More than three hundred years before Jesus was born, a Greek philosopher named Diogenes walked the streets of Athens at high noon carrying a lantern. He said he was searching for an honest man, whom he never found.

We’ve all heard this story, of course, and because it’s so familiar, we’ve grown accustomed to its peculiarities. It’s a story of a philosopher who believed that light was something special in the universe, that it could penetrate all kinds of vile things, but never become polluted by them. So special was light that even the rays from a lantern in the middle of the day could pierce the eye and lay bare the truth in human souls.

In the Bible the image of light is also special. Visions of angels, or God, or Christ are often associated with light.

*His face was as the appearance of lightning,*  
*his eyes like flaming torches* (Dan. 10:6).

*His glory covered the heavens ....*  
*His brightness was like the light* (Hab. 3:3, 4).
His eyes were like a flame of fire ....
And his face was like the sun shining in full strength
(Rev. 1:14, 16).

One thing about these pictures is that when God looks upon us, there is no hiding from the truth. The searching eyes of the Eternal will know everything there is to know about our souls. And unlike the dim rays emanating from Diogenes’ lamp, God’s brightness is like the sun. It illuminates every darkened corner, making visible even our most protected secrets.

The searching eyes of the Eternal will know everything there is to know about our souls.

Now I suppose for many of us this is not the most pleasant news, that God’s light will one day flood the universe and make public our every thought, word, and deed. I readily admit that I’m not eager to hear my entire life “shouted from the rooftops” (Luke 12:3). Paul might have looked forward to the coming judgment with joyous expectation in his heart (“In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,” 2 Tim. 4:8), but for most of us—if the truth be told—we wonder how much light our lives can stand. After all, we haven’t been whipped, stoned, chained, and imprisoned for our faith the way Paul suffered for his faith.

But there is good news. The image of light in the Bible is not just about judgment. It’s about a wonderful God that provides light for people who otherwise would have been lost in darkness. In our modern world we sometimes forget what it was like before electricity, when people rose with the sun, went to bed with the sun, and rarely ventured out after dark. It was only after the gas lamps of the 1800s and the incandescent light bulbs of the 1900s that we moved from blackened streets to the brilliance of Broadway lights.

Today, it’s hard to envisage a world without the convenience of modern lighting. We’re so used to walking into a darkened room, and with the flick of a finger, turning night into day. Of course, somewhere in the back of our minds, we know how unpleasant things could be if the light that we take for granted was suddenly ripped away. I remember hearing about a man who was exploring an abandoned copper mine, but in a moment of carelessness, he dropped his flashlight, and it smashed on the stony floor. For many days he wandered through miles of pitch black tunnels trying to find a way out. He never did and eventually died of thirst. A sad story, but one that reminds us of how important light can be.

We see something similar in Isaiah 59:10: “We look for light but all is darkness; for the light of dawn, but we walk in deep gloom. We grope like blind men along a wall, feeling our way like men without eyes.” But in this darkness, there’s hope. There’s hope for every one of us, because even in our most dire circumstances, we are not alone. We can cry out to God for help, and he will hear us. He will shed a light on our paths.
because he is a God of light. From Genesis to Revelation, light symbolizes the presence of God. In the beginning “darkness was over the surface of the deep” (Gen. 1:2), but then God said, “Let there be light! And there was light” (Gen. 1:3). During Israel’s exodus from Egypt, we remember how God provided light for his people in a “pillar of fire” (Exod. 13:21), and how at the end of the age God creates an eternal home that has “no need of the sun or the moon to shine” because “the glory of God is its light” (Rev. 21:23). As John says, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

So “at the fullness of time” the God who is light sent his Son (Gal. 4:4) to be the matchless “light of the world” (John 9:5). As Matthew puts it, “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light” (4:16). The New Testament writers depict Jesus as “the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16), “a lamp shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19), and they go on to say that whoever follows Jesus “will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

But even for Jesus, it wasn’t easy being a light when he had to deal with people “blinded by the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). There were many times when Jesus faced hatred and misunderstanding, when he was interrupted and ridiculed. Eventually, as we know, he was taken outside the walls of Jerusalem to be crucified. “The light shines in darkness,” says John, “but the darkness does not understand it” (John 1:5).

And as it was with Jesus, so it is with you. Many in your community may not understand your life as a Christian, and while you almost certainly won’t suffer the way Jesus or Paul did, you will suffer to a degree. There may be times of discomfort or sacrifice. There may be awkward moments. That’s the cost of letting your light shine in a world of darkness. And make no mistake about it—you are the light of the world, especially now that Jesus has returned to the Father. It’s a staggering thought, but true nonetheless, that for some people in your circle of friends, you are the only connection they have to God. There’s nobody else.

So how do we, in a practical sense, let our lights shine? The first thing that comes to mind is that we should be ever alert to tell others about Christ, how he has changed our lives, and how he can change their lives. The last thing Jesus ever said to his disciples was that they should go everywhere and preach the gospel (Matt. 28:16-20). In the modern world, of course, it’s difficult to witness to others in the workplace or at community gatherings. Talking about our faith can sometimes be seen as intrusive, even offensive. Yet, if no one had ever spoken to us about Christ, we would still be lost in darkness with no hope for the future.

Maybe the best way to let our lights shine is to live in such a way that others will see the love of Christ in us. This is exactly what F.W. Faber suggests we should do in his nineteenth century hymn, "Faith of Our Fathers." He wants us to win the nations to God “by kindly words and virtuous life.” Can you imagine what your life would be like if tomorrow you decided to treat everyone—friends,
workmates, family members, other drivers on the road—in a kindly way? After the initial shock, those closest to you would begin to ask about the change in your life. You would suddenly find plenty of opportunities to speak about your faith, because many in your circle would come to you for comfort and guidance. Jesus said to his followers, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

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To win the nations to God "by kindly words and virtuous life."

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So it turns out that Diogenes was right ... there is something special about light. And there’s something wonderful about a God who provides light for people lost in darkness, a God who sends his own son to be the light of the world. And now, in turn, he is asking us to be that light, to influence those around us “by kindly words and virtuous life.”

Remember the man lost in the pitch black tunnels of the copper mine? Imagine how thrilled

he would have been to see a light in the darkness. “You are the light of the world,” said Jesus. “A city on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14).

Dr. William Crockett is Professor of New Testament at Alliance Theological Seminary. He is also an author. His writing includes Four Views on Hell and Through No Fault of Their Own?: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard.
A Totally Committed Life and Change

John and Helen Ellenberger

Looking back over a lifetime of 53 years of ministry, I am reminded of Indian pioneer Pandita Ramabai’s assessment of Christian commitment: “The life totally committed to God has nothing to fear, nothing to lose, and nothing to regret.” I want to say, “You’re right, Pandita—no regrets!”

For Helen and for me, that service involved the whole gamut of ministry—from pioneer evangelism among tribal people in remote valleys of New Guinea, to teaching seminary students in busy urban centers in three major countries of the world. And it included a number of other fascinating ministries in between!

This wide spectrum of ministry raises a good question: why is there such a dramatic change in type of ministry for a servant of God from one time to another? Does God’s will for the servant change? Or is it a change in the situation? What motivated us to move from one kind of ministry to another very different type of service? While it is true that each situation is unique, there are some common themes in missionary practice that can help us understand this change in ministry.

"The life totally committed to God has nothing to fear, nothing to lose, and nothing to regret."

1. Ministry is to people, and our role changes as people’s needs change.

As the New Guinea tribesmen we worked with—the Damal people group—became followers of Jesus, our role shifted. It moved from pioneer evangelism to teaching Bible lessons, to translating the New Testament into Damal, and then to teaching literacy to people who never before had a written language. Fortunately, I had studied translation and literacy in graduate school, so I was prepared for that need. But when the Damal people needed airplane service into their valleys, I had no school preparation on how to build an airplane landing field! But we did that, too! In our time in New Guinea, I helped construct five airstrips in five different valleys!

2. One type of ministry often opens the door for new kinds of service.

Helen is a Registered Nurse, trained at Columbia University, so she was prepared to provide basic medical care to the Damal tribal people who had no other source of treatment. But treating sores and colds opened up expanded opportunities for other kinds of service Helen had never done before—
such as opening 15 treatment clinics in isolated valleys and training the “barefoot doctors” that served them. Helen did many other things her Columbia nursing program never prepared her for, like pulling arrows out of wounded warriors and organizing a population-wide inoculation campaign against childhood diseases and polio.

3. We often experience our ministry lives in “chapters”—chapters that may be very different.

Our service for God often comes in time periods like the chapters of a book. God may open the door for a very different kind of ministry—perhaps in a different location—and give His servant assurance that He has opened the new doorway. For example, the Apostle Paul traveled tirelessly through most of the provincial capitals of the Mediterranean, preaching the Good News about Jesus. But in Acts 19:9-10, Paul’s ministry abruptly changes. For a two-year period he holds a kind of Bible school for some of the believers in Ephesus in the Tyrannus Lecture Hall. These students apparently went out in evangelistic trips, which were so effective, Luke tells us, that “all the people who lived in the province of Asia, both Jews and Gentiles, heard the word of the Lord.” This was our experience as well. After 27 years in evangelism and Bible translation in New Guinea, we saw God open another door of ministry for us in training the next generation of missionaries at Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, NY. And God gave us assurance that He had opened this new door of service. We have been blessed to be involved in the training of many dedicated servants of God who are changing the whole world.

4. But there’s another important idea here: Life is ministry—to live is to be involved in service!

As CMA mission leader Robert Roseberry said to me at his retirement home in Florida, “John, as long as the Lord gives you life, he will give you a ministry.” We accept that challenge as we enter our next chapter. We are asking God to open the doorway for us to return to the Damal valleys as retirees in order to help them finish the final phases of the translation of the Old Testament. We want the whole Word of God to be our final blessing for the 70+ Damal churches—to the glory of our Lord Jesus.
Biography of Ellenbergers, an International Family

John was born in Guinea, West Africa to C&MA missionary parents. (Father founded a Bible School and Mother translated the New Testament into the Maninka language.) Meanwhile, half a world away, Helen was born in Hong Kong and grew up in Cambodia where her parents were pioneer C&MA missionaries. John and Helen met at Nyack College.

John and Helen worked among the Damal people, one of a dozen tribal groups living in the highest mountain valleys in Irian Jaya, now called Papua, Indonesia. Thousands of these tribal people were accepting the “Eternal Words” about Jesus as Savior in a wide-ranging People Movement to Christ. John helped translate the New Testament into the Damal language and Helen, a nurse, among people with no other medical help, opened 15 clinics in the remote valleys of the Damals. Prayer for each patient was part of the therapy. Three daughters, born in Papua, blessed their home.

Twenty-seven years later, after completing the New Testa-

ment in Damal, John and Helen accepted a call from the Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, NY, to come and teach on the missiology faculty.

John and Helen retired from ATS after 16 years and answered a call to return to Indonesia with C&MA to teach in Simpson Theological College in Central Java and do contextual ministry among the North Coast Javanese people—a people group of some 21 million people, among a population of 150 million on the whole island of Java.

After six years in Java, John and Helen returned to Alliance Theological Seminary for a year as “Missionaries-in-Residence,” followed by a year as “ATS Pastoral Couple.”

Having formally retired, John and Helen are now planning to return to Papua, Indonesia to assist in the completion of the Old Testament in the Damal language. This project may take about three years. John and Helen ask that you remember them in prayer.
Learning to Obey

Jim Liu
(Class 2007)

Praise the Lord that He called me to serve in ministry full time and gave me opportunities to be equipped at the Alliance Theological Seminary. It was truly joyful and enjoyable studying in the school full time for three years. Not only had I enjoyed God’s provision to me, but also the dedicated teaching, learning, and loving one another that occurred between teachers and students. I respected their gifted serving experiences and mature spiritual disciplines. I knew I had to learn many lessons, especially obedience.

My merciful God gave me the opportunity to serve in the Chinese Bible Church of Maryland after graduation. This church was so blessed that I enjoyed very much serving together with all the other pastoral staff in the church. I was so grateful for many opportunities to learn about and experience church ministry for three years. I am especially thankful for learning three things about obedience.

First of all, I developed a better understanding about serving God. God calls me to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in Christ’s name (Luke 24:47), to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), and to feed and take care of His sheep (John 21:15-17). When God gives me opportunities to serve people whom He has gathered, I should humbly serve all the people-believers or non-believers with the same attitude as serving God. Humility is a first stop toward obedience.

Second, I learned about teamwork in unity. God provides all co-laborers with His gracious gifts given to us to serve and to edify the church together as a team. It is God’s sovereignty to unite our hearts with team spirit. God will provide for and strengthen our service when we obey. So, unity is a second aspect of obedience.

Third, I realized that in order to establish leadership in church ministry, I had to be led first under a senior pastor’s spiritual authority and the bylaws of the church. God gives authority to the church leader to carry on a vision and mission that He assigned to the church. Being selfless to follow guidelines is the third thing to obedience.

In the past three years, I have learned a little about principles and practices of being a humble and selfless team player. By God’s grace and mercy, I have been forgiven by the congregation many times for my mistakes. I am so thankful that in Christ we learn how to forgive each other, love one another, and enjoy God’s blessing.

Last year God sent me to shepherd His flock in the Chinese
Bible Church of North Carolina. It became a good opportunity for me to learn how to build up the church leadership with limited resources and to apply my previous ministry experiences to a new environment.

I developed a practice that every ministry started with prayer and team building. Teaching and training followed. Implementation came after. Praise the Lord that the church started to see God’s wonderful work of preparing our hearts to come to the weekly prayer meeting. We had almost three times the people attending the prayer meeting. We then recognized God’s hand in strengthening each team in various ministry areas. He brought new people into the leadership positions and created more ministry opportunities to reach out to the community. The team co-laborers became responsible for each assignment and for helping each other to implement tasks.

However, since the teams did not have enough experience to coordinate with each other, most people were zealous to get things done at their will. Soon after that, arguments and complaints came out and caused conflicts. I also didn’t know how to use authority wisely. If I were too serious, people tried to hide from me. If I were too loose, activity slowed. My pastoral authority was challenged, and I was confused and disappointed.

Praise the Lord that He turned me back to Himself quickly. God changed my initial thoughts of my leading the church ministry to recognize His lordship and His governing sovereignty in His church. Now I realize that the senior pastor’s authority is truly based upon his obedience to the Lord. The Lord reigns. It is He who calls brothers and sisters to serve as a team in unity. It is also He who calls people to His church. The Lord has prepared everything, and I do not need to worry!

Since God has taken care of everything, what should I do then as a pastor? The Bible teaches us that the pastor should be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). But what does that look like? I have learned that I must obey God first and then lead the congregation into obedience. I am so grateful to know that because of obedience we can see God’s work. This is truly God’s blessing.
It has been twelve years since my seminary commencement in 1999. Twelve years may not be long for many senior ministers, but for me and my fellow classmates, these quickly-passed twelve years have not been short. We have learned many lessons, we have had failures, and we have experienced what it means to be used by God. Recently I was also invited to speak at a colleague’s inauguration ceremony, and the content of my message was exactly that—my ministry experience across the past 12 years. I summarize the message below as an encouragement to others.

“An inauguration is very much like a wedding. The new minister is the new bride, while the pastoral staff and the deacons and congregation are the groom’s family. It is the beginning of a relationship and the focus is all on the bride, who is expected to be ‘fruitful and multiply.’ Such a lot of pressure!

However, the Apostle Paul—the most able yet most pressured apostle in the New Testament—his ministry has allowed us to understand the biggest needs of a minister, any minister. And so, we know how to pray for our new minister today.

Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 6:19-20 about his need for prayer, asking for the three desires in his heart:

1. A Heart of Confidence

   v. 19: ‘Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel.’

As a serious student of the Law and eloquent speaker, Paul is not asking for eloquence (he already has that) but rather to speak with control. Paul knows that the Gospel he represents is despised as simple and foolish in the world’s eyes (1 Corinthians 1:22-25). Moreover, this same Gospel will inevitably offend people, and so Paul also needed courage.

Today, although we can utilize different techniques and ways to spread the Gospel, it is important to remember that we are not ‘entertaining’ our listeners or ‘showing off’ knowledge. We are to convey God’s message. More importantly, in every message we need to offer up Christ Jesus’ salvation (John 3:14-15). It will be hard to avoid offending others with this message, but when the opportunity comes, I pray that God will give us the courage to speak.

2. A Heart of Willingness

   v. 20: ‘for which I am an ambassador in chains.’

Paul wrote Ephesians as a letter to a church while he was in
prison. To capture and lock up another country’s ambassador is an act of great contempt to the sovereignty of the sending country. It implies war between the two countries. Here, Paul shows us how he paid the price to represent the Gospel as an ambassador of Christ Jesus.

Today, we work hard; Satan works even harder. Spreading the Gospel is the same as an intense spiritual battle. Paul was eager and willing to sacrifice for the Gospel. We can follow Paul in his willingness to pay the price, to sacrifice, to suffer humiliation, and when we have prepared ourselves, we will have the courage to endure.

3. A Heart of Dedication (Concentration)

v. 20: ‘Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.’

Paul did not ask the saints at Ephesus to pray for his early release. He did not forget the reason for which he was imprisoned, which was spreading the Gospel and witnessing for God. And so, he held tight to every chance he had to share the Gospel despite the intimidation of jail with its officials and guards. Paul asked for the courage to fulfill his duty, to be brave enough to tell them the Gospel.

We must constantly remember why we answered the call to be vocational ministers. Was it not to suffer for God? If so, we should not ask for a comfortable life, for power or for riches. What is our duty? Is it not to help believers who are building their faith in God, to become disciples of Jesus and to spread the Gospel? If so, work, meetings or things that do not have a direct connection with the Gospel must not get in the way of us fulfilling our duty.

The Apostle asked for a heart of confidence, a heart of willingness and a heart of dedication. I hope that his humility, his willingness to suffer for God and his faithfulness toward the Gospel will be both a reminder and encouragement to us every day (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Howard Li graduated from ATS with a M.Div. degree in 1999. He is currently serving as the senior pastor at Trust in God Baptist Church, New York.

Courses Offered in Rockland Campus

Fall 2011
Chinese Preaching I
Instructor: Rev. Stanley Kwong
Date: September 7 - December 20, Thursdays
Time: 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Spring 2012
Chinese Preaching II
Instructor: Rev. Stanley Kwong
Date: January 2 - May 1, Thursdays
Time: 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
**New Ministry**

Wayne Cho (May 2001) is now serving at Coming King Church, NY, which he planted in June.

Yin Fa Frank Huang (Dec. 2010) will do two years of externship at Queens Herald Church, NY. His ministry focus is on children.

James Lee-Shan Leu (May 2002) moved back to Taiwan two years ago. This summer, he has decided to join a church planting initiative in Tainan. The church will be called New Life Formosan Evangelical Church.

Eric Wu (May 2011) in September started to serve at Queens Herald Church, NY as an extern for the coming two years.

Edmond Yeung (May 1998) is now serving as a hospice chaplain for Asian patients and families at Vitas.

Xiang Tian Zhong (Dec. 2011) is graduating in December. Xiang Tian has concluded his nine years of ministry in New Haven Chinese Alliance Church, CT in April in order to join a church planting endeavor in Queens, NY. The new church started meeting in May, and it is called Christ Herald Church, C&MA.

**Ordination**

Sharon Lee (May 2008) had his ordination ceremony held at Faith Chinese Alliance Church, CA on June 11. He has been serving there for two years.

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