught by our adjunct professor Dr. Cyrus Lam, an Executor Director of GO International, from January 9-13, 2006. Dr. Lam has been involved in missions for more than thirty years. His rich experience and in depth insights into the mission work among the Chinese worldwide widens the scope of the horizons and burden for missions among the students.



NEWS

Dedication Camp "LIFE AND DEDICATION"

From June 8-10, 2006

*at **ATS***

*a life-changing experience
an opportunity to draw close to God, to seek His will*

A three day/two night Dedication Camp "LIFE AND DEDICATION"

This camp is especially designed for those who are seeking God's will in serving Him or who are struggling with God's calling. Messages and workshops will be spoken by the professors of the seminary and experienced pastors. Spiritual guidance will also be provided.



For more information, please contact the Chinese Studies Program

Student Life



A student couple Jane Cheng and June Ren are blessed with a daughter on November 22, 2005. Her name is Mercy.

Alumni Update

New Ministry

James Chang (May 2005) moved to Cleveland, Ohio and joined the staff of Cleveland Chinese Christian Church in January of 2006.

Sam Chi Lau (2003) started to serve as an interim pastor for a year at the Greater Boston Chinese Alliance Church, MA in January of 2006, after the previous pastor of the church resigned for a health problem.

Ordination

Jeremiah Kong (2002)'s ordination celebration was held in Overseas Chinese Mission, NY on October 1, 2005. Jeremiah has been serving the Overseas Chinese Mission for three years.



Sui Foo Liaw (2003) after serving in the New Life Chinese Alliance Church, NY for two years, will be ordained on April 29.

New Born Baby

Mary Joy Leung (1999) gave birth to a son, named Hananiah, after being married a year to Samuel So.

Courses Offered

Rockland Campus

Worship in the Chinese Church (3 credits)

Instructor: Dr. John Ng

Time: January 17-April 25, Tuesday, 1:15pm-4:30pm

Theological and Cultural Issues in the Chinese Church (3 credits)

Instructor: Dr. Paul Siu

Time: January 18-April 26, Wednesday, 9:00am-12:15pm

Pastoral Counseling and Care for Chinese Church (2 credits)

Instructor: Dr. Abraham Poon

Time: May 1-5, Monday to Friday, 9:00am-4:30pm

Editorial Advisor: *Dr. Philip Teng*

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Rev. Michael Wu, Rev. TongSu Liu*

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