Working With Lay People in the Church

Abraham Poon

Introduction

The lay population in our churches is the biggest untapped human resource of the kingdom of God, and to launch lay people into ministry is the greatest challenge the Chinese churches are facing. From my own personal experiences, the potential and effectiveness of lay people in ministry are determined by how pastors think of them. In other words, pastors are the key in setting lay people free to minister.

Lay people are seen by some insecure pastors as threats to their authority. They are afraid that lay people take over their churches or ministries. Therefore, lay people are there to give money to support ministries and then shut up. Whatever they do on weekdays is unspiritual and they can only serve in a limited capacity over the weekend when they do not have to work. Most are involved in secular aspects of the church's ministries such as maintenance and administrating church programs. Some lay people may become a leader, deacon or elder, and if they are good, may become pastors themselves one day. If they are not called, their ministries would be confined. How a pastor thinks of lay people, and the structure of the church may actually prohibit the effectiveness of lay persons.

The Church in China has changed my mind about what lay people can do. In many parts, where professional clergy is absent, lay people run the church, evangelize and train others effectively. Many groups do not have the
Bible, and they follow what is in the Word in their ministries. The result is staggering growth and gospel explosion, producing true New Testament type of churches run by lay people. I visited a very successful church with no professional clergy; every aspect of the church is run by lay people. That church has grown so much in the past years that a number of other churches have been planted, each with lay leadership and no professional clergy.

If the key to lay involvement is the stepping aside of professional clergy, we have to rethink the role of the pastor in the church. What follows are some thoughts on the way we look at lay people, the way we train them and the way we involve them in kingdom ministries.

**Clergy vs. Lay**

The first barrier to overcome is to actually practice the doctrine called the priesthood of believers. If every believer were a priest and ministering, the line between lay and clergy should be redefined. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were supposed to be a kingdom of priests. God called them an army at the time of Exodus. Later on Peter re-emphasized this fact in his Epistle. Even if the pastor had more theological training, he is on the same level as the lay person who has just accepted Christ. They are all coworkers in the vineyard, and everyone has to give an account before God one day. No one would dispute this doctrine, but in practice, very few pastors are guided by their belief in the priesthood of believers.

**Consumers vs. Caregivers**

If lay persons are on staff of the church and are actually priests, they are supposed to serve instead of being served. Not to be served but to serve is the motto of our Lord when He was here on earth. To serve means to care for the needs of others to the neglect of one's own needs. Someone once said that the church is the only institution on earth that exists not for her own good for but the welfare of the world around her. A consumer oriented church is a church that is immobilized because everyone is standing around waiting for others to serve them. A caregiving church is one that is vibrant and moving because everyone is looking for someone to serve. When the Lord examined Peter's heart after the resurrection, He told Peter to care for the sheep if he loved Him. Caring for others is a sign of spiritual maturity and a realization of life's purpose. Every Christian is a caregiver to those around him. Caregiving is actually pastoring and if we put it in another light, all believers are to care for everyone around them. At work, the believer is to pastor his coworkers; at school, the fellow students; at home, the neighbors; in the extended family, the relatives. Just imagine that if every believer takes this identity of a caregiver or pastor carefully, they are already set free to minister.

**Life vs. Ministry**

The reason why Jesus asked Peter about loving Him before giving him the assignment of shepherding is because life comes before ministry all the time. Ministry that is not the outflow of an abundant spiritual life is mere activity with no anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is not about doing but about being, as many pastors have repeated over and over. Our lay people are not ministering and do not have the desire to minister to others because of the poverty of their spiritual lives. They must be set free from all those sins that entangle them and run the race ahead. The first step in unleashing lay people is not to train them in doing the ministry but guiding them into relationship with Jesus Christ. Being filled by the Holy Spirit is the first step upon conversion so that they might receive power to live a holy life and to minister. In order to be filled, one must clear his life of all the darkness and sinful behaviors. The church must seriously confront sinful thoughts and behaviors and lead believers to spiritual maturity. A good look at the different programs of the church would reveal little input into one's spiritual life. Most programs do not scratch where it itches but are shallow and superficial. Much of the teachings are not designed for life change but for pure knowledge. This has to change if the church is serious about
releasing lay people

Impartation vs. Academic Training

The training method of the church is more influenced by the Age of Enlightenment rather than following the model of Jesus. The Chinese Church in America is still affected by the theory of education from the early days of the Republic when many reformers called for mass education so as to bring change to the new society. The underlying thesis is that knowledge brings about behavioral change, and ignorance is the enemy of progress. This is humanistic and does not address the state of the human soul which is sinful from birth. Knowledge does not bring change; change is only brought about by the Holy Spirit. Jesus never taught a method of evangelism to the disciples; He never gave a seminar on soul winning. The disciples' training was, first, to be with Him, observing His acts and words, and then to repeat what they had seen and heard. It is an impartation model instead of an academic model. Although they were uneducated, everyone knew that they had been with Jesus. Impartation is like the medical model of "See one, do one, teach one." Today, the more we train, the more people feel inadequate. Knowledge not only brings pride but also intimidation, for it focuses on performance. Let us keep things simple. Bring someone along by having that person observe what you do. Then encourage the person to do it. He can then teach others to do the same.

Bible-taught vs. Spirit-taught

The two factors that lead believers to spiritual growth are the Word and the Spirit. We cannot have one without the other. The Holy Spirit is the agent of experiential sanctification, leading us into the truth. Without Him, the Word is dry knowledge that does not impact lives. A. W. Tozer coined the terms "Bible-taught" and "Spirit-taught," with a distinction between knowing the Word and knowing the Spirit. Study of the Word without the presence of the Holy Spirit results in an academic study of the Word. Today, many of our lay persons know the Word well but are unable to integrate what they know into their lives. The church must emphasize the works of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives in order for them to minister in the power of the Spirit and also have the Spirit produce fruit in their lives. Without the fruit of the Spirit, believers would fight one another instead of serving one another. Without the gifting of the Spirit, believers would minister in the flesh, seeing little or no result of their ministries. That is why so many lay people are burnt out, discouraged and experiencing spiritual lows after serving.

Vision vs. Provision

It is one thing to have a grandiose vision for lay people; it is yet another thing to give the provision to them. Vision encourages and motivates, but provision empowers and releases into ministry. Most pastors think of provision in terms of training and program, but it is more than that. The ultimate provision is mental rather than physical. It is the mind of the pastor allowing his people to serve, opening up opportunities that otherwise would be closed to lay people. Giving away one's job is difficult but necessary. Eugene Peterson's term of an "Unbusy pastor" has stuck in my mind for a long time. Pastors need not be busy all the time if they know how to give away or delegate their responsibilities. Peterson's recent book has an even better description about the pastor: "The Unnecessary Pastor" — that says it all. The key to provision is to let lay people do it, be it preaching, teaching, visiting the sick, praying for the needy, or any other pastoral roles.

Centralized vs. Decentralized Church Structure

In order to unleash the lay people, a church must have a decentralized or diffused structure. To put it simply, is to have many smaller churches within one church. Another good book with a wonderful title is "Can the Pastor Do It Alone?"
The answer is quite obvious. He cannot! One pastor cannot even effectively pastor one hundred church members without help. However, most of our churches are structured in a centralized manner and would not allow for a sharing of authority and responsibility. More and more, I think small group shepherding utilizing lay leaders as pastors is the only way for churches to grow. This is the church structure for all the places with explosive church growth, be it Korea or Argentina, Africa or China. Of course, structure cannot ensure growth; however, structure could inhibit growth. Releasing lay workers into ministry means that we have the context for them to work in. Decentralizations of authority and responsibility are the keys.

### Conclusion

Seminary education is vital and essential but must include training in how to release the untapped lay potentials — human, material, and financial — in the church. Lay people must become ministers and priests in our churches in order to see more kingdom growth. Studies should be done on how churches of different regions and continents release their lay potential. The North American Chinese Church should also make a move in this direction if she wants to be relevant in the 21st century.

### May Term

**May 2-6, 2005**

An intensive class *Development of the Chinese Church up to the 21st Century* was taught by our adjunct professor Dr. Peter Au, the Director of the Educational Projects International, from May 2-6, 2005. Through the historical development of the Chinese Church worldwide, Dr. Au challenged students to respond to God's desire for the Chinese Church in the 21st century.

**May 1-5, 2006**

Rev. Abraham Poon will be teaching a May Term course *Pastoral Counseling and Care in the Chinese Church* from May 1 to May 5 of 2006 at ATS Rockland campus.
"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."

Jesus could have been talking about your church, or mine. Wherever pastors or church leaders gather, they talk about their church's need for workers—for Bible teachers, worship leaders, ushers, nursery workers, outreach team members. Parents ask for midweek clubs for their children, but there are not enough leaders. New Christians need to be discipled, but the pastor is the only discipler. Church staff members commiserate and deplore their people's attitude toward service: "They are too busy with their jobs and families;" "They're not committed—they'll give money but not time;" "They want these church programs but are not willing to serve in them."

I've heard all these reasons laypersons are not serving. As a Christian educator who has been on both sides of church ministry, on staff and as a lay volunteer, I've seen and heard negative comments on both sides. What people say to the pastor may not be what really keeps them from ministry. Here are some attitudes and feelings that I've found among lay persons about what ministry is, who does it, and why they don't do it. Being aware of them may help us to inspire many who are merely spectators to become what God intends them to be—gifted and grateful servants.

"It's not my responsibility."

Church members often feel that if an area of ministry does not meet a need in their lives, someone else should do that ministry. For example, they reason that parents of children should work in children's programs. Pastors should evangelize and disciple. A personal sense of God's call to ministry doesn't enter the picture. Unfortunately, the way we hire staff sometimes promotes these ideas. We hire specialists as youth pastors or directors of Christian education, put them in charge and allow church members to conclude that the staff is hired to do those ministries. However, Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us otherwise. The purpose of the pastor-teacher is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

"No one asked me. I guess they have everyone they need."

This is a common reason church spectators give for not being involved, even though there may have been repeated requests for help from the pulpit, or lists of "Needed Volunteers" in the church bulletin. Unless the help is merely incidental, lay people (wisely) seldom respond to impersonal requests for help. They may readily volunteer to bring juice or donate used clothing, but teaching
a Sunday school class or leading a small group is serious business. A widely-broadcast appeal for help seldom brings results when the service demands commitment.

Jesus modeled a more personal approach. Consider the way he called the Twelve. He noticed Andrew and John following him, and struck up a conversation, inviting them home. Through Andrew and John he met their brothers, Peter and James. Later he visited all of them on the job, and asked them to follow him. He called Matthew from his place of employment and later had dinner at his house. In Galilee he found and called Philip, and then Philip's friend Nathanael (Bartholemew). Finally, as his group of disciples grew larger, he had a night of prayer, and then singled out five more men "to be with him and that he might send them out." (Mark 3, John 1, Matt.4, 9, & 10.) Jesus' night of prayer and his relational approach are instructive for us: God guides us as we seek his face concerning potential lay leaders, and personal relationships foster trust and willingness to serve.

"I Served for a While But Was Not Gifted for It."

Some version of this statement is often a mask for a volunteer's feeling of failure or disappointment. As Christians are encouraged to identify their gifts they sometimes begin to serve under the illusion that having a gift makes the ministry task easy, requiring minimal preparation. If preaching or teaching on spiritual gifts is not followed up with appropriate training before placement, an eager novice can quickly become discouraged, and conclude that he or she is not gifted after all.

Empowering lay leaders means not only teaching on the gifts of the Spirit or even doing a spiritual gifts inventory; it also means preparing gifted and called saints to carry out their ministries effectively. It is in ongoing training and in practice of ministry that our gifts are confirmed and blessed. In his influential book Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God, Greg Ogden uses the following diagram to illustrate how God gifts those who must carry out his plan for equipping the saints:

The Goal of Equipping
The Priesthood of All Believers
Ephesians 4:11-12

Apostles
Prophets
Evangelists
Pastor-Teachers

Equip the Saints

The Work of Ministry

Builds up the Body of Christ

(Ogden, p. 132)
Pastoral staff may need to step back and relinquish some control as they prepare lay Christians to do the work of ministry. Through preaching, teaching, modelling and affirming, they assure laypersons that God wants to use their gifts, as well as the gifts of pastoral staff, to build his church. Committed Christians will respond as pastors cast a vision of lay ministry as a "biblical pattern and command," not an option. Only with this kind of biblical vision will a church be able to transition from a pastoral staff-centered ministry to one of shared staff and lay leadership. (Mallory, p. 22)

Having had the privilege of serving in and working closely with diverse kinds of churches I know that there are unique challenges and strengths in every spiritual household. I know too how powerful a church can be when the gifts of men and women, old and young, are valued, developed, and put to work. The equipping process becomes a bridge that spans differences, unites a congregation, and expands its ministry in the community.

I've Served So Long I'm Exhausted. It's Someone Else's Turn

Even the most committed become weary in well doing. Jesus himself was weary in his journey (John 4:6), and he knew when his disciples needed to come aside for rest and renewal. (Mark 6:31). The rest and renewal lay workers need is more spiritual and emotional than physical. They need regular support and resourcing in their ministries. They need the attention and wisdom of those pastors or leaders to whom they are accountable. Church workers who serve week by week, particularly those who care for or teach others, often feel isolated in their ministries, their energies sapped by efforts that seem neither fruitful or even recognized. To remedy this isolation, groups of volunteers need to be gathered at regular intervals for retooling--for instruction to improve skills, for sharing of ministry experiences and solving of problems. At such a venue leaders will have opportunity to discern the needs of the lay worker who is misplaced or stagnated in his or her ministry and needs either a respite or a change of position. Equally important, the successes and small victories that occur can be cause for praise to God and the encouragement of his servants. Such support helps avoid ministry fatigue, and fosters long-term commitments to the spiritual task of serving the Body of Christ. The end result is a church community conscious of God's call to ministry, assured that they will be equipped and supported by the pastoral staff, and ready to trade the role of spectator for the joy of being a servant in God's household.

References:
Mallory, S. The Equipping Church:


Websites:
Leadership Training Network: www.ltn.org
Leadership Connection: www.connexion.org

Dr. Wilkerson is an adjunct faculty member at ATS; her book, Multicultural Religious Education, was published in 1997
In this column of Chinese American Christianity, let us consider Chinese American History in the teaching of the Chinese American churches.

An African American seminary student asked me whether our Chinese American Churches have something like Black History Month. The answer is no. There is nothing like Black History Month. However, the question sparked a few thoughts about ministering in a Chinese American Church.

1. Black History Month is one of the few events in the US that is linked closely to the Christian church. This is especially so with the image of the Baptist pastor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his "I have a Dream" speech. The landmark Civil Rights movement and church involvement are inseparable. The effect is still felt today. Therefore, there is a keen awareness in the African American Churches of their history.

2. The Chinese American Church, on the other hand, is just awakening to her historicity. Like the African American Church, the Chinese American Church has had a long history. The San Francisco Chinese Presbyterian Church that the Presbyterian mission started in 1882 is the oldest standing Chinese American Church in the United States. However, unlike the African American church, the Chinese American Churches went through 123 years without a visible sense of historicity.

3. We are thankful to people like Dr. Feng-gang Yang and Dr. Timothy Tseng. Their contributions have put Chinese American Church history into perspective. We can now see four phases of the Chinese American Church.

4. The "Mission Phase" began when American mission boards brought Chinese Americans together in churches mainly in Chinatowns. The "Chinese Exclusion Act" that tried to limit the Chinese American population instituted the second phase that helped to firm up Chinese leadership for the Church. The third phase was the "Immigrants Phase" that centered in the 1960s. The final and current phase is the "Second Generation Phase."

5. From one phase to another, the church accumulated unresolved issues. To minister in a Chinese American Church today, we need more than reading the Bible and preaching the Gospel. We need to know God's desire for a Chinese American Church. History and spirituality do intertwine.

6. Let us think about having a Chinese American Church History month!

Endnote
1 Feng-gang Yang is working on his second book "An Integration: Chinese Christian Churches in America" (Tentative title).
2 Timothy Tseng is Director of the Asian American Center with the American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, Ca.

(Rev. Victor W. Chan, the senior pastor of East Bay Alliance Church, Oakland, CA.)
Church Ministry Column

Sharing My Joy From A Special Ministry

Him-Yan Hui

From the telephone came a faint voice, "Pastor, I am ... I feel anguished. I am being harassed by a lot of hallucinations. Could you pray for me?" On further inquiry, I got to know why this believer was persecuted by a flood of whims in his mind. It was because he did not take medication as scheduled.

I know a couple of brothers and sisters who have long-term mental illnesses. Their symptoms are different. Some of them always have hallucinations, while others have uncontrollable habits, worries, depression, sense of insecurity, or endless suspicions. They could stay in total darkness for more than ten hours and then resume normal in just a few minutes. When their mental conditions are sound, they can worship and even serve as members of Christ's body. However, they hardly have any friend in the church. Because of their personal limitations, they maintain nominal relationships with other believers. On days of festivals or special activities, they are always the lonely individuals who are either forgotten or isolated.

In view of their situation, and encouraged by my wife, one year ago I started a weekly Bible study group with them, and we ate a meal together once a month. I compiled the materials for the Bible study based on the book written by Dr. Andrew Kwong, "A Biblical Perspective on How to Live a Happier Life." Psychological tests were sometimes used as part of the lessons. This small group aims at letting members get encouragement and awareness from the Bible, guiding them to set up their personal goals, and helping them to build up intimate and supportive relationships with one another. Thank God, during the meetings all of them honestly admitted their weaknesses and confessed their suspicions of God and men. I believe the Gospel can make a person open his or her mind without shame and accept corrections from others without feeling humiliated. Having mental illness is not a signal that one's life has come to an end.

Once in a while this small group would be perturbed by depressions, fear, suspicions, offensive attitudes in conversations, and even the intent to forsake God. However, the love of God makes them forgive and understand one another and persist in building up a fellowship of love that is in communion with both God and men. Recently a member gave a new name, "Winsome," to the group, indicating that they have developed a sense of belonging to their group. They show readiness to study another book, "What to Know When I Don't Know What to Do", written by Cloud Townsend. They intend to write their own questions for discussion; my assistance is to provide them with references for Bible study. Besides, we hope that we will have outreach activities, visits, and personal testimonies in the future. We pray that our Heavenly Father would use us to endow blessings on others.

(Rev. Him-Yan Hui, the senior pastor of Portland Chinese C&MA Church.)
"God is always preparing His workers in advance; and when the hour is ripe He brings them upon the stage, and men look with wonder upon a career of startling triumph, which God has been preparing for a lifetime" said A. B. Simpson. From the word of the founder of Christian and Missionary Alliance, I understand my office in the seminary is not only making study, but also making myself a godly person.

The major task of a student is to study, but it is not all. If we are called to shepherd the flock of God, a more important thing for us to do considers quality of life. Good academic achievements will demonstrate what we have gained during the three years of seminary life. Good character, however, will reveal what we gain through a lifetime of service.

Fortunately, I have studied both of these from ATS. Through study, ATS broadens my view of world wide missions and makes me think deeply about the role of church in the postmodern society. I still remember Prof. Bailey repeating one of his motifs about the reaction of church when she confronts the impact of synthetic religions and secular philosophies, "Is Jesus still the Lord?" Indeed, at the end of the ages, what we can always trust is only Jesus Himself, for we are told "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;" (Psalm 29:10)

On the other side, ATS also helps to shape good character for future ministry. In addition to the proficient mastering of what they teach, the professors of ATS have integrated humility and kindness into their careers and lives. In ATS, many professors have become my good friends. From these loyal servants of the Lord, I learn to be a servant too. Dr. Paul Siu said: "Please be godly. Your life does matter what you are rather than what you gain," when he taught me "theology I" last semester. Of course, to be a godly person has become my aspiration in the process of following Jesus Christ.

Above all, in ATS I find the balance between "making study and making character." ATS is not a seminary which focuses solely on academic study while overlooking the spirituality of students. The special time of study at ATS has become an inerasable memory in my life of. May God bless ATS, and ATS bless God too!
It is hard to believe that I am going to graduate from Alliance Theological Seminary. It was a dream three years ago but is now a reality. I still remember wondering whether or not I should respond to God’s calling as a full time seminary student. In my prayer for direction, the Holy Spirit in me continued to press me onwards to respond to His calling. When my wife Julie told me she also wanted to study in a Chinese seminary, I knew it was time to obey the Lord. God has been treating me well in my life so far, and it is only right to submit the rest of my life to Him! God said in Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." It was these words that encouraged me to drop my career and its wealth to follow Him.

During these three years of study in ATS, I truly experienced God’s abounding providence. The Holy Spirit renewed my life, professors taught and encouraged me, fellow students supported me, and the mission agenda in the ATS culture also widened my awareness for the global need of the Gospel. In a word, He molded a new me. Not only did I receive knowledge of His kingdom, in the same period, I have gained hands-on experience in church ministries and church planting. I praise Him for everything He accomplished within me. Graduation is a new beginning in my life, and with the same faith, I am waiting for Him to send me to the harvest field.
There Is No Fear In Love

Jim Liu (Second Year Student)

This is my second semester in ATS. I still have a question of "Why am I here?" It is not "Why did I come to this school?" but "What is the purpose?" I think that this question may be better addressed as "What is the meaning of my life from now?" This is a question that I actually seriously think about very often.

Looking back over my past, I realize that I have abilities to study, to plan, to organize, and to manage my school years, professional career, and family life. Everything appeared to be so smooth that I, on the contrary, started to accumulate anxiety, worry, and fear. I was afraid of losing things I had. In the meantime, I was afraid of not being able to get more. Under this unbalanced "getting or losing" situation, my heart was filled with fret, pride, jealousy, complaint, judgment, and competition. When I was in such a chaos with completely empty insight, God came into my life.

I remember that the first few years after my conversion, I wasn't so sure about the true meaning of life. Initially, this was some form of gaining knowledge from and understanding about God without knowing who actually controlled the new life.

My life didn't change too much until two and a half years ago. In a big annual Christian's retreat, I was directed by an invisible power to stand up and walk to the stage, and I kneeled down with tears to receive God's call to devote my life to serving the Lord. I feared again. This fear was not like the first fear, which was the fear of "getting or losing" my desires. This fear, however, was that I knew God was a living and true God. And He was around me. He was leading me to start a real new life with Him. I was afraid because I knew I didn't love the Lord yet. I still liked the world, and I had many sins in my mind. Besides, I didn't have a strong willingness to turn to the Lord at that moment. This was why I feared. I didn't understand the meaning of this call.

Well, my Lord continuously led me with His word to inspire me, instruct me, support me especially when I felt weak, unsteady, lonely, isolated, depressed and struggled to move forward. The Lord first opened my eyes to look up to the Kingdom of God. He says, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession (Psalms 2:8)." I was in peace because I knew there would be inheritance from God and this could be something related to the nations and all the places on earth. He also says, "If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you (Proverbs 1:23)." I realized that I must respond to God's call in order to get His thoughts. Then He says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God. (2 Cor 5:171-8)." I knew this was the regeneration through Christ's salvation. And the Gospel is the way to bring people to Christ Jesus.

Putting all these together, I start to understand that the meaning of that call really relates to mission ministry. Before responding to that call, I must turn to God first. Then I need to bring people back to God either by preaching the Gospel to the non-believers or by encouraging believers return to God just like I do through this experience of God's call.
Praise the Lord that I can come to Nyack to get equipped. Although this is just the beginning year of overall preparation, God has led me to learn many things about His plans. I have been graciously led to a new life environment that I enjoy. Teachers' teaching, students' discussions and sharing, and brothers' and sisters' prayers. I am learning how to understand and enjoy the life change of everyone in the school and to witness God's work and God's presence. I believe anything that happens in class or in the school is not accidental, and there must be some purpose. It is so joyful to see that God is molding each one of us at that same time and same place to make special instruments for His use in the future. This is truly a beautiful place to experience God's grace.

I understand that during the school years, in addition to searching for knowledge and truth in class and practicing service in the church, there are two important courses that may not be offered in school. These two courses are humility and love. We know that learning how to "be" Christlike is more important than how to "do." And the Christlike character is basically humility and love. When Jesus Christ was on the way to the cross, He also taught these two important courses to His disciples about humility and love (John 13-16). Humility and love are my most difficult courses but the most needed courses for me to learn. Perhaps there will never be good teachers in the class to teach these two courses. But I praise the Lord that He gives me three years to use life to learn these lessons.

Do we see life change? Of course we do. I notice that my life change comes from my heart and as a change of attitude. Let me use 3Es to share some of my thoughts about this life change since I have come to the school. These 3Es are: Enjoyment, Encouragement, and Engagement.

Enjoyment means to enjoy what we are given and what we have for our portion. We have promises from the Father, reconciliation from the Son, and protection from the Holy Spirit. We should rejoice and enjoy the heavy loading of studies in school and of services in church and face the pressure at work or in family or any other place with joy. This is because God wants us to live with peace and joy in Christ.

Encouragement is more horizontal to the human relationship. We should encourage one another to turn to God to enjoy the abundant grace He has given to us.

Engagement emphasizes our obedience to God while serving the Lord. We should focus on God, not human beings, and respond to God's rebuke, not other people's comments to or about us. We live for the Lord not ourselves or someone else. Therefore, repentance and thanksgiving are our responsibilities to fulfill the law of Christ.

Every time when I think about the reason why Jesus Christ asked Peter three times in John 21: 15-19 "Do you love me?", I fear again. This is my third time to be afraid. The first time when I feared, I hadn't accepted the Lord. I tried to use knowledge and abilities to overcome my desires without God. The second time when I feared, I knew He loved me first, and I still hesitated to respond His love. Now the fear I have is that I have to love the Lord before following Him. He is demanding that I follow Him now. I look at myself and realize that I receive more but give less. I am not humble. I don't love the Lord as He does me. I fear that I fall far short of the glory of God, my Lord.

Gratefully, I learn from God's word that my fear of God is His inspiration "I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me" (Jer 32:40). The fear is a reminder for me not to turn away from God. Christ has set me free because He says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18) I devote my life to the Lord, and I fear no more.
I thank God for taking me through different stages of fear over so many years to learn how to build a relationship with the Lord and to understand the true meaning of life.

Friends, I don't know if you still fear. What do you fear? I hope that with this essay and my sharing, it will also help you to experience God and to know the meaning of your own life. May God's glory be always with you!

The year 1990 was the time when I began seriously thinking about my commitment to full time ministry. I joined the Chinese Christian Herald Crusades as a full time ministry worker in 1995. In 2000 I was admitted to the M. Div. program at ATS I rejoined CCHC following my graduation. As I reflect on the past 15 years since my desire with prayers to the Lord for His leadership, I have to say that I marvel at the abundance of God's grace and His provisions to me and my family. Recently at a restaurant worker ministry conference, a pastor said, "all service to God begins with love." This sermon became a timely reminder and a spiritual-uplifting experience. Truly, serving God is not merely a job, though ministries may intermingle with many administrative duties and complicated personnel matters. It is my belief that our own mentality and motivation will set the course of direction for our service. Desire to serve the Lord must come from within the heart. The commitment begins with love.

I am now committed to full time ministry at CCHC; yet our co-workers may sometimes tend to confuse ministries and office routines. In order to maintain a right attitude to serve our Lord, one must have a healthy and strong spiritual life with love flowing from within and manifesting in his daily life; be always submissive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit; and better still, be sustained through encouragement, support, recognition and prayer from brothers and sisters in Christ.
Mentoring is a process that takes place within the context of a trusting relationship. The annual Alliance Theological Seminary Internship Workshop is designed to prepare mentoring pastors or lay supervisors and prospective interns for meaningful, successful internships, and to move them toward a lifelong pattern of mentoring.

The workshop is a fun, interactive experience, with many opportunities to practice mentoring skills as they are taught. Those who participate become conditioned to seek a life of constant ministry enrichment as they see a biblical model, adopt a life-style of effective ministry relationships, establish and nurture the bonding necessary to intern-mentor relationships, and identify and practice the skills of interpersonal relationships and of ministry.

The 2005 ATS commencement was held at the Westchester County Cemter on May 16. It was a memorable event for all who attended. Among those who were awarded the Master of Divinity Degrees, were two students who majored in Chinese Ministries: James Chang and YuLin Evan Liu. They continue to seek God's guidance for their future ministries.

James Chang is seeking a pastoral postion.
YuLin Evan Liu is doing three months of externship in Long Island Alliance Church for the summer. After then, he will continue his study.
Alumni Update

**Scarlet Huang** (1999) joined the ministry of the OC International this year, preparing to go to China in the near future.

**Tak Tong Lee** (2002), after serving in the Eglise Alliance Chinoise de Paris for two years, was ordained on May 15.

**Peter Kwong** (1998) after a year of furlough in the States, Peter and his family are preparing to go back to the mission field with GO International.

**Mel Leung** (2000)'s wife, ChiLim, went to be with the Lord on February 8. She left two daughters and a son with Mel.

**Michael Liang** (1994), after a year of furlough in the States, returned to Panama for another term with C&MA as missionary serving in Panama Chinese Alliance Church.

**Tong Su** (2002 Dec) is now serving in The Church of Grace to Fujianese, NYC.

**Man Kong Novy Yiu** (2001 Dec) joined the staff of Fifty Ninth Street Lutheran Brethren last April.

Pastors Retreat

From March 14-15 of 2005, the Chinese Studies Program held the fourth Pastors Retreat with the theme of "Drawing to Near God". Over 30 pastors from New York and nearby states attended this retreat. Co-workers made use of this opportunity to support one another through sharing, prayer and waiting upon the Lord.

Courses Offered

**Rockland Campus**

**Planting and Growing Healthy Chinese Church** (3 credits)
Instructor: Dr. John Ng
September 6-December 13  Tuesday  1:15pm-4:30pm

**Chinese Preaching Seminar** (3 credits)
Instructor: Prof. Stanley Kwong
September 7-December 14  Wednesday  9:00am-12:15pm

**Mission Outreach in the Chinese Church** (2 credits)
Instructor: Dr. Cyrus Lam
January 9-13, 2006  Monday to Friday  9:00am-4:30pm

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