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DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SMALL GROUPS
BY MENTORING AND COACHING PRACTICES

Written by

CORINNA SUK YIN HO

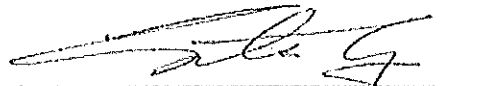
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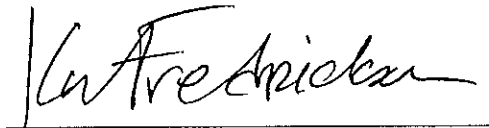
Doctor of Ministry

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upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



Silas Ng



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DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SMALL GROUPS
BY MENTORING AND COACHING PRACTICES

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

CORINNA SUK YIN HO
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ABSTRACT

Discipleship and Leadership Development through Small Groups by Mentoring and Coaching Practices

Corinna Suk Yin Ho

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2018

Moving people from explorers of Christ, to believers of Christ, to Christ-centered followers of Jesus is the discipleship-focus of Broadway Church (BWC). To grow everyone toward maturity in Christ is the purpose of the church ministries. Nevertheless, spiritual growth to maturity for many of the Chinese-speaking congregants is difficult, though not impossible. The impediment to spiritual growth is constituted by various factors: being raised under the cultivation of atheism, the rule of colonialism or communism, the continuing political movement, traditional cultures and values, etc. By and large, not many of the congregants are enthusiastic about discipleship, or passionate about transformation to Christ-likeness. Overall, the lack of committed followers and leaders to serve in the kingdom of God is the challenge of the Chinese Ministry.

In light of the impediment to the spiritual growth of the Chinese-speaking congregants, the objective of this project is to develop a paradigm to encourage spiritual formation among them. To that end, this project seeks to adopt the Spirit-led mentoring and coaching practices through small groups to attain the said objective. Some effective spiritual disciplines such as Loyola's Exercises, Lectio Divina, prayer, etc., will be identified and incorporated into the practice process. The goals of this project are twofold: the first goal is to develop a model to enhance spiritual growth and empower followers to become leaders of the Chinese Ministry; and the second goal is to understand how to build up mentoring and coaching relationships that are effective for discipleship and leadership development.

This paper will reveal a strategy that enhances spiritual growth and leadership development for the Chinese-speaking congregants. It will discuss the resources, tools and approaches that will be used for assessment. Finally, it will evaluate whether the project is successful or not and the corresponding reason.

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PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Jesus empowers the church to “make disciples” of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Undoubtedly, Jesus’ Commission to the church has to begin with evangelism that introduces Christian faith which enables people to make a decision for Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the Commission must not end at evangelism; for at its very core, it lays out the mandate of making disciples of Jesus. As evangelical organisations affirm, the ultimate destination of evangelism is discipleship.¹ We are “disciples” rather than “Christians”, as Alexander Campbell suggests, for we are followers of Jesus on the way.² Even if we call ourselves “Christians” then, we are always Christians-in-progress because we are still learning and following Jesus, as nobody can expect to be graduated from Jesus’ discipleship. Jesus’ call to people is a call of discipleship, which is an invitation to follow him by forming a personal relationship with Jesus for life. Discipleship is the only form in which Christian faith can exist.³ This is the conclusion of Eduard Schweizer’s careful and detailed exegesis of the Gospel of Mark. Bonhoeffer also contends that “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”⁴

Evangelism must be followed by discipleship or else it does not fulfill its utmost purpose. Discipleship is the continuation of leading people to experience Jesus after the

¹ Mortimer Arias, *Announcing The Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 1984), 101-108.

² Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to St. Mark* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), 49.

³ *Ibid.*, 386.

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963), 50-51.

moment of conversion, which is essential for building a relationship with the Lord to whom they commit to for life. It further invites people not only to enter into God's kingdom, but also to stay in the kingdom that Jesus proclaims in his first preaching (Mark 1:15), which is taught to his disciples throughout and till the end of his earthly ministry (Matthew 26:29). This implies that followers of Jesus are called to live lives in and for the kingdom of God, that is, to be the witnesses of the kingdom, to experience the forgiveness and fellowship of this kingdom, to participate in the blessings of the reign of God, and to engage in the services of his reign.⁵ This is the kind of discipleship that Jesus invented and toward which evangelism must aim from the very beginning. The church exists not so much for its own sake nor for numerical growth but for making disciples. Thus, to make Jesus' Gospel real in the lives of the people of faith communities and to observe his commands and teachings in daily life is vital to Christianity. Discipleship is the kernel of Christian faith.

Nevertheless, non-discipleship is a universal phenomenon in the church today,⁶ as Willard argues, no matter if it is or is not ignored by local churches. In churches worldwide, many are Christians without being disciples of Jesus. They are Christians, not disciples or apprentices of Jesus, who do not follow Jesus in their daily existence by believing what Jesus believed, doing what Jesus did, and becoming what Jesus is. Willard observes that many proclaimed Christians keep up a consumer or client relationship with

⁵ Arias, *Announcing The Reign of God*, 105.

⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 301-302.

the church, without maintaining a whole-life devotion to God.⁷ When people desire to be converted to Christianity, they may be eager to fulfill all that their church requires them to do in order to be permitted baptism. However, after participating in the baptismal ceremony, many of the converts are not keen to take the next step of discipleship to become mature in Christ Jesus. Simply put, the non-discipleship issue is commonly found in church.

The main reason for this is a flaw of faith that discipleship is perceived as a non-salvation issue. Many converts have the understanding that spiritual maturity or discipleship is irrelevant to the saving faith to which they commit at baptism. If you ask those converts who say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, you will probably be told that saving faith is believing Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead.⁸ Their understanding of the Good News is that Jesus Christ has done something about our sins, that he died on the cross, and that he lives today to offer his forgiveness to us. Indeed, in John 3:16, God declares that the work of Jesus Christ on the cross provides forgiveness of our sins. Truly, through faith, people receive Jesus and his forgiveness. The sin problem is resolved and people can be assured of going to heaven and of attaining eternal life. Thus, having faith in Christ is understood as believing in Christ for salvation so that Jesus can remove the guilt of sin and can offer eternal life. As such, what matters is solely one's faith in Christ, not one's years of Christian life on the earth, for people think that they have

⁷ Ibid., 301.

⁸ Ibid., 42-43.

already committed their eternal destiny to God at the moment of conversion. Therefore, discipleship is taken as more of a moral matter than of the saving faith that people proclaim and commit to at conversion. Discipleship is, thus, perceived as a non-salvation issue which does not need to be settled in order to get one onto the way to heaven, even though it is the very essence of Christian faith. Nonetheless, all this is the essence of the matter whether we trust Christ Jesus to be the Lord who saved and reigns in our life in every aspect, or whether we merely trust the sin-remission set up through Jesus.⁹ As far as Jesus' Good News in the four Gospels is concerned, we must ask whether Christian faith about believing Jesus is only as a guilt remover to resolve our sin problem; or it is about believing him in every dimension of our real life and having a close relationship with him.

Discipleship is, indeed, significant to eternal life. In 1 John 5:11-12, it states that he or she “who has the Son has life” for “this [eternal] life is in his Son” then. We, therefore, have to walk in a personal and interactive relationship with Christ Jesus, through which a new kind of eternal life from above would thus be formed. John 17:3 records the only words of eternal life spoken directly from Jesus, which states that eternal life is “that they [Jesus' disciples] may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” As Willard comments, the biblical meaning of “know” always refers to an intimate relationship,¹⁰ so the eternal life that Jesus speaks of is not merely a head knowledge about God, but an intimate and interactive relationship with him. The faith that we proclaim at

⁹ Ibid., 48-49.

¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

the moment of conversion to Jesus is meant to guide us to the Spirit-given eternal life through an on-going personal life with God. To be sure, this interactive relationship and personal life with the One to whom our faith is committed, does constitute the essential part of what we call Christian discipleship. In light of the above, discipleship is not only a salvation issue, but also the very core of Christian faith.

When church congregants are not attentively responding to the call of a discipleship life, it must not be taken lightly by any church leaders or community of faith. Therefore, this paper aims to address the issue of non-discipleship which is also found among the Chinese congregation at Broadway Church (BWC) where I am presently serving and overseeing its Chinese Ministry. The mission of BWC is discipleship-oriented, to produce fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Growing the congregants to become mature in Christ is the perpetual focus of the church. The church ministries are, by and large, discipleship-oriented, aiming to move people from explorers of Christ, to believers of Christ, to Christ-centered followers of Jesus. In spite of the many choices of lively discipleship programs that BWC provides, those who actively participate in these programs for spiritual formation are only a small percentage of the whole church. Like many Christians in North America, the Christians at BWC who are persistently learning to live and strive towards maturity in Christ are the minority of the whole congregation. Similar situations occur among the Chinese congregants of the church.

Spiritual growth to maturity for the Chinese-speaking congregants of the church is difficult, though not impossible. In addition to the flawed foundation of faith that has been discussed above, the impediment to the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants is

composed of various factors such as the cultivation of atheism, worship of ancestors, rule of communism or colonialism, clash of political movements, and the influence of ethnic cultures and values. As well, language and cultural differences also contribute to the sluggish spiritual growth of the Chinese group. Many of the Chinese congregants at BWC generally do not have a problem with understanding and speaking English; nevertheless, to converse in English in a social setting is one matter, but to share one's inner life and to make spiritual friends in English is another matter. This is not only a language, but also a cultural issue. Most of the Chinese congregants of the church have not grown up in the English-speaking world of western culture, so, they do not readily live and merge with the mainstream English-speaking Caucasians in the church. Thus, the Chinese Ministry is functioning as a language-cum-cultural bridge by providing discipleship programs for the Chinese congregants for their spiritual growth. However, with the lack of mature spiritual leaders and resources, the Chinese Ministry has not been effective in moving the Chinese congregants towards maturity in Christ or for advancing them from Jesus followers to Christian leaders.

In light of the impediments to the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants and the challenges of the Chinese Ministry, the objective of this project is to develop a paradigm that encourages spiritual formation and enhances leadership development among the Chinese congregants of BWC. To that end, this project seeks to adopt Spirit-led mentoring and coaching practices through small groups. While the former approach has to do more with people's inner beings for spiritual formation, moving people towards spiritual maturity with Christ-like characters, the latter approach aims at working on

people's outward doings for leadership development, moving people from followers to become leaders of the Chinese Ministry. In these practice processes, some effective spiritual disciplines such as Lectio Divina, meditative and contemplative prayer will be identified and incorporated in small group meetings.

Spiritual mentoring has been a spiritual practice for healing and renewal of souls throughout church history.¹¹ It was embraced by the Desert Fathers since the early age; during the Reformation period, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ignatius of Loyala and Teresa of Avila also assume the practice. More recently, Henri Nouwen, A.W.Tozer, Richard Foster, Eugene Peterson and Dallas Willard are some of the prominent pastors and gurus of spirituality who adopt spiritual mentoring for soul nurturing as well. Spiritual mentoring is fundamentally about transformation of a person's inner self by the education of one's heart. It leads the heart to move towards God, teaches the heart to listen for God's will, and encourages the heart to respond to it. Thus, mentoring in Christian faith facilitates and promotes one's desire to know God intimately, and to seek for a deeper relationship with Him.¹² It deals with the view of purpose and direction of life, focusing on the spiritual growth of who we want to be.¹³ In sum, the practice is to help one become better in serving God, society, and people, as well as to march towards the goal of perfection like Jesus.

¹¹ Tony Horshall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Faith Journey* (Abingdon, UK: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 33-34.

¹² Keith R. Anderson & Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 24-25.

¹³ Walter C. Wright, Jr., *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2004), viii, xvi, xxvi, xx.

For coaching, the core of it is a spiritual process too. It helps people listen to God to find out what God wants them to do in life or in ministry and to accomplish it.¹⁴ It is not telling people what to do, not giving them advice, but helping them discover their gifts and God's mission for them, and learning to play well to accomplish it. In spite of its spiritual nature, the essence of coaching is about support. The coach comes alongside people to assist them in responding to God's agenda for them so that they may grow in Christ-like character and may realize their fullest potential. Nonetheless, on the one hand, none of us knows exactly God's agenda for others. On the other hand, most people do not always know where their destinations are. Some may have a general idea of where they want to go, but still, it may not be clear to them where it is and how to get there. The coach comes to disciple people to find for themselves what God calls them to do and to do it so that they may realize their full potential.¹⁵ Coaching is like another set of eyes and ears for people so that it gives them a sense of perspective, which is forward-looking and action-oriented.¹⁶ It provides people to be coached with the focus that is necessary to get to where they desire to reach. Therefore, we may say that coaching concentrates more on tangible goals, although spiritual growth could possibly be the result of coaching practice.

Spiritual mentoring and coaching both comprise some common elements and principles in the practice processes. Neither are a technique, nor can they be presented as a

¹⁴ Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 23-24.

¹⁵ Ibid, 17-26.

¹⁶ Ibid., 18-19.

formula. They do not come with standard steps that apply to all. In both practices, the Holy Spirit is the center of the processes, to whom the mentor or the coach directs people to actively attend.¹⁷ Listening to the voice of the Spirit is the important part of both practices, for guiding and discerning what to do and how to do it. Those to be mentored or coached must learn to listen attentively to, not the mentor or the coach, but the Holy Spirit. Also, the very heart of mentoring and coaching is relational. The relationship between the mentor and the mentoree as well as the coach and the coachee is, thus, crucial to the effectiveness of the practices. The essences of listening and relationship in mentoring and coaching practices will be discussed further below.

The goals of this project are twofold: first, to develop a model to enhance spiritual growth and to empower followers to become ministry leaders; second, to explore how to build up mentoring and coaching relationships for discipleship and leadership development. The outline of the paper is sketched into three parts. Part One of this paper will explore the socio-political, social-economic, and cultural components that contribute to the stagnant spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants. It will also review the structural and resource factors that could hinder or help advance effective discipleship and the leadership development of the Chinese group of the church. Finally, it will explain why the practices of mentoring and coaching, along with certain spiritual disciplines, are adopted to address the challenge and the need of the Chinese Ministry.

¹⁷ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 44-47. Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 24.

Part Two of the paper will focus on a theological reflection on why spiritual formation in Christianity is essential and what its implications are. Also, the soils and conditions that may bloom Christian formation among Jesus' followers will be discussed. It then will explore how spiritual formation for individuals could be worked out by the Holy Spirit through small groups. Finally, it will discuss the key marks of maturity in Christ for individuals and for faith groups.

Based on the observations of Part One and Part Two, Part Three of the paper will propose a strategy that will enhance spiritual growth and leadership development for the Chinese congregants. In this last part, how mentoring and coaching relationships could be established for enhancing spiritual growth and developing potential leaders through one-to-one or group meetings will be examined. Discussions on the resources, tools, and approaches that can be used for assessment will be followed. Finally, it will explain how the result will be evaluated and will conclude whether or not the project is successful. In sum, the thesis of this paper is to enhance spiritual transformation and leadership development among the Chinese-speaking congregants at BWC, through small groups by the practices of mentoring and coaching.

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

Broadway Church (BWC) is a multi-cultural church comprised of different ethnic groups, though its congregants are mainly Caucasian Canadians. In spite of the different languages and cultures of the congregants, it remains as a one-congregation-one-language church, where everyone attends the Sunday services in English. However, simultaneous translations into Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish are provided during the services. Every ethnic group is welcomed to the church and all cultures are well respected by this faith community. Nevertheless, BWC is an English-speaking church whose development and direction are driven towards the cultural landscape of the English-speaking world of Canada. Thus, in considering cultural and language aspects, the needs for the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants cannot be fully met by the church. The Chinese congregants are mostly immigrants who have come from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Although many of the Chinese congregants speak English, it can be a challenge for them to share completely their inner lives or emotions in English, which is not their mother tongue. Furthermore, it may not be easy for them to build mutual, personal relationship with the English-speaking people in church, who may not understand

Chinese culture. In other words, the discipleship programs of the church may be helpful for the spiritual growth of the English-speaking congregants, however, they may not be effective in the growth of the Chinese congregants in their journey of faith. Language and cultural barriers to the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants do exist and have to be overcome. That is to say, the soils and conditions for advancing their spiritual maturity in Christ need to be further cultivated, which is the very challenge of the Chinese Ministry of BWC. In spite of this, the church has been doing well in providing a friendly and safe environment for all ethnic groups of the congregation who feel at home to seek for Christian faith freely. Before discussing further the challenges and the needs of the Chinese Ministry, the contexts of the Chinese Community and the Chinese Ministry are now turned.

The Context of the Chinese Community at BWC

BWC is a community church with two thousand people attending its Sunday services, of whom the majority are local Canadians. It is located in a residential area of Vancouver where people of middle class or below find their homes. It is also a place where Chinese immigrants are found in increasing numbers in recent years. Since the Chinese Ministry was started five years ago, the number of Chinese congregants has been steadily increasing to over two hundred people today. This constitutes ten percent of the church congregation. The socio-political, social-economic, and cultural influences that contribute to the spiritual growth from congregants of Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong are different from one place to another.

Socio-Political Influence

The rule of communism in Mainland China and the rule of colonialism in Taiwan and Hong Kong result in very different socio-political influences on the congregants from these different places. First, the rule of communism brings about three obstacles to the spiritual growth of the congregants from China: atheism, political movements, and skepticism. Since the communist party took over the rule of Mainland China about seventy years ago, the Chinese nation has been growing under the cultivation of atheism. People in China are taught that no God created the universe. Instead, human beings are the pivotal point of the world and the will and the power of men and women can overcome all the world's challenges. A new and ideal China could be re-created with the ideology of communism.¹ In the process of establishing the new China, however, the whole country was turned into a tumult of political movements such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. This series of political movements lasted for over twenty years until the economic reform and open policy was implemented in 1978. In these terrifying years of political movements, human nature was severely distorted, the goodness of humanity was seriously harmed, and class struggles between and among people were found everywhere throughout the nation. Interpersonal relationships were alienated, including those between spouses, parents, and children, as thousands and thousands of families were

¹ Wilson Wong, *The Challenge of Chinese Ministry in Canada* (Toronto, Ontario: Christian Communication Inc., 2008), 130-132.

torn apart by the political strife. People's dignity and personal rights were recklessly trampled on in those years of class struggles.²

Even though the nation was then turned from political movements to economic reform after 1978, the ideologies of communism still dominated people's thoughts and minds. Through education and the public promotion of the country, people were tuned to embrace skepticism and materialism and that they should only believe in and trust themselves.³ Skepticism suggests that people should only accept what has been thought through and what has been truly comprehended by them. Any ideas or sayings that one doubts about or cannot fully understand should be rejected. Thus, it is politically incorrect for people to turn to the Triune God of Christianity for help or comfort. Unless people realize that finite human beings are unable to fathom the infinite knowledge of the universe, and that men and women with sinful natures are incapable of fairly and fully differentiating between good and truth and the evil and falsehood of the world, they will not accept Jesus Christ to be their Saviour of life.

In sum, all this brings the congregants from Mainland China difficulty in trusting people, as they grew up in an environment that attunes them to suspect the intentions of love and good deeds of strangers. Their worldview is, therefore, self-centered rather than God-centered. They focus more on the present life than the eternal life of the Bible, which to them is only a dream of a utopian future. Many of them demand a rational proof of

² Ibid., 123-129.

³ Ibid., 133.

God's existence and critically argue about the inerrancy of the Holy Scripture and that the Bible may not be taken as the Word of God. Nevertheless, not all the congregants are rooted in these negative influences. People who are under forty-five years old are the generation that was born after the years of political movements. They had the advantage during the years of "reform and open policy"⁴ of having opportunities of receiving education overseas or working outside the country. These men and women have had integration with western cultures and values, in the same way as the congregants from Taiwan and Hong Kong, about whom we now turn in our discussion.

As Taiwan and Hong Kong were colonies for many decades before the twenty-first century, this gives rise to these people having much exposure to Christianity and western values. In these years of colonial rule, evangelical organizations from western countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, established missionary outposts in the lands of Taiwan and Hong Kong as a way to attain their evangelical strategies in Asian regions. As a result, many Christian or Catholic schools were built for junior and high-level education, particularly in Hong Kong. Thus, at school, many people were somewhat familiar with biblical stories, and learned who and what Jesus was about, and acquired some basic knowledge of Christianity. Also, people were socially introduced to the western values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law, of which the very essences are found in the concepts of free will and in the high value of human life in the Holy Bible. All

⁴ Fang Cai, *Interpretation of the Reform and Open Policy in China* (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2018), 3-28, 64-84, 131-145.

this explains why the Chinese congregants from Hong Kong and Taiwan are more receptive to Christianity than those from Mainland China in exploring the Christian faith. Although the former also reflect and ask critically about theological questions of why, what, and how as the latter do, the former would not be as quick to reject the Christian faith even if the answers to those questions could hardly be satisfactory to them. For instance, what is the Trinity of God? How can Jesus be fully human and fully divine when he was incarnated on earth? People may not get acceptable answers to these kinds of theological questions, nevertheless, congregants who grew up in Taiwan and Hong Kong are generally receptive to the saying that many unknowns could be true and mysteries do exist in this world, which are beyond the reach of their logical and intellectual limits.

Indeed, in these colonies of Hong Kong and Taiwan, their lands were good soil for evangelism. However, the political and social systems that are established in these places impose control over people's minds and thoughts rather than liberating them. Neither do the educational systems cultivate people to speak their minds, or foster people to think creatively. Instead, people are educated to submit and to follow rather than to lead. It is found that the congregants from Hong Kong and Taiwan are good team players in the church ministries. They are co-operative and are good co-workers, although they could hesitate to assume leadership roles.

By and large, the congregants from Taiwan and Hong Kong are open to the Christian faith. After conversion, they gradually accept the biblical value of agape love, the worldview of God-centeredness, the second coming of Jesus, the final judgment, and eternal life to come. Regardless of whether they seriously observe Jesus' commands and

teachings or not, they respect the Holy Scripture as the Word of God; and they accept that, as Christians, it is good for them to strive towards the goal of Christ-likeness. Nonetheless, to move them from followers to leaders in Christ, and to be matured in Christ, is still a challenge and a need for the Chinese Ministry.

Social-Economic Influence

The social-economic influences on the congregants from Mainland China are different from those on the congregants from Taiwan and Hong Kong. In China, since the economic reform and open policy was implemented in 1978, the whole nation has been undergoing an enormous transformation. In these past forty years, China has gone through a great change from new economic orders and by the stimulus of huge commodity productions.⁵ This economic whirlwind and stimulus of commercial production made tremendous differences to people's lifestyles, ethical concepts, as well as social values and structures. Traditionally, Confucianism represents the foundation for the ethics and morals of the Chinese nation. Nonetheless, its thoughts and ideas have been greatly destructed during the twenty years of political movements and class struggles prior to the economic reforms. Moreover, after the years of economic reform, people find less and less interest in the dogmatic moralism which is preached by the Communist Party. Thus, the ethical and moral system of China has been like a vacuum, without substance. During the economic reforms, people embraced materialism and served money that the primary meaning of life

⁵ Wong, *The Challenge of Chinese Ministry in Canada*, 134-135.

for most people was to become financially rich.⁶ As the desire of being wealthy became so strong, all immoral or unethical means could easily be justified, and many ethical boundaries became blurred and moral standards vanished.

This ideology of worshipping money influences not only the society in China, but also the Chinese immigrants and their next generation in North America today. Indeed, it is easier for immigrants from China to accept Christ and to be baptised than for those who live in Mainland China. Nonetheless, the influence of money worship and the affluent environment of North America cause the congregants from China to pursue comfortable and materialistic lives, rather than striving towards the goal of Jesus Christ. In fact, utilitarianism may explain why these congregants convert to Christianity. On the one hand, they desire to attain protection and providence from the mighty God as well as care and love from the church people in this present life. On the other hand, they want to secure eternal life after their physical death. Since all this is obtainable by converting to Christianity, they have no reason to reject Jesus and not be converted. However, for daily devotion, tithing, serving, observing Jesus' commands, or anything that requires them to pay a price, they may calculate whether or not it is worth it for them to act on. Thus, if it is not easy for the congregants from China to convert to Christianity, it would even be more difficult for them to grow to maturity in Christ, though not impossible. Simply put, these congregants desire for early retirement and seek pleasure in life. This same mentality also occurs with some of those from Taiwan and Hong Kong.

⁶ Ibid., 135-136.

For the congregants from Taiwan and Hong Kong, two factors obstruct their spiritual growth: busyness and a goal of early retirement. In the last six decades, both Taiwan and Hong Kong experienced a prosperous period of economic take-off.⁷ They have been working hard for personal ambitions and dreams, and many of them are successful in either businesses or professional fields. In fact, it is observed that some Chinese could retire from work and live a decent life at the early age of fifty years old or earlier. After migrating to North America, some of these congregants continue to pursue their ambitions in North America, just as they did in the past in their homelands. Thus, these congregants are always busy with their personal goals and dreams, rather than sparing time and energy to take care of their spiritual conditions. On the contrary, some affluent congregants prefer to live out an early retirement and to enjoy leisure. In either case, daily devotion, serving people, and doing the will of God hardly seem to be the congregants' priorities in life.

In sum, serving money as the core of life, busyness, and early retirement are the social-economic factors that generally distract the congregants from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong from spiritual growth. Some of these congregants merely believe Jesus is God, not believe in Jesus. In other words, they believe in the existence of God who is Jesus, and thus, they accept the baptismal ceremony. However, believing Jesus is God is quite different from believing in Jesus, for the latter means believing Jesus in every dimension of life, observing his words and commands in daily life. If they do not see the importance

⁷ Shu Yong Liu, *The 20th Century of Hong Kong Economy* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2004), 35-107.

of living out Jesus' commands in ordinary life, they can hardly be spiritually transformed; or even if they are, it is only very mild and slow.

Cultural Influence

No matter whether they grew up in Mainland China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong, Chinese people are taught that men and women should be morally or ethically good in behaviour. However, they believe that people can strive for ultimate good by themselves through some prominent teachings or religions such as Confucius doctrines or Buddhism. This thinking leads to two ideas that obstruct spiritual growth: (a) religion is a matter of morals and ethics that has little to do with social or spiritual needs; (b) all religions are the same that drive people to become good, and Christianity is only one of the choices. As they believe that Christianity is only one of many choices for people to become good, what attracts them to explore Christianity is the genuine love and kind deeds of church people. In other words, their Christian faith is built on people and their deeds, not on Jesus and his words. This means that whenever church people disappoint them, which could happen, they may leave and turn to other religions or churches. Also, as they perceive that religion is a moral matter of striving towards the goal of being good, they do not see the significance of Christian discipleship, serving people, or being together for church life.

Culturally, most Chinese would not openly give their comments on people's wrong doings or their dishonoured marks from the past, neither would they publicly reveal their thoughts and critiques on others. Since childhood, they are taught to mind their words, not to embarrass or to criticize people openly. Maintaining a person's good impression

publicly as well as a harmonic relationship between one another is the social norm in Chinese society. This means that people cover their real thoughts and feelings from others. They hesitate about disclosing their weaknesses, problems, and emotions to others, unless the persons can undoubtedly be trusted. In other words, it takes a long time to build trust between one another among Chinese, particularly those from Mainland China. By and large, Chinese people keep control of their emotions and feelings inside, rather than show them outwardly.

This emotional reticence explains the phenomena that most of the Chinese congregants are not as expressive as we would like them to be. Thus, it is common for people not to share their lives in depth with others in fellowship or group meetings. Because they feel uneasy to share difficulties or challenges that they are actually facing, they may simply hide them. Likewise, they hesitate to argue or debate openly with teachers or preachers on biblical values and truth, for they do not want to harm the harmonious relationship with one another. Thus, it is hard to tell if the Chinese congregants truly believe the words of God and practice them in their lives. This culture of making everyone look good, maintaining harmonious relationships on the surface, and not easily having mutual trust between one another does not promote spiritual growth in Christians.

After all, Christianity is not about a religion of doing good but is about a relationship with Christ, leading to goodness. Spiritual growth in Christianity is about following the words of Jesus, not the ideas of men and women. In sum, the cultural influences on the Chinese cause them to not openly deal with their sins and darkness inside. Also, biblical values and worldviews do not effectively penetrate people's minds

and hearts to renew and to transform them. Until and unless people are willing to open up and admit their sinfulness and keep in step with the Holy Spirit, they can hardly be transformed to be like Jesus. In fact, they could be bold to acknowledge their sins before Christ Jesus and to believe that the Almighty God has accepted them as they are. Indeed, Jesus loved us by shedding his blood on the cross to forgive our sins so that harmonious relationships with God and with people are truly restored.

The Context of the Chinese Ministry at BWC

As Chinese immigrants have been increasingly living near the area of the church, more Chinese are attracted to BWC. A Chinese fellowship was, thus, started seven years ago to help them settle at BWC and to make it their spiritual home. Since then, the number of Chinese congregants has increased steadily, and the Chinese Ministry was established to meet their increasing needs five years ago.

Purpose and Function of the Chinese Ministry

The Chinese Ministry aims to help the Chinese-speaking people, mainly Mandarin and Cantonese, to become followers of Jesus Christ. The Chinese Ministry serves as a bridge to overcome language and cultural barriers that the Chinese people may encounter in their journey of faith. That is to say, its ultimate function is to fulfill the church's mission of producing fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. This mission aims at moving people from unbelievers to Christ-seekers, to Christ-believers, and to become fully devoted followers of Christ. To achieve this mission, the Chinese Ministry needs to provide services to foster both evangelism and discipleship among the Chinese congregants.

Currently, the Chinese Ministry provides the services of pastoral care, monthly lunch meetings, and outreach ministry to strengthen evangelism. Also, it provides Bible classes, small groups, counseling, and retreats to encourage discipleship among the Chinese congregants. However, to pastor the Chinese who need to overcome language and cultural barriers to grow in Christ, more passionate followers and qualified leaders of Jesus are surely needed. The only pastor of the Chinese Ministry needs assistance from the Chinese groups to shepherd well the over two hundred Chinese-speaking congregants and to support their increasing needs.

Structure and Resources of the Chinese Ministry

As discussed, BWC is an English-speaking church where all the congregants of the different ethnic groups attend the English Sunday services, during which translations of different languages are provided. Besides Chinese, currently, the ethnic groups of Brazilian, Korean, Spanish, and Filipino are all running under the Cultural Ministries, which is one of the nine key ministries of the church. Among all the church ministries, the Chinese congregants mostly relate to the children's and youth ministries, which help edify their next generation. In the past years, the church has been striving to rejuvenate the congregation, therefore, the ministries to children, youth, and young adults are given emphasis and priority to utilize church resources. Although the church would want the many colors of cultural groups to be manifested in the congregation, it can only give limited resources to the Cultural Ministries. With constraint on resources, the Chinese Ministry has been striving to provide some basic needs for discipleship such as Bible

study, small groups, fellowship lunches, outreach, and pastoral care. However, in the midst of the challenges and the needs of the Chinese Ministry, the resources available to grow the Chinese congregants in their spiritual journey and for leadership development among them is not adequate.

The Challenge and the Need of the Chinese Ministry

Among the Chinese congregants, about thirty percent are below the age of forty-five years old, 40 percent are aged between forty-five and sixty-five, and 30 percent are above sixty-five years old. The overall distribution of the congregants from Mainland China and from Taiwan and Hong Kong is about 60 percent and 40 percent respectively. In light of the above-mentioned factors, the spiritual conditions of the Chinese congregants can be summarized as below.

Due to their exposure to the values, worldviews, and cultures of the western world, the congregants who are below forty-five years old are generally open to the Christian faith and desire to pursue the meaning of life. As many of them have university or college education, they can understand the concepts of biblical truths, are able to comprehend the doctrines of Christianity, and are open to learn new things or to accept matters that are unknown to them. However, they can also be easily distracted by many anti-god ideas and popular trends, and are attracted to the pursuit of success and the wealth of the world. All this keeps them too busy to think of spiritual growth and to spend time with God. However, they are energetic, teachable, and willing to take risks, and are the potential leaders of the next generation for the Chinese Ministry. They need to grow to maturity in

Christ, from followers to leaders in Jesus Christ, so that the Ministry can be developed with a future, and God's kingdom be expanded.

The Chinese congregants between forty-five and sixty-five years old mostly have plenty of life experience, which may include political turbulence, economic instability, social storm, success, failure, grievances, despair, joy, as well as life and death. Indeed, they have gone through so many ups and downs in life that they have become intellectually mature; however, not many of them are spiritually grown up. Some of them have been Christians and churchgoers for over twenty years. However, many of them have not yet been transformed to fully accept the Christian faith, nor have they truly acquired biblical truths to follow Jesus. By and large, those who come from Hong Kong and Taiwan are more receptive to Christian truths and doctrines than those from Mainland China. They are more open to strangers for friendship and allow others to know their inner thoughts and feelings more than those from China. Nevertheless, these Chinese congregants are either devoted to their own ambitions or engaged in the pleasures of retirement so that they only spare a little time for loving God and people. Overall, congregants of this age group are more equipped than the younger group to serve in church ministries such as leading worship, small groups, and Bible studies. They are dependable and responsible for any ministry commitment that they make. They are willing to be challenged and to learn new things. In fact, they are physically fit and skillfully sound in assisting the pastor of the Chinese Ministry, should they take Jesus to be the priority of their life. Indeed, they are significant in sustaining the Ministry at present as well as helping develop its future leadership.

Most of the congregants above sixty-five years old have retired and are living a steady and comfortable life with their families. They can spare relatively more time for church than the other two groups. Generally speaking, they are interested in small groups, fellowship, as well as listening to and sharing life with others, regardless of where they have come from. They are also willing to serve in the Ministry, if it does not demand that they get out of their comfort zone or to acquire new skills and knowledge. In fact, people of this age group have survived many tough experiences in life, good or bad, so that they have become mentally wise, emotionally steady, and intellectually grown up. However, it also means that they do not easily accept the values and worldviews of the Christian faith. Rather, but it takes a long time for their thoughts and behaviours to be changed by the teachings of biblical truths. Simply put, no obvious spiritual growth of the congregants of this age group can be expected, though they may be interested in listening to and reflecting on God's Word. However, there are always exceptions among them, and importantly, the power of the Holy Spirit is unlimited, and He is ceaselessly working on God's people.

The Challenge: from Explorers to Believers

As stated above, the function of the Chinese Ministry is to comply with the church mission of producing fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. To achieve this mission, the Ministry needs to be constantly making disciples of Jesus, and it has to start with the Christ explorers. This implies that the concept of discipleship needs to be taught early in the evangelizing stage. While evangelism requires an openness of people towards God, discipleship demands a lifetime commitment of men and women to the God in whom they

believe. Early in their faith journey, Christ explorers need to know that following Jesus is a lifelong commitment. Also, the values and priorities of life such as time, money, justice, relationship, family, loving people, etc., must be taught according to Jesus' teachings and commands. In fact, Christ explorers must be prepared from the beginning that inevitably, they will have to pay a price for their Christian faith if they are genuinely to follow Jesus. Truly, God's salvation is free to everyone, yet, the grace of Jesus' salvation is costly in that discipleship to Jesus must not be taken lightly. Nevertheless, no matter how tactfully this is done, it is a challenge to teach Christ-seekers that there is no cheap grace in Jesus' saving work, and at the same time, to lead them see that God's salvation is worth the cost of discipleship in drawing them close to Jesus.

The Challenge: From Believers to Followers

Not every Christian believer is a follower of Jesus Christ, and this occurs among the Chinese congregants as well. That is to say, not everyone has a personal relationship with Jesus that causes them to observe his teachings in their daily life. Moving people from settling for their spiritual status quo to embracing a close relationship with Christ is crucial in leadership development. This is the challenge of the Chinese Ministry. In view of the spiritual condition of the Chinese congregants that has been discussed above, busyness in pursuing personal success, wealth, or for any other reasons, is one of the impediments to the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants below sixty-five years old. In fact, for this generation, most wants more individual time for families and for themselves. People spend many hours a day on the internet, cell phones, or electronic games; they seem to enjoy

more in the virtual world of information technology than in the real world outside. Thus, to ask people, as disciples of Jesus, to commit time and energy to love others through regularly meeting with them is surely a challenge to the Ministry.

The Need: From Followers to Leaders

The demands and needs of the Chinese congregants of BWC can hardly be met solely by the pastor of the Chinese Ministry. Leadership development is essential and crucial for expanding the Ministry in the long run, which would then provide the necessary human resources to enhance the ongoing spiritual growth of the congregants. For instance, small groups and Bible classes are crucial programs for advancing the spiritual transformation of the congregants. Thus, the ministry has to multiply leaders of small groups and increase teachers of the Mandarin and Cantonese Bible classes.

Leadership development is inevitably discipleship. The Chinese Ministry needs to make the congregation aware of the importance and necessity of discipleship and to foster it among the congregants. Thus, encouraging discipleship or spiritual formation is the fundamental step towards leadership development. Only if the congregants are serious followers of Jesus can they be developed to become leaders in the Ministry. As discussed above, the congregants below forty-five years old are potential leaders of the next generation, while those between forty-five and sixty-five are crucial to sustain the Ministry at present and to help develop its future leadership. Thus, both age groups are the ones have to be strategically focused on for not only discipleship but also leadership development. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter attempts to review spiritual formation from three perspectives: what, why, and how. The study will reflect on what spiritual formation is about, why spiritual formation is significant, and how spiritual formation may occur. To the discussions of each of them we now turn.

What Spiritual Formation Is About

To explore the understandings and misunderstanding of spiritual formation, two resources, written by Richard Peace and Gordon Smith, are reviewed below.

Spiritual Transformation by Richard Peace

In his *Spiritual Transformation: Taking on the Character of Christ*, Richard Peace points out that spiritual formation is a process of change in the direction of God, that one is conformed to the image of Jesus and is living faithfully in his ways. He argues that in this process, spiritual dynamics can be identified to help transformation take place in everyday life. Since spiritual growth takes place slowly over time, rather than suddenly and instantly, he contends that we must have a mindset of becoming wholly like Jesus as a

life goal, and also to develop a lifestyle to bring about such transformation.¹ Peace quotes Romans chapters 12 and 13 to spell out the spiritual dynamics which he leads us to pay attention to for changes to occur in daily life. These spiritual dynamics are mainly: 1) renewing of minds, not conforming to the world and culture; 2) knowing ourselves, being aware of the need and areas for change; 3) repenting continuously, turning away from evil but turning to Jesus; 4) trusting God, actively reaching out to him for help to resolve life issues; 5) loving others; 6) fulfilling roles of being responsible citizens; 7) opening up to community, repenting and confessing to others; and 8) living with the anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ at any moment.²

By and large, Peace argues that transformation is normative and must become a mindset and a way of life to resist being conformed to the pattern of the world, and to be open to the works of the Holy Spirit to renew our minds.³ The environment for growth is primarily the community of God's people; among them, each has a different and essential role to play for one another in the transformation process. Peace believes that love must be the essence of the formation of a faith community, within which maintaining a serving and loving attitude toward one another is necessary, especially to those who persecute and treat us as enemies. Submitting to the authority of the state is another dynamic for change,

¹ Richard Peace, "Spiritual Transformation: Taking on the Character of Christ" (Spiritual Formation & Discipleship in a Postmodern World, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, October 21-25, 2013), 16-19, 26-30.

² Ibid., 23-58, 79-102.

³ Ibid., 16-19.

which is the role of every Christian, unless the state ceases to restrain evil and reward good. After all, Peace argues that the way to spiritual transformation is to live a life of love, which is the way of the new age when Jesus Christ comes again. All this explains what spiritual formation is about, and their meanings to the thesis of this paper are discussed below.

First, from Peace's argument of developing a mindset and a way of life that brings about transformation, it prompts us that the way to spiritual growth and leadership development needs to be intentional.⁴ Truly, spiritual change is God's business not ours, though it is both God's full responsibility as well as ours. There is no magic formula or control in our hands to enforce transformation. Followers of Jesus could try their best to live out the life that Jesus calls them to, nonetheless, there are times that they may find their efforts futile, no matter how hard they try, as only God can bring about change in them. What people can do is to put themselves in places where spiritual growth can occur with the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they need to develop the mindset that they are sons and daughters of God and are called to live up to this sort of life as God's children; however, they are unable to do it without being changed by the Holy Spirit. In other words, being intentional implies that we need to have a plan, a strategy, and a clear destination for the spiritual transformation of the Chinese congregants, which this paper will enlarge upon later.

⁴ Ibid., 23-30.

Second, Peace believes that the primary environment for spiritual growth is the community of faith.⁵ The Holy Spirit works through faith communities for spiritual growth and for growing leaders of Jesus. As Peace contends, without knowing the need for change and without an open heart to growth, no change will happen. It is through community that people may realize their need for change. Also, loving others is at the core of Christian life that leads to transformation; however, love can only be practiced within groups of people. All this points to the need of a community that serves as an agent of spiritual change. This confirms that small groups, which serve as a form of community that opens us to the need of change and to sustain us in the transformation process, could be adopted as a part of the strategy to address the challenge and needs of the Chinese Ministry that as has been discussed in the previous chapter. However, in view of the cultural influences upon the Chinese congregants which cause them not to deal with their sinful reality inside, it is important not only to make the congregants aware of the need for change but also to provide them with a safe environment to overcome the obstacles to spiritual growth so that they may be strengthened and encouraged to press on toward the goal of Christ. Theological reflections on spiritual formation through small groups will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Third, Peace suggests that repentance is not a one-time action but an ongoing effort of all Christians throughout transformation.⁶ It means one needs to be repeatedly converted

⁵ Ibid., 87-91.

⁶ Ibid., 45-49.

to Christ in his or her spiritual journey. Truly, being spiritually mature in Christ does not happen instantly by an act of believing Christ at the moment of conversion. The root of repentance is to continually discover and admit failure, inadequacy, and wrongs, and to keep turning away from ungodly ways. It is not just an occasional moment of regret, but also a deep contrition of sins that ceaselessly lead one to respond to God's way through everyday lives. Again, the Chinese culture of preserving people's face in public does not encourage them to admit their sinful nature or to deal openly with darkness inside. No doubt, support from small groups could be beneficial to their spiritual journey; nonetheless, the anti-God forces of the world are so immense that many of the Chinese congregants may not be strong enough to stand firm in order to keep turning away from ungodly forces and to keep turning to God in their personal lives. For overcoming this face issue in order to advance the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants, some thoughts on faith and repentance are inspired by the writing of Gordon Smith, to which we now turn.

Beginning Well by Gordon Smith

In his book *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation*, Gordon Smith contends that the lack of spiritual maturity and qualified, effective leaders in church is mainly the result of an inadequate theology of conversion.⁷ He observes that many Christians presume that conversion is the one step that leads to ultimate salvation,

⁷ Gordon Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 13-31.

and that spiritual transformation is insignificant to God's saving deliverance. Conversion does release people from consequences of sin. However, as Smith highlights, salvation is more than God's saving work to be experienced at the one time believing act of conversion; it is also found in the call to people to work out their own salvation (Philippians 2:12). Indeed, being spiritually matured is the work of the Holy Spirit, however, it is also very much the responsibility of every Christians. God's salvation is not fully accomplished at the once-and-for-all moment of conversion, but should be continued in the aftermath of conversion. Smith contends that without an authentic conversion, one would hardly attain a comprehensive spiritual transformation. Thus, beginning well with a true conversion is crucial for the kind of transformation that leads one to real maturity in Christ.

In studying Scripture, spiritual autobiographies and evangelical experiences from Protestant, Catholic, Reformed and Wesleyan backgrounds, Smith suggests that a true conversion must be comprised of seven elements that lead toward authentic transformations: (1) belief: not believing about Jesus, but believing in Jesus in every aspect of life; (2) repentance: an utter and decisive rejection of sin and of ways of life that lead to sin; (3) trust and assurance of forgiveness: radically trusting in God by the abandoning of self to Jesus Christ and by being assured that our sins are held no more against us; (4) commitment, allegiance and devotion: resolving to live in obedience to Christ and to reject the way of sin and darkness in daily life; (5) water baptism: by observing this external ritual to complement and to confirm that an internal regeneration has happened to one inside; (6) the gift of the Holy Spirit: receiving the gift of the Spirit is integral to and

inseparable from the conversion experience; (7) incorporation into Christian community: to complete one's conversion, he or she needs to incorporate into a Christian community, which provides the necessary structure and context to enable spiritual growth to maturity in Christ.⁸ All these components can come or be experienced in any order. In summary, Smith argues that spiritual formation is possible if the four internal actions of the converts happen as listed in items one to four above, and that they are supported and enabled by sacramental, charismatic and communal elements, as listed in items five to seven above. The next to discuss is then the significance of these elements in the transformation of the Chinese congregants.

The element of belief is pivotal to spiritual formation. Indeed, as Smith contends, this is the kind of belief that leads converts to eventually embrace a biblical worldview, and to think Christianly is crucial to authentic transformation, which is a change of both minds and hearts.⁹ To the Chinese congregants, especially those from Mainland China, they must not only know and understand, but also believe in, the saving grace of Jesus. They do not only take the Gospel into their minds, but also trust the truth of the Gospel in their hearts so that they may press on, living out Jesus' commands and teachings in their earthly lives. From knowing to understanding to continuously trusting the truths of Jesus, some fundamentals are critical to the process of transformation. First, converts must go beyond mere beliefs to Christian thinking. Converts need to go deep in their beliefs to a

⁸ Smith, *Beginning Well*, 135-156.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 158-164.

Christianization of worldview and biblical values, otherwise, their Christian beliefs will quickly and easily be replaced by the views of the world through media, television, the Internet, movies, and popular songs. Thus, teaching and preaching the texts of Scripture to the Chinese congregants is important for the changing of minds, which will be discussed further in the chapter on strategy later.

Second, changing of minds and hearts must include repentance and allegiance to Jesus, which are crucial in the transformation of Christian faith. Smith, as Peace, argues that repentance is a continuing and vital element of the spiritual life of transformation.¹⁰ Nonetheless, he highlights that repentance would be incomplete without repudiation of sin. Indeed, the conviction of sin at conversion is insufficient; it is not sufficient for a convert to feel sorry for sin, but he must also cut himself off from sin. Believing in Jesus is not only a verbal proclamation, it also has to be made public by a change of life, turning from a life of sin and turning to the way of Jesus. This ongoing repenting and repudiating of sin, however, needs to be sustained by an allegiance to Jesus, and a resolution to live in obedience to the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ. This commitment to the Lord Jesus re-orientates the converts' hearts and minds inwardly, which results in a reorientation of behavior outwardly in every aspect of life. That is to say, the Chinese congregants must learn how sin is displeasing to God, and how important it is for them to resolve to hate and forsake it. However, in face of the massive secular forces of the world, the Chinese congregants cannot stand firm and continuously commit to Jesus for complete

¹⁰ Ibid., 167.

transformation. Also, they cannot overcome the face issue and continually repent and live in obedience to Jesus.

There are two factors inspired by the writing of Smith which are found essential in authentic transformation and they are helpful in answering the above questions: freedom and joy.¹¹ Without freedom and joy throughout the journey of transformation, it is too hard for any Christian to press on to finish well. Indeed, we are created to live freely, and when we are free, we are alive. Also, no human likes to be under oppression, which limits our life; rather, deep within, we long for joy. People desire freedom and joy, not oppression and sadness. Thus, in order to sustain continuous spiritual growth, the Chinese congregants need to know that all Christians are sinners and still commit sins after conversion. They need the freedom of confession to enable them to advance in the path of spiritual growth. That freedom comes from the very core of Jesus' Good News where God's grace of forgiveness of sin and acceptance of sinners is found. With the freedom of confession, the Chinese congregants are free from the bondage of face issues where there is no shame for them to admit their sins, wrongs or mistakes, and to turn to God. Only when they are free from sin and free to follow Jesus, can they go on repenting and continually obeying Jesus in the process of transformation.

In striving for transformation without oppression, but freedom to turn to God, it is then possible for people to have joy throughout and to finish well. Thus, joy is another crucial factor for complete transformation. The joy in God orients people's deepest desires

¹¹ Ibid., 167-175.

towards God; and capturing people's fervency and passion for God is key to spiritual transformation. If people fail to find joy and satisfaction in God, they will try to find it elsewhere.¹² In other words, God's presence, salvation, love, goodness, etc. are the source of joy that will lead the Chinese congregants to reach the goal of their journey of spiritual growth. In summary, while the sacramental and communal elements of water baptism, the gift of Holy Spirit, and the community of faith, respectively, sustain and enable authentic transformation, belief, repentance, trust in and allegiance to Jesus are the fundamentals, which enable transformation to begin. However, without the freedom of confession and joy in God, the Chinese congregant is not able to go far on the path of spiritual transformation.

Why Spiritual Formation Is Significant

“It is by grace through faith that we have been saved which is the gift of God; this grace is not from ourselves, nor by our work so that no one can boast” (Ephesian 2:8-9). God's salvation is inarguably all his work, not ours. Thus, by accepting Christ to be ones' Savior, people must ask whether they are only gaining admission to heaven and attaining eternal life after death, but are not necessary to bother with spiritual formation or discipleship. They need to reflect on whether discipleship is something good, yet a non-salvation issue for Christians in their earthly life.

¹² Ibid., 171.

The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard

In his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard eloquently contends that discipleship is not a non-salvation issue, but the very essence of the gospel of Jesus; and that discipleship or Christian life is not an option but a must for all Christians to take seriously.¹³ He argues about the eternal life of the gospel mainly from two perspectives: God's kingdom and sin management. Firstly, he highlights that the gospel that Jesus preaches throughout his earthly ministry is primarily about the kingdom of God, and at the very heart of the gospel is life and discipleship in his kingdom, which is the central theme of God's salvation for men and women of the world. As Willard explains, the kingdom of God is God's effective will that controls whatever he wants to be done. Everything that obeys the person of God himself and the action of his will, by nature or by choice, is within his kingdom.¹⁴ Essentially, the kingdom of God governs human beings through their faith and allegiance to Christ. Nevertheless, the kingdom does not restrict its ruling to within people's hearts or consciousness; it spreads through and rules the whole universe. Willard points out that Jesus' gospel is not about the kingdom yet to come into existence, but is about humanity's new accessibility to the already-come-kingdom through Jesus himself. Thus, in Jesus' teaching of how to pray, the verse "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10) is not meant for the kingdom to come into existence, but for it to rule over all different orders of the world such as the personal, social, and political arenas.

¹³ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 1-33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

What Willard says is: the eternal life that people attain through faith in Jesus begins with a life now in his present kingdom on earth, which is available to everyone who believes in Christ Jesus and comprises all aspects of one's present life. The eternal life of Jesus' gospel starts now, in the present, not only after one's physical death on earth. This eternal life is about living as his disciple in his kingdom now, and its future naturally extends from the present kingdom-living and life of faith which people participate in now. Thus, discipleship is not a non-salvation issue, but a here-and-now matter, by which one is entering into the kind of eternal life that God gives to the world through faith in Christ.

Secondly, Willard argues that forgiveness of sin is not all that Christianity is about. The faith in Christ that brings forgiveness of sin is meant to change a person's being and the values, by which one is led in every aspect of life to be different from those before believing in Christ.¹⁵ The change of a person and one's life results from the influences on one's character and spirituality by faith in Christ. Simply put, forgiveness of sin should naturally be followed by a change of life, which is a life of discipleship in God's kingdom. However, it is generally found at the present time that this professed Christian faith has little impact on changing converts' lives and the world. Willard suggests this is mainly because the Christian message the church often preaches is concentrating on sin management, rather than on God's redemption of ordinary life. That means the messages from the pulpit do not emphasize God's salvation through Christian living; on the contrary,

¹⁵ Ibid., 36-38.

they focus more on sin and its effects, which people may name as the gospel of sin management.

The gospel of sin management does not help motivate people to take Christian living or discipleship seriously, for what it focuses on is very much about how their sins can be forgiven, what bars them from heaven, or what prevents them from having eternal life. The simple answer to all this is sin. In John 3:16, God declares that the death of His son, Jesus, provides forgiveness of sin for everyone who believes in him. Thus, it is understood that if people receive Jesus through faith, they attain the forgiveness of sin that resolves the sin problem, and thus they can be assured of the path to heaven. As such, discipleship or Christian living in God's kingdom has no significance to Christians, or at best, it is something nice to do. However, Willard further contends that such faith is like "trusting some arrangement for sin-remission set up through Jesus, [that is], trusting only his role as guilt remover,"¹⁶ rather than trusting the real person of Jesus in every aspect of real life. Nevertheless, the faith that Jesus preaches compasses not only forgiveness of sin, but also reconciliation with God, and the latter implies an ongoing relationship with Him in the presence of life together.¹⁷ This intimate relationship is the very essence of the kind of eternal life that is embodied in the gospel of Jesus. It constitutes a kind of life that people live in an interactive relationship with him which leads them to an eternal destiny. In fact, if people do rely on Christ's life for eternity, they must also trust him for this

¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁷ Ibid., 48.

present life by knowing him, as his disciples, in pursuing eternal life (John 17:3), because the word, know, always implies a personal, interactive, and intimate relationship in the Bible. As the gospel of salvation, faith and forgiveness has to do with believing Jesus is the One who reigns over everything in life, and obeying his teachings in kingdom living, discipleship is significant to and inseparable from the heart of the gospel of Jesus.

To sum up, Christianity without discipleship is Christianity without Christ Jesus. Living a kingdom life here and now is the very essence of Jesus' teachings, which calls his followers to become his disciples. By thoroughly examining Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7, Willard shows us how to access living the kingdom life at present, which is the kind of eternal life that many Christians relegate to the future after death. As Willard suggests, to live a kingdom life now is to focus on being an apprentice of Jesus, learning from him how to lead one's real life throughout their entire lifetime.¹⁸ It is by God's grace shown in the beatitudes and by the power of the Holy Spirit that ones are enabled to live out Jesus' teachings in our lives with God's given time, circumstances, family, people, and all the various aspects of ones' lives. Living as a disciple of Jesus is not only not doing what is wrong, but also practicing what is positive and good during people's days on earth, so that the strengths and virtues that may be cultivated in them make them grow and become like Christ. The instructions for how to live a life of discipleship are spelled out in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel.

¹⁸ Ibid., 281-291.

It is how the understanding of the present kingdom life contributes to enhancing the spiritual growth of the Chinese-speaking congregants that this paper intends to address next. As discussed above, the life of discipleship outlined in Jesus's preaching on the mountain as the kingdom life must be made accessible to the congregants. Thus, they first need to know what discipleship to Jesus is, and to recognize that kingdom living is not a distant and utopian ideal. Certain practical and experimental steps could be made achievable to the congregants, from which people could identify those that are effective for ongoing application. Further reference can be made from the curriculum for Christlikeness that is depicted by Willard.¹⁹ While the program for discipleship and leadership development of the Chinese congregants will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5 of this paper, two points are beneficial for implementing the program. First, in the course of learning to be like Jesus, the purpose is not to let the congregants know more information about what Jesus believed, taught or said; it is to make them really understand and believe heartily all that information and to practice it. In short, "to hear and do" is where the program has to begin.²⁰ Second, what is crucial to hear and do is: believe in the Triune God and live as if this God is real. That means, be conscious of God's presence in people's thinking, decision-making, speech, and deeds. This is to let their faith rest upon the reality of the Trinity in action, and thus, kingdom living is not something beyond imagination but is woven into the true world of God. However, before identifying the effective steps for

¹⁹ Ibid., 311-373.

²⁰ Ibid., 317.

becoming like Jesus, people must first understand the soils and conditions that will bring people to choose discipleship in Jesus, and also, the significance that will keep them pressing on toward the goal of the Lord Jesus. This brings us to the next discussion of how spiritual formation occurs.

How Spiritual Formation May Occur

The journey of spiritual transformation is not a straight road, and that is why the Bible states: “the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matthew 11:12). In order to keep Christians pressing on toward maturity in Christ, they must perceive that the choice of discipleship to Jesus carries great value, and must treasure it so much that they do not want to miss the opportunity. Moreover, they must experience joy and a sense of goodness throughout the discipleship or transformation process. To provide the soil and conditions for spiritual formation to continually bloom among the Chinese congregants, three resources are reviewed for this section: one is written by Eugene Peterson; another one is co-authored by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett; and the third is penned by Simon Lee.

The Jesus Way by Eugene Peterson

Peterson argues that the way that leads to Christian formation is the way of Jesus.²¹ It is by entering into ways of practicing what and how Jesus acts that Christians are shaped and directed to become like Jesus. Through depicting Old Testament figures, Peterson

²¹ Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 21-41.

points out the crucial elements of the ways of following Jesus, among which two are chosen for discussion, which are significant for spiritual formation to occur within the Chinese congregants.

First, in considering Abraham's life, Peterson contends that following Jesus is about being transformed into a life of embracing God-sovereignty and abandoning self-sovereignty.²² In the process of spiritual growth towards Christ, Christian faith must be tested, and it needs to be tested because "religion and spirituality is a bottomless pit breeding illusion, deceit, and oppression," as Peterson argues.²³ Indeed, Christians' faith must be tested repeatedly in their lives with real people. The same was true for Abraham. His faith was tested not only once at the top of Mount Moriah, but throughout his earthly life of over a hundred years. Abraham was called to journey from place to place, leaving Ur and Haran, Shechem and Bethel, Egypt and Gerar, and to go on. In each instance of leaving behind, as Abraham journeyed and obeyed, he became less ruled by his own will and more by God's will. Likewise, over and over again, when Christians' faith is on trial, they are tested on whether they take God as God to whom they respond in awe and obedience, or they follow their own wills and desires. They are tested about whether they see God as a servant to serve them and their desires, or whether they humbly obey and follow Him. Indeed, in the path of spiritual formation, long obedience to Jesus' teachings is crucial for Christians to become mature in Christ. Obeying Jesus means giving up one's

²² Ibid., 44-58.

²³ Ibid., 53.

control that gives one a sense of security. Thus, accepting God-sovereignty in life needs to be highlighted in Christian education among the Chinese congregants, and surrendering self-sovereignty needs to be practiced and encouraged, often in fellowships or small groups, for advancing spiritual growth.

Second, in talking about David's life, Peterson argues that following Jesus has to be free from the perfectionist expectations of others and ourselves.²⁴ Truly, much can be said about the nobility of David such as his intimate friendship with Jonathan (1 Samuel 18-20), his twice refusal to kill Saul (1 Samuel 26), his lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1), his repentance before the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 7), his compassion for Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9), etc. However, Peterson rightly says that "what we admire in David does not cancel out what we abhor, and what we abhor does not cancel out what we admire."²⁵ The story of David clearly reflects that God is the One who works to perfect people who are incapable of perfecting themselves. The community of faith must not hold any ideas of perfectionism if people are to desire spiritual formation to happen to them. The same is true for the Chinese congregants of BWC. The Chinese congregation of BWC consists of all walks of life, people of various temperaments and experiences, desires and needs, blessings and disappointments, sensibilities and senses, as well as depth of belief in God. All are living together as a community. Nonetheless, all these factors make the living in community complex so that conflicts and disputes can

²⁴ Ibid., 100.

²⁵ Ibid., 87.

easily arise. Thus, in order for spiritual formation to bloom among the Chinese congregants, they need to be educated to the idea that perfection should not be expected from others or from themselves. They need to be reminded through preaching and small group meetings that everyone is on the road to the perfection of Jesus. Before they arrive at the goal of being like Jesus Christ, they all are imperfect, therefore they should not be easily hurt by others' sins and acts, and also, they should not easily give up on the journey of spiritual growth because of their own sins and acts.

A Many Colored Kingdom by Conde-Frazier, Kang and Parrett

The conviction of this book is that when genuine, loving relationships are built in a faith community with diverse backgrounds and cultures, the differences can be embraced and should advance the spiritual growth of the people of the community. Although the congregants whom this paper addresses are all Chinese, cultural diversity is significantly found among them. This is due to their different backgrounds, which are influenced by the very different social and political environments where they were living before immigrating to Canada, as discussed above. Culture may be defined as an integration of ideas, feelings, beliefs, patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, and ideals that are shared by a group of people; and it regulates people's thinking, feelings, and responses.²⁶ Churches and church leaders need to be culturally sensitive, for people will intentionally seek to exert themselves to preserve their unique cultural identities in one way or another, within and

²⁶ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics For Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 18.

without the church. This surely also happens among the Chinese congregants who are culturally diverse. However, being one in Christ does not imply that people do not have distinct cultural identities, just as it does not mean that male or female should not exist anymore in a faith community, although Paul writes that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).²⁷ For being all one in Christ, people have to be clear and hold onto the vision that the world belongs to God, and Jesus Christ reigns forever and ever (Revelation 11:15). This gives the foundation for how to provide healthy soil for the ongoing transformation of the Chinese congregants. Despite the diverse cultures and backgrounds of the Chinese congregants, the commands and teachings of Jesus need to be adopted by the community as the rules and principles to handle misunderstandings or conflicts that may arise from the Chinese congregants due to their cultural differences. Simply put, the soil and conditions for the spiritual formation of the Chinese congregants need not be conformity but unity in Christ.

Another concept that is inspired by the book for advancing the spiritual formation of the Chinese congregants is to employ the faith community itself as the content and context for Christian education of love.²⁸ People in community, who commit to and practice the shared knowledge of biblical love, shape and are shaped by life together. In being together, the Chinese congregants come to know and are known by others in the community. This kind of knowing establishes the bonds of people in the community, and

²⁷ Ibid., 60.

²⁸ Ibid., 80-83.

the love that they share encourages them to embrace one another in an intimate way. In this process of living life together, they realize that they are inseparably bound to one another, and that their lives are complete, only if they continually commit to and share with a community of faith. This is how they can know more about themselves through living God's love together; and indeed, they would know and are known by God in this loving life together.

By knowing and practicing love as well as committing to others of the faith community, the broken or incomplete selves of the Chinese congregants can be reunified and reconstructed by the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁹ As the goal of spiritual formation is to become like Christ, the very first thing to stem from our beings must be love, for God is love. Nonetheless, this love of God is different from that of the world which is comprised of cravings, lusts, and boasting; and it is not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth (1 John 2:16; 3:18). In other words, it is not a matter of classroom study, but it is like a kind of on the job training so that life together in a faith community provides the appropriate setting to practice love in order to grow to maturity in Christ. This practice of God's love is essential to help the Chinese congregants, who culturally hide their feelings and thoughts in public, to open up themselves and to trust others, which is necessary in the transformation process.

The practice of loving and trusting others in the faith community is not so much that it is a safe environment and all church people are trustworthy. It is more for the

²⁹ Ibid., 81.

Chinese congregant to take God's providence seriously so that their minds can be transformed to move away from their self-concealed thoughts and patterns, towards openness to God's grace and faith. By knowing that God is the preeminent bedrock of the community where his presence is promised, these Chinese congregants have to learn to be open to and trust others for spiritual growth. In conclusion, the practice of openness to the truth of God through the love of the community is vital for the journey of spiritual formation. In other words, what is significant for the Chinese congregants to keep pressing on towards the goal of Christlikeness is agape love. By being loved continually through the community, the Chinese congregants feel that they are accepted as they are, and they will then gradually and continuously open up themselves to the truth of God and to others, which is crucial for the completion of transformation.

A Layman's Guide to Christian Spirituality by Simon Lee

Lee suggests that the two greatest commands of loving God and loving others imply the practicing of spiritual disciplines and pastoring of life respectively.³⁰ It is through practicing of spiritual disciplines that people learn to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength so that they may build an intimate relationship with God, and that they may really know him and understand his will. However, the meaning behind attaining a close relationship with God is not only for this God to live inside themselves, but it is also for him to live in the world where they exist. That means people do not live

³⁰ Simon Y.C. Lee, *A Layman's Guide to Christian Spirituality* (Hong Kong: Ming Feng Press, 2009), 3-8 & 14-22.

away from the world, but they have to live in the world. They need to adopt the attitude of loving God in order to love others as themselves in this world. Lee argues, by learning and practicing how to love God, people attain the wisdom of knowing and the strength of loving themselves, by which they are enabled to know and to love others.³¹ In other words, it is through loving God and pastoring others' lives that their own lives are sanctified and transformed.

Thus, it is essential to preserve an ongoing, loving relationship with God in order for spiritual formation to bloom continually. From all that Lee suggests in order to keep alive an intimate relationship with God, two aspects that contribute to promoting the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants are captured. First is strengthening a daily life of God-centeredness through the practice of spiritual disciplines.³² It is not so much about what spiritual disciplines people should adopt; rather, it is more about whether through these practices they are keeping God in the center of their life and keeping their focus on him in their day to day decision making, deeds and speech. What matters is whether they are persistently walking with God every day in all areas of life. As discussed above, many of the Chinese congregants are distracted either by the busyness of fulfilling their ambitions or by the desire to enjoy their retirement that they lose the passion of living for God. It is through the constant practice of spiritual disciplines in ordinary life that people are drawn back to God and their relationship with him is kept close, so that their hearts are

³¹ Ibid., 20-22.

³² Ibid., 304-314.

renewed and their minds are transformed. The spiritual disciplines that they may consider practicing in daily life are varied, such as prayer, devotional Bible reading, worship, Bible study, retreats, church services, testimony sharing, life caring, etc.

The second aspect is strengthening one's sensitivity to God's daily presence by committing to live a God-focused life every day, which is important for spiritual formation to be persistently continued. God is a Spirit who is invisible.³³ However, the ungodly forces of the world are so real and visible that the Chinese congregants' faith in Christ is always being challenged. In the midst of all the inescapable pain, suffering, temptation, despair, failure and sorrow of life, people can stand firm and keep their faith if they do sense and experience the presence of God in everyday life. What helps them to sense and experience God's presence is by knowing as well as by living the words of God. However, they may find that many times they are too weak to observe Jesus' teachings. Thus, they need to always remember that God's presence is real; not only is he with them, but also they can ask for the power of the Holy Spirit throughout the day, wherever they are and whatever they are doing. This way of pressing them to consciously think of God's presence will draw them close to God and experience his power, comfort, and strength whenever it is needed. They are sanctified and transformed, not by doing special and great deeds, but by the work of the Holy Spirit through the bits and pieces of ordinary life. Being aware of the presence of God and relying on him for every matter in life through the practices of prayer and meditation are beneficial and effective for keeping people moving

³³ Ibid., 330-336.

forward in the transformation process. The spiritual disciplines to be practiced by the Chinese congregants will further be discussed in later chapters. For now, we turn to a reflection on the theology of spiritual transformation.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

This chapter will first reflect on the nature of spiritual transformation in light of the challenges and the needs of the Chinese Ministry that are discussed in Chapter 1. It will then consider the space and time that spiritual transformation may occur among the Chinese at the BWC. At the end, it will discuss the goal of spiritual formation among the Chinese groups to reflect the presence of God in them being a community that carries out God's love and obedience.

The Nature of Spiritual Formation

To overcome the challenges of the Chinese Ministry of moving Christ explorers to believers to followers, and to meet its need of developing Christ followers to be leaders, what is required is a fundamental change of people's hearts and minds. This change is, however, the work of the Holy Spirit who transforms the hearts of people to ultimately bear the spiritual fruit, in particular the fruit of loving God and loving people as Jesus commands. The essence of spiritual formation can be understood further in the following.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Spiritual formation is about the renewal of the whole nature of a Christian, not an amendment to a part of a person, but a transformation of one inside to become like Christ. This renewal of inner being starts from the human salvation experience of being born anew. In his dialogues with Nicodemus (John 3:3-9), Jesus succinctly explains that being born anew is concerned not with what one has to do or not to do, but with what one must become through a rebirth which can only be initiated and completed by the Holy Spirit.¹ In exegeting the phrase, rebirth out of “water and the Spirit” (John 3:5), Bruner explains that this means all his disciples must seek John the Baptist’s baptism of water, through which one openly joins the Spirit, and by whom people are moved towards God.² That is to say, the condition of spiritual rebirth is satisfied only by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that new birth is the beginning of one’s miraculous salvation by God’s Spirit.

God’s salvation for his people starts at the moment of new birth by the Spirit, and it continues by sanctifying people throughout their earthly lives, which is directed by the same Spirit. This explains why the Apostle Paul admonishes the Galatians: “after beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal [i.e. sanctification] by human effort?” (Galatians 3:3). God’s people are saved because they are justified by the death of Christ on the cross, who was raised and is at God’s right hand and is interceding for them (Romans 8:33-34). However, the purpose of God in sending his Son to die on the

¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2012), 172.

² *Ibid.*, 183.

cross is not limited to justifying people but to sanctifying them by living according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4).³ In other words, God's salvation is to free people from the condemnation of the law, and to free them by fulfilling the just requirement of the law. People are not only set free from sin and death from the law, but are also set free for fulfilling the righteousness of the law (Romans 8:1-4). This implies that, as Stott argues, God's eternal purpose for his people is that they are set free for holiness, that is, for the transformation of Christlikeness, which begins in people's character and conduct by the work of the Holy Spirit who will bring it to completion when Jesus comes.⁴

However, people cannot keep the law to fulfill God's required righteousness by their indwelling flesh as Romans 7 asserts; they are empowered to keep the law only by the indwelling Spirit as Romans 8:4 declares. Obedience to the commandments of the law is a necessary and possible aspect of Christian discipleship or spiritual formation; but this obedience can only be secured by the Spirit, not by the law nor human effort.⁵ In sum, the transformation to Christlikeness is initiated and accomplished by the Spirit. The Christian life is necessarily life in the Spirit, by whom it is sustained, guided and enriched. Therefore, spiritual formation or Christian discipleship would not be imaginable and certainly not possible without the Holy Spirit, who forms spiritual rebirth in repented ones,

³ John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 217.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 221-222, 252.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

as well as initiates and completes spiritual formation in them throughout their Christian life on earth.

The Work of Bearing Fruit

One must be aware that the journey of spiritual formation is a constant warfare between the Spirit and the flesh, although they are not two equal forces within Christians. The Spirit is the Spirit of God which lives with and in those who believe in Christ when they are baptized. The flesh is the corrupted human nature with the inclination to be self-seeking, which is a force and power opposed to the Spirit of God who is self-giving.⁶ This self-seeking is due to man's own sin and the sin of his forefathers. The texts of Galatians 5: 16-18 teaches the very essence of the warfare, "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law." What has been said in these verses is that life in the Spirit is absolutely incompatible with life in the flesh because the purposes and desires of the Spirit oppose those of the flesh. If one consistently stays in line with the Spirit, that is, habitually lives in the sphere of the Spirit, one will follow the forces of the Spirit and will not be affected by the flesh, as the verses promise.⁷ It is just like the force of gravity (the flesh) which holds a wheat corn down on

⁶ Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 192, 196.

⁷ Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 430.

earth; but, a buried wheat corn will obey a vital force (the Spirit) which is superior to the attraction of the earth and grow towards heaven in the opposite direction.

Nonetheless, the Spirit and the flesh are not two equal forces within Christians.⁸ As Fee contends, the Apostle Paul never said or even hinted in these verses that an internal warfare between the Spirit and the flesh is going on within human hearts so that it leaves Christians in a helpless state to live on their own.⁹ Instead, because of the sufficiency of the Spirit, Christians are enabled to not revert to the former life in the flesh they lived before becoming followers of Jesus. Moreover, Bruce affirms that Christians' inside are not the helpless battleground of two opposing forces, for Christians are not totally disabled by the flesh, but are empowered by the Spirit, in resisting sin.¹⁰ Packer also contends that in the new life of the Spirit, Christians are freed from slavery to sin, and they can and must walk in the Spirit, in a steady course of godliness and good works.¹¹ All this is to say that the Spirit and the flesh are not two equal forces within believers.

The sufficiency of the Spirit, nevertheless, does not make Christians exempt from living with the ever-present flesh in discipleship life. When Christian are baptized, their old self is crucified with the flesh (Romans 6:6), “for those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). Crucifixion does

⁸ Ibid., 438.

⁹ Ibid., 434-435.

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 245.

¹¹ J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 34.

not mean total death, or, that all the influence of the flesh ceases; thus, sin is still a reality present in a human's life. However, crucifixion carries an effect of setting Christians free from the bondage of the flesh so that the influences of the flesh no longer dominate them. This is like the healthy person who also has bad cells in them, but those bad cells do not dominate them to become cancer when they are in good health.

The flesh, like bad cells, is ever present in human bodies. Nevertheless, Christians do not have to live according to the flesh, although they still live in the flesh. This is to say, the flesh cannot be so destructive to people that it draws their full attention and interest in keeping with anti-God values and systems of the world as well as the anti-God desires and passions within human beings.¹² As people do not live according to the flesh, but are empowered by the Spirit, their lives turn toward God and their hearts and minds are open to the activity of the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit, people gradually grow in Christ to bear the fruit of the Spirit, namely love, joy, peace, patience, and so on, which is the landing place of spiritual formation. In sum, the Spirit and the flesh are not two equal forces within believers; the Spirit is the sufficient agent to empower Christians, who are still in the flesh, to live out the life in Christ in the present age.

The Work of Hearts

As discussed above, on the one hand, the challenge of the Chinese Ministry is to move the Chinese congregants from spiritual status quo to keep pressing towards the goal

¹² Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Volume. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM press, 1955), 239.

of Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, difficult to encourage spiritual growth among these people who desire more private time and space, embrace personal ambition, and pursue money as their life priority. On the other hand, the Ministry has to address the need in order to develop Christian leaders among the Chinese congregants who generally engage with much busyness, and many of them are not courageous enough to accept leadership roles. To overcome the challenge and to fulfill the need of the Ministry, the hearts and minds of the congregants must first be transformed. There has to be a change in their values and priorities of life such as time, money, justice, relationship, family, and love. People's minds have to be reformed so that they are tuned towards God, and hearts have to be molded like Christ.

This change of hearts and minds implies that a process of shaping and reshaping of people's inner being occurs inside to become like Christ's character. Willard contends that terrorists and followers of Jesus both are the outcome of reshaping and reforming of their hearts, as spiritual formation of one kind or another does happen to everyone.¹³ The difference between them is that the terrorists "live according to the sinful nature," whereas the devoted followers of Christ "live in accordance with the Spirit" (Romans 8:5). Whether people are in the sinful nature or are in the Spirit, it is prompted by the ambitions that drive them, by the concerns that engross them, how their time and energies are spent, what

¹³ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 2002), 1-2.

preoccupies them, what they focus on, and so on.¹⁴ All this is determined by their hearts, which control all aspects of human life: thought, feeling, will and character, body, social context, and soul.¹⁵

The forming of new hearts is, thus, the shaping of these aspects of human life within, among which thoughts, feelings and character are crucial for heart renovation and are discussed here. Firstly, it works on human thoughts.¹⁶ Spiritual growth is much related to one's thoughts which are comprised of ideas, images, information and thinking. Ideas and images can enrich people's inner world, while clear thinking can translate Scriptural information into a way to pursue and to live out life in God, by the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. Having God constantly present in one's mind presses out all toxic ideas and evil images. As 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 states, this does not only demolish thoughts against God, but also captivates thoughts of obeying him. Secondly, it works on human feelings.¹⁷ People's decision-making is led or influenced by their feelings, some of which are good ones, such as being merciful to the needy, and some can be destructive, such as being hostile to people. Feelings that help spiritual growth in Christ are those associated with love, joy and peace, which, by and large, give positive feelings to a person. For people to maintain life-giving feelings, they may first receive love, joy and peace from

¹⁴ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 223.

¹⁵ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 36-43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-76.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 89-96.

God, and then extended love to others through prayers and deeds. Thirdly, it works on character which leads to habitual patterns of behavior. Habitual behavior is easily formed but difficult to change, which is influenced by thoughts and feelings.¹⁸ That is to say, people's thoughts and feelings that turn patterns of behavior into character must first be renewed before a deep transformation of character and habitual behavior of Christlikeness can occur. In other words, thoughts, feelings, and character are not only crucial but also interrelated in the work of hearts.

The transformation of all these inner aspects of life is mysterious, yet possible. It first must start with one's spirit that comes alive to and through God, so that he or she does not remain dead in sins and transgressions as indicated in Ephesians 2:1.¹⁹ When one's spirit comes alive in God, it restores one's soul that was previously dead or lost, and all one's inner aspects begin to be subdued under God through the lengthy process of spiritual formation. The key to restore one's soul, however, lies in self-denial on which this foundation of Christian spiritual formation rests. Self-denial is a process that induces one to being dead to self so that people do not insist anymore on having their own way.²⁰ By laying down the burden of having one's own way which is a great part of human evil in the world, people begin to understand that God is all-sufficiently present in life, and they can then actively press on in the path of self-denial. In walking this way by God's grace and

¹⁸ Ibid., 110-113.

¹⁹ Ibid., 45.

²⁰ Ibid., 50-57.

strength, they will find that the grip of sin breaks and the way to Christlike goodness also opens, and thus, makes transformation into Christlikeness possible.

Spiritual transformation can, indeed, happen to people, and to be spiritually formed in Christ is a possible goal for people to achieve. Nonetheless, many Christians, both Christian leaders and followers, are not successful in finishing the transformation process to the end to attain spiritual maturity in Christ. In fact, before progressing to the point where what Jesus did and taught streams naturally from them inside, they become fatigued in fighting against their own desires as well as the anti-God trends and cultures outside so that they may lack the stamina to press on till the end.

To carry through with spiritual formation into Christlikeness, three main components must be upheld: clear vision, strong intention, and adequate means.²¹ First, a clear vision of the kingdom of God is the starting place; it is about the kingdom that Jesus came to earth to announce and to teach. This vision aims at calling the attention of Christians to live here and now, not hereafter, in God's will and presence. It means to make people trust and rely on Jesus as the way, the truth and the life by concretely obeying Jesus' teachings in everyday lives. With this vision in mind, people would know that genuinely believing Jesus must lead to both trusting and obeying him, not just one or the other. Second is strong intention to obey Christ, which implies an actual decision to carry out the intention without procrastination. Deeds of living out Jesus' teachings would

²¹ Ibid., 57-63.

reliably follow professing intention, which however, must be sustained by vision and decision.

Third, adequate means for achieving the ends of obeying Christ is essential. This refers to the means of replacing one's sinful character with Jesus' character of truth and goodness. Fundamentally, the means to that end are to fill one's inner being with thoughts, feelings and habits that embrace God and his teachings. This could be done by studying and meditating on Scriptural teachings about Jesus, the world and God-created life, by constantly practising spiritual disciplines such as Lectio Divina and contemplative prayer, by following the lives of prominent spiritual gurus, by praying earnestly for God's Spirit to transform people's inner life, etc. These spiritual disciplines are effective means for the Spirit to work on people and are means to fulfill the vision of life in God that people intend and decide upon.

In sum, the very essence of spiritual formation is the Holy Spirit, without whom spiritual formation could not possibly be initiated or completed within Christians. Spiritual formation is about renewal of people's hearts by shaping human aspects of mainly human thought, feelings, will and character. Although the renovation of the human heart is led by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians also have a role to play by putting themselves in environments where the work of the Spirit can come about.²² The practice of spiritual disciplines that are effective for such spiritual work to occur is included in the ministry strategy. However, perseverance is demanded from Christians to finish the process of

²² Peace, "Spiritual Transformation", 11-13.

transformation, for they are still living in the flesh, though they are free from living according to the flesh because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Space and Time of Spiritual Formation

It is true that because of the Spirit, Christians are enabled to enter and complete the spiritual life of maturity in Christ. Nonetheless, spiritual formation is not only passively being led by the Spirit, but also is an active walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5: 16, 25). It is passive because Christian cannot save themselves but are saved by God's grace of the Spirit. It is active because it requires Christians to work out what they believe through walking by the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit is, however, quite different from walking by the Spirit.²³ The former refers to the Holy Spirit who takes the first move to uphold his desires against those of the flesh (Galatians 5: 17) and forms within Christians holy and godly desires, as they surrender to the Spirit's leading and guidance. What Christians all have to do is not only to passively submit to the control of the Spirit, but to actively walk in the path of the Spirit who shows Christians the way. The verb, to walk, refers to walking in line with the footsteps of the Spirit, that there is a principle or rule to follow, which is the Holy Spirit himself and his will.²⁴ Although the Spirit does the leading of Christians, Christians must deliberately walk along the path in daily life, according to the rule that the

²³ John Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 152.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

Holy Spirit lays down. In other words, spiritual formation happens in ordinary life when Christians actively “keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5: 25) to live the life in Christ.

In consciously walking and living by the Spirit, there are not-to-do things and to-do things that the Apostle Paul suggests Christians observe attentively. On the one hand, Christians must not will or practise the acts of the flesh such as immorality, impurity, sensuality, enmities, strife, jealousy, dissensions, factions, envying, and those that are illustrated in Galatians 5: 19-21. It may be obvious that most of these wicked behaviors do not concern the internal life of an individual’s physical desires; rather, they have to do with the corporate life of a faith community. They are not so much about Christians’ internal struggles with sin; rather, they are about destroying the unity and the oneness of the community of God’s people.

By not doing all these wicked behaviors, however, will not turn a Christian to become like Christ. Thus, on the other hand, Christians have to practise the qualities of spiritual fruit, namely love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23), by the power of the Spirit in order to be spiritually matured in Christ. It may also be noticed that all these honourable, lovely and gracious behaviors are meant to be practised, not within an individual’s own life, but within the sphere of a faith community. In fact, love, joy, peace, patience, and so on, all have to be done unto others; they cannot be fulfilled by one alone. For the Chinese at BWC, the qualities of spiritual fruit can be practised in their together life such as fellowships, small group meetings, outreach services, and so on.

In community life, Christians may set their minds and intentions on the nine qualities of spiritual fruit by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, praying corporately and privately, attending public worship, keeping the Lord's communion, sharing what is in one's heart with others, listening and examining themselves, and so on, as Packer suggests.²⁵ Wright also argues, Christians are not just relaxing and doing what comes naturally, but what comes through intentional efforts to let the life of the Spirit have its complete way.²⁶ The qualities of the fruit will gradually appear among God's people as they live within the community by the principles that flow out of the life of the Spirit. Whenever Christians are led and walking by the Spirit, those ungodly things such as mutual envy, rivalry, factions, etc. will be ruled out of the community. As God's people are passionate for God and his truth of the gospel, they must actively occupy themselves in spiritual things every day, like love, patience, and others. These qualities of fruit are not virtues that Christians can cultivate on their own but are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit through their corporate life. In sum, the space and time of spiritual formation occurs in the community of God's people and in their day by day life together respectively.

Towards the Goal of Spiritual Formation

The Apostle Paul says that without love Christians are nothing (1 Corinthians 13: 1-13) and that the whole law is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself (Galatians

²⁵ Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 90-91.

²⁶ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians* (London: SPCK, 2002), 71-73.

5:14). In fact, when people look at the list of the fruit of the Spirit, they find that love heads the list (Galatians 5: 22). What the Spirit produces in Christians is the fruit of love, which will not lead Christians to hurt others by these wicked behaviors (Galatians 5: 19-21) that destroy the unity and oneness of the faith community (5: 13-15). This love does not lead Christians to harm or hate others but to forgive them; it does not lead Christians to be jealous about others' strengths and performance, but to celebrate their good work. This love is, however, produced among God's people to create ultimately a community of love and obedience, through which the presence and the glory of God are reflected.

The Community of Love and Obedience

Love is the heart of the Christian life and is also the fruit that the Spirit produces to empower the communities of God's people to live out Christlikeness. For all Christians, the same as the Chinese at BWC, love is not an option, but a command that they must practice in order to grow into maturity in Christ. Indeed, to serve one another in love (John 13) and to love one another (John 15: 12, 17) are Jesus' last commands of love for his disciples before he was arrested. Nevertheless, the love to which Jesus calls attention is not a feeling of affection within a person, or simply a form of pleasant emotions. Instead, it is about the love of God, agape, social love to others, and obedience.

The love which Jesus commands us is about God's love, agape, because without it, Jesus' commands of love for his disciples cannot be fulfilled. Jesus' greatest love commandment consists of two parts: "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 37-

40). It is important to take heed of Jesus' command and notice that he does not say love God, but love the Lord your God, who is the God with an address, the Lord, that is, Yahweh.²⁷ This means that God is the One with a log account and with clear heritages, who first loved his people. The love that Jesus commands is a responding act to the God who has already finished the saving work on the cross for his people and for the world. This love reveals the greatest truth that "not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). It is with the background of first being God's loved people that Jesus commands his followers to love God and to love neighbors. It is the consequence of God's agape love, for people and for the world that Christians are enabled to love God and to love others.

The love to which Jesus calls attention is about, not self-love, but social love because the command of "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39) refers to a personal choice of willing and self-giving service to people. Although the word neighbor is singular, a demand of love for individuals is always meant to be a quest for love and justice for groups of individuals. The command of love as yourself does not mean a third command of self-love. Rather, it is another way of saying cherish the persons whom you meet with all that you are.²⁸ What Jesus requests of his disciples is not to love the whole world nor to love people more than yourself. He simply desires Christians to throw all of

²⁷ Frederick D. Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 412, 416-417.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 415.

themselves into encounters with people wherever and whenever it happens. Loving your neighbor is equally as important as loving God, for Jesus says the former is just like the latter (Matthew 22:39).

Love, however, manifests itself in obedience. During his last days on earth, Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another as he loved them so that people would know that they were his disciples (John 13:34-35). In fact, in the preceding verses, Jesus expresses that it is through their love and obedience that God is glorified. This theme of love and obedience is repeated again in John 15 where Jesus said, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” What Jesus has said is that love is demonstrated in obedience and obedience appears in love.²⁹

Jesus’ love for the Father is shown in his obedience to complete the path that God placed before him, by not considering equality with God, but making himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, appearing in human likeness, and humbling himself to become obedient to death even on the cross (Philippians 2:7-8). As Jesus’ love towards God is expressed in obedience to the Father God’s will, so Christians, followers of Christ, show their love to Christ by following the same road of obedience to Jesus’ commands. Being obedient to Christ is, however, not rendering him lip-service without deeds. It means

²⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 199-200.

Christians re-schedule their lives in order to pray, to be in solitude with Christ, and to meditate on his words so that they will give themselves no chance to be apart from Jesus. It is by his love that their continual obedience is made possible. In sum, the purpose of spiritual formation among God's people is to create a community of love and obedience. It is through such communities that the glory of God is revealed and the tending of human beings is demonstrated.

PART THREE
MINISTRY STRATEGY

CHAPTER FOUR

MINISTRY PLAN

This chapter will present the goal, strategy, and plan for the spiritual growth and leadership development of the Chinese-speaking congregants at BWC, in light of ministry needs and theological reflection. It will first consider the theological implications brought up from the reflections of the last chapter, which can be summarised into two central points: individual and corporate growth, as well as spiritual maturity to become a leader. Leadership development by the practices of mentoring and coaching through small groups will then be discussed. The ministry plan aims at finding out how coaching and mentoring practices can be effective for the Chinese congregants on the path of spiritual formation and leadership development.

Theological Implications of Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development

As discussed, spiritual formation is about the change of hearts and minds, which means shaping and re-shaping of men and women inside, such as thoughts, feelings and character. The renewal of the inner beings of Christians is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Growth: Individual and Corporate

The transformation process is initiated and completed only by the Spirit. This implies that Christians need to constantly connect with the Holy Spirit and remain in Christ. Indeed, only if Christians remain in Jesus and Jesus in them, will they bear much fruit; apart from Jesus, they can do nothing (John 15:5). Though spiritual growth is invisible, it occurs whenever they abide in Christ, as Jesus promises in the verse. In other words, they have to maintain a close relationship with God through their personal life and the practices of meditation, prayer etc., so that their thoughts, feelings and character will be molded towards spiritual maturity.

Christians are, however, not passive in the transformation process, but have an active role to play by placing themselves in circumstances where the Spirit can be effective in working on them. By keeping themselves in step with the Spirit, Christians are, in fact, in a constant spiritual warfare in living out the life in Christ. This is because they still live in the flesh, though they live not according to the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is, they turn to God and are open to the lead of the Spirit. In order not to fight the spiritual battle by their own strength, it is also necessary for Christians to connect with the body of Christ. As grapes are produced in bunches, not in isolation, Christians are also grown together in community, and do not flourish on their own. In other words, Christians must not live in isolation but practice communal life. As Bonhoeffer advocates, through the practices of communal life, true Christian services of listening, helping, and bearing

with one another are performed in the community of Christ, which gives the support and encouragement that Christians need to press on till the end of the spiritual journey.¹

To live with people of God's community, however, does not mean that Christians do not need to have alone time before God. They should not disregard solitude, nor alone time to meditate on Scriptures, to pray, and to intercede for others. Christians are called both into the community and to stand alone before God, through which the Spirit works on them for spiritual growth. Thus, the ministry plan will incorporate services for corporate spiritual growth to take place and will also embrace practices of spiritual disciplines for individual growth to come about.

Spiritual Maturity: From Followers to Leaders

Leadership development is essential for the expanding Chinese Ministry to encourage the ongoing spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants. Three issues are identified in considering the ministry plan: character development, encounters with God, and prayer. First, leadership is a character issue.² Leadership development comes through character transformation. Character building of spiritual leaders is certainly a slow and sometimes painful process, which is positively affected by the practices of trusting in and submission to God in their ordinary lives. The depth of trust and obedience to God of the

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, Kelly Geoffrey B., ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 98-100.

² Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 53-54.

potential leaders determines how far and how fast leadership development can go with them.

As leadership development is unavoidably discipleship, it is by trusting and obeying Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit that spiritual leaders are developed. Before the twelve Apostles were empowered to become church leaders, they were first called to follow Jesus. Their character was not instantly renewed, but took time to be transformed. Even after being discipled by Jesus for three years, when Jesus was crucified on the cross, the Twelve all fled. However, by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus declared (Acts 1:8), they carried out the entrusted Great Commission in the first century which led to Christianity flourishing as it is today. In order to carry out Jesus' Commission, people can understand that these twelve Apostles and other discipled leaders of their time did not hold anything back, but trusted in Christ as their Lord and submitted totally to Christ's lordship over their lives, in the midst of severe persecution of the Church of the first century. After all, they became the leaders of their age, remaining faithful, and some even being martyred for their Christian faith in the end. Certainly, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the practices of trusting and obeying God in daily life are crucial for character transformation, which leads people from followers of Christ to become leaders and to remain faithful to Christ at the center of their lives, as the Twelve did.

Second, no one can become a true spiritual leader if he or she is not encountering God in deep and life-changing ways.³ Spiritual leadership flows out of a leader's lively and

³ Ibid., 100.

close relationship with God. Spiritual leaders lead people to seek God's way in everyday life; however, more importantly, they are to bring people into an intimate relationship with Jesus and to have a mature faith in him. They are not able to fulfill the role of spiritual leaders unless they are continually growing in their faith and living out life in Christ. This can only happen if they consistently maintain a vibrant, intimate relationship with God. In fact, it must be through an intimate relationship with God that Jesus' followers are able to trust and to obey constantly in order to finish well with their faith journey. Indeed, nothing of this kind of eternal significance happens apart from God (John 15:5).

Third, prayer life is critical for leaders, through which the spirit of leaders could encounter with the Spirit of God and is renewed profoundly. To pray for the power of the Holy Spirit is certainly necessary for leaders so that they may trust and obey God throughout the process of spiritual formation. As spiritual leadership is about marching people to where God wants them to be, it cannot be effective by human efforts but by prayers. Developing more leaders is not done by getting more people to fill the pews in the church. Like Jesus, it is through prayer that spiritual leaders are inspired to select strategic ones for leadership development, deciding on those who are willing to evangelize others to become followers of Jesus.⁴ Thus, one must spend good quality time in prayers to choose, before picking who is to be developed. It is God's will, not people's, that needs to be satisfied in developing leaders for his kingdom. Therefore, in the process of developing

⁴ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 66.

leaders, prayer for asking the power of the Holy Spirit to inspire, to lead and to transform the selected ones to become mature leaders is not an option, but a must.

Spiritual leader development is not just about what and how church equips people to become leaders. It is more about what and how the Spirit of God transforms people from inside to become like Jesus so that their lives and service are Christ-centered. In sketching out the ministry plan, Bible classes, small groups for outreach service or spiritual life support, and the spiritual practices of Lectio Divina, contemplative and meditative prayers, etc. will be promoted for both corporate and individual life. Also, attentive listening and interactive prayer with God through coaching and mentoring practices will be adopted for spiritual growth and leadership development. Overall, the core of the new ministry plan is to motivate the developed leaders and congregants to preserve a lively, intimate relationship with God in order to live out a community of love and obedience.

The Goal and Strategy

Meeting the Challenge and Fulfilling the Need

To meet the challenge of an ongoing spiritual growth for the Chinese congregants, and to fulfill the need of leadership development among the congregants, the goal of the ministry plan is twofold: the first is to develop a paradigm for the potential leaders and the congregants to maintain an intimate relationship with God, to trust and obey God in everyday life, and to be sensitive to the voice and leading of the Holy Spirit. All this is to facilitate the spiritual growth of the congregants and the development of spiritual leaders. The second is to understand how to build up mentoring and coaching relationship in the

process of spiritual transformation and leadership development, as well as to find out which spiritual practices are effective for the Chinese congregants.

Strategy of Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development

The strategic thoughts on spiritual growth and leadership development are essentially to influence the Chinese congregants on how to perceive life; that is, to make them see the meaning and future of their lives from the lens of God and eternity, and to turn their values and culture towards the biblical worldview so that they may take spiritual growth towards Christ seriously as the essence of the Christian faith. In order to support the spiritual needs and the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants in the long run, the strategy is to focus first on developing leaders, with the promotion of spiritual growth for the congregants as a supporting arm of the strategy. Both leadership development and the promotion of spiritual growth are accomplished through small groups and are facilitated by spiritual disciplines in the process. In developing leaders, the practices of mentoring and coaching are applied to enhance people's spiritual formation and to equip their ministry skills respectively. Three crucial elements are embedded in the strategic plan, namely mentoring and coaching, an intentional group, and spiritual disciplines.

Mentoring and Coaching

At the heart of mentoring and coaching is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit. Coaching practice⁵ is to help people discover God's call to them and to accomplish

⁵ Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 17-26.

it. The coach is not supposed to tell people what to do, but, by listening to the voice of God, help them to find out their gifts and to become competent to accomplish God's mission for them. The essence of coaching is about support where the coach assists people to respond to God's voice so that they may grow spiritually and may fully develop their potential. Coaching practice is, thus, assumed in the strategic plan to equip potential leaders with ministry skills such as leadership, preaching, teaching, etc. so that they may be equipped to take on the leadership role for the Ministry.

The essence of spiritual mentoring is about renewal of people's hearts, by teaching them to listen to God's will and encouraging them to respond to it. It encourages and leads people to desire God and to seek for an intimate, deep relationship with Him. Spiritual mentoring is for nurturing souls to help people march towards Christlikeness. The practice of mentoring deals often with the view of purpose and direction of life, focusing on the spiritual growth of who people want to be.⁶ Thus, mentoring practice is adopted in the strategic plan to advance the spiritual transformation of potential leaders and the congregants, particular in the area of character building.

Spiritual mentoring and coaching are neither a technique nor a formula, but are practices that provide people an opportunity to ponder what they are doing and where they are heading. The practices help people reinforce intimacy with God and alert them to the all-time presence of God, which strengthens people to trust and obey God without reservation. To be effective in the practices of mentoring or coaching, however, some

⁶ Wright, *Mentoring*, viii.

significant principles are identified to observe in developing potential leaders of the Ministry.⁷

Firstly, the core of mentoring or coaching is relationship. The relationship between the mentor or the coach and the developing leaders is the key to bring about productive results. Such spiritual relationship can be established on two different levels: informal or unintentional as well as formal or intentional. Nevertheless, no matter on what level it operates, the heart of it is relational. The practice of mentoring and coaching is anchored in life and all daily encounters of the potential leaders, its effectiveness depends on whether their lives and daily encounters can be explored beneath the surface.⁸ The mentoring or coaching relationship is, therefore, a window or a door that opens to search below the surface of the life of the potential leaders. In order to probe into the depths of what goes on under the surface of their lives, in addition to relationship, it is also important for the mentor or the coach to ask good questions, which are listed in detail in the Appendix A.

Secondly, the director of the mentoring or coaching process is the Holy Spirit. The task of the spiritual mentor or coach is basically to assist the potential leaders to find out the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It is not only to make them aware of the presence of God, but also to seek for God's will and direction in their lives. Thus, prayer is crucial for listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and for discerning his movement in the process of mentoring or coaching. After all, the director of the process is the Holy Spirit, and it is

⁷ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 37-47. Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 31-44.

⁸ Ibid., 39-43. Ibid., 31-39.

through prayer that one recognizes God's purpose for people in their specific space and time. Different ways of praying will be discussed below under the section of spiritual disciplines.

Thirdly, a sound practice of mentoring or coaching is attained by good boundaries. In fact, the mentoring or coaching relationship needs to be maintained by setting boundaries on money, emotional, sexual, and other issues for the good of both the mentor or the coach and the potential leaders. These boundaries are to respect one another, and need to be specific and clear, and to be well maintained throughout the process.

Lastly, an authentic practice of mentoring or coaching involves preparation. In mentoring or coaching practice, the mentor or the coach needs to listen to God before speaking to the potential leaders about what is heard. This implies that the mentor or the coach must be well prepared prior to the mentoring or coaching session. If the mentor or the coach neglects to prepare, it is actually not a mentoring or coaching session, but one that is manipulated by the mentor or the coach, for it is no more directed by the Holy Spirit. Prayer, meditation, contemplative Bible reading, and some other spiritual disciplines are helpful to the mentor or the coach to prepare and to focus on God.

An Intentional Group

Leaders for the kingdom of God are not made accidentally but are grown by intentional selection, strategic processes, and a clear destination right from the beginning when the leadership development starts. To strategically recruit leaders to join the development, prayer over a period of time is necessary, like when Jesus chose the Twelve.

The goal of the leadership development of the Ministry is clear: to be servant leaders to serve the needy and the poor within and outside BWC. That means they need to be spiritually and technically equipped as Bible teachers, small group leaders, or outreach service leaders. Moreover, they need to be intentionally made aware of the cost of following Jesus and of being Christian leaders, reinforcing them along the way so that they may persevere and not give up when facing tough trials and struggles.

To be sure, mentors or coaches carry personal influence over the selected ones in the development process. However, as discussed, leaders are not shaped in isolation; they are spiritually sharpened by the effect of God's community. It is through the involvement in one another's lives that leaders and believers come to bear spiritual fruit. It is by discipleship in community that spiritual leaders are developed, and believers become mature in Christ. Thus, the intentional group of developing leaders would be encouraged to connect with others through services or fellowships of the church.

Spiritual Disciplines

As discussed, spiritual formation is about renewing people's hearts and minds to be like Christ, which occurs whenever they abide in Christ. That means, preserving a lively, intimate relationship with God is fundamental to spiritual growth. To engage with God deeply, spiritual exercises are common to Christians to stimulate their desire to draw close to him. In the ministry plan, three significant spiritual exercises are recommended to carry out together with mentoring or coaching processes as well as for individuals to practice in their daily life.

First is the practice of prayer. Prayer is the most common practice in Christian faith. People pray in different ways: (a) to pray with ready-made prayers, for instance, The Lord's Prayer; (b) to pray in one's own words whatever is in one's mind; (c) to pray by listening to God, that is, focusing on God's agenda not his or hers.⁹ No matter which way of prayer is adopted, it demands an absolute faith from people as they are not able to prove if God is present in the prayer; they simply have to trust that God does listen to their prayers. In prayer, however, people spend most of their time learning to listen to God and to discern his will, which is an important part of mentoring and coaching. The practice of listening will further be discussed below.

Indeed, prayer is not about what and how to pray to God; it is for us to listen, to interact with, and to open ourselves to God. Thus, meditative prayer is embraced by Christians in their prayer life.¹⁰ It combines the study of Scripture and reflection on the scriptural text in practice. In meditative prayer, people enter into the text and make themselves open to God. Meditative prayer does not advance above spontaneous prayer, nonetheless, it helps enrich people's prayer life and their spiritual experiences with God, because prayer and reflection on Scripture are effective catalysts for spiritual growth.

Second is the practice of Lectio Divina. Contemplative Bible reading, Lectio Divina, is not Bible study to learn about God. It is a way of establishing a relationship with

⁹ Mark E. S.J. Thibodeaux, *Armchair Mystic: Easing into Contemplative Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2001), 53-62.

¹⁰ Richard Peace, *Meditative Prayer: Entering God's Presence* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 11-14, 48.

God through interactive conversations with him. The practice of Lectio Divina involves four steps: (a) reading and listening to a passage of Scripture three or four times; (b) meditating on the passage that was read; (c) praying on the thoughts that derive from meditation; and (d) contemplation in God's presence: listen to God in silence, who may reveal himself to people through words, images, ideas, thoughts, or visions.¹¹ In short, it is the spiritual exercise of Bible reading to cultivate paying attention to the words of God and to listen and obey. Peterson, however, argues that Bible reading would not benefit people unless it is done in a good way. He contends that good Bible reading means people must not forget "the active revelation of the God of creation and salvation, the God of love who became the Word made flesh in Jesus".¹² If Christians forget God is alive, they will fail to submit to his sovereignty and saving love. All this will make them become arrogant in their thoughts and behavior, which will only do great damage to their Christian life.

Lastly is the practice of listening. Listening is crucial to successful relationships, and is the essence of mentoring or coaching, for the core of these practices is relationship.¹³ To be effective in listening, one has to be in the habit of listening with four key elements: (1) listening with intentionality, that is to listen deliberately to every aspect of people's lives and the underlying issues of their souls. Intentional listening requires one

¹¹ Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God Through Scripture* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 7, 12-13.

¹² Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 82.

¹³ Michael P. Nichols, *The Lost Art of Listening* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), 10-11.

to listen with alertness and anticipation of God's voice and presence.¹⁴ It is attentive listening to the meaning of people's experiences and life circumstances, by the inspiration of God's voice; (2) listening with intimacy, which means the listener, the mentor or the coach, is willing to share one's emotions, thoughts and experiences, and vulnerabilities, that mutual trust and relationship is deepened and strengthened between the listener and the one who speaks. Intimate listening, however, does not require the listener to talk too much about his or herself; (3) listening with focus, which is listening with one's energy and focuses on the presence of the one who speaks, without letting the mind seek for solutions, what to say or to do next, or ways to respond to the person. This will allow the listener to truly listen beyond words; (4) listening to the ordinary, which is the practice of seeing and identifying God's work and grace in everyday life, becoming aware of the presence of God in every circumstance of people; that is, to pay attention to everything in daily life for listening to God. Further listening guidelines are listed in the Appendix B.

Content of the Ministry Plan

In order to advance and sustain the ongoing spiritual growth among the Chinese congregants at BWC, developing leaders of the Chinese Ministry is the primary step to take. This means that small group leaders with solid Christian faith, Bible teachers with sound biblical knowledge, and outreach team leaders with servant heart to bring people to Jesus, are the foremost needs of the Ministry.

¹⁴ Ibid., 16-31.

Strategic Plan for Embracing Spiritual Growth

First, the necessity of ongoing spiritual growth towards maturity for Christians will be made known generally among the Chinese congregants through a series of teachings on why and what spiritual growth is about. It plans to edify the congregants in the concepts of spiritual growth through Mandarin and Cantonese small groups of fellowship. The series is taught in group meetings once a month for a period of one year. The relevant topics include, but are not be restricted to: (1) the ever presence God; (2) the guidance of the Holy Spirit; (3) the core of God's salvation; (4) the significance of saving grace; (5) the significance of faith and spiritual transformation; (6) intimacy with God; (7) abiding in the Vine; (8) the fruit of the Holy Spirit; (9) listening to God; (10) attentive listening and obedience; (11) discernment of the guidance of the Holy Spirit; (12) God's will and the Christian life. Other than the pastor of the Chinese Ministry, some Chinese congregants with a good foundation in the Christian faith will be invited to share the above or relevant topics in order to prepare and cultivate people for change.

Strategic Plan for Developing Leaders

This part of the plan is to move people from being Christ followers to become Christ leaders. Strategic ones are selected for leadership development to achieve the short-term goal of leading outreach services, Bible classes, or small groups. The plan also aims at the long-term goal of leading the Chinese Ministry to move forward together with the pastor of the Ministry. Coaching and mentoring practices will be adopted in the process of

developing leaders. A monthly meeting with all potential leaders is scheduled for both skills training and spiritual enhancement.

Skills training refers to ministry skills such as communication, public speaking, delegation, and leading a small group or a Bible class discussion. In learning how to lead a Bible class, the potential leaders need to make extra time and effort to enhance their biblical knowledge and teaching skills. However, they are not taught to focus only on academic pursuit but to reflect on the life application of the biblical truth that they attain through preparation and study. Theology or biblical truth which is irrelevant to the reality of life would not benefit the spiritual growth of the congregants. Nevertheless, by entering into the biblical text to ponder deeply, the spiritual experiences of all potential leaders must be enriched, and their spiritual growth must be enhanced. They will also be assigned to lead small groups or outreach teams, through which the skills of decision-making, discernment, organization and planning will be sharpened.

Spiritual enhancement refers to prayers and life sharing sessions, in which everyone is encouraged to freely share one's personal and ministerial struggles, thoughts on life challenges, reflections on devotional reading, etc. This will help develop spiritual formation by cultivating a willingness to reveal one's vulnerability and deep thoughts to others, who can pray with you for your needs and weaknesses. Being open, honest, and humble publicly not only build trust and unity among the leaders as a team, but also lets the Holy Spirit mold their inner lives.

Strategic Plan for Advancing Spiritual Growth

This first part of the plan is to move Christ seekers (CS) to become Christ believers (CB). As Chinese people feel relaxed over meals, an eight-week social gathering, served with a free meal each time, is arranged on weekends for any CS who are interested in knowing more about Christ or the Christian faith. The Chinese congregants are prompted to invite people both from within and outside the church, such as workplaces, social circles, markets, etc., to accompany the CS to attend. The gathering format is home-style so that people may loosen up. During each meeting, a short video about Christian faith is played, or a life story or testimony is told relating to one's faith life, which may spark dialogue with one another to link their lives with the conveyed biblical truth.

The meetings aim to establish relationships with the CS and to lead them to perceive the challenges of their work or personal lives through the lens of the conveyed biblical truths discussed that day. The meetings do not serve to convince the CS to be Christians, but to encourage them to build relationships with the Chinese congregants. In fact, the CS' faith obstacles may still exist at the end of the eight weeks; however, what is important is to make friends with them. In the end, if any CS decides to receive Christ, they will be invited to join Sunday service, and to take up the next-step to continue on their faith journey. Nevertheless, for those who need more time to explore Jesus to decide on the Christian faith, they will be invited to join certain church activities which are more for connection and making friends, such as fellowship lunches, or art studio participation. A coffee meeting will be held once a month or bi-monthly to connect with these undecided CS, to maintain relationships and dialogues with them.

The second part is to move Christ believers (CB) to become Christ followers (CF). This is to advance people from being complacent with their spiritual status quo to keep pressing on to establish an intimate relationship with God continually; that is, from simply having an intellectual mind for God to possessing a deep heart for him. The process of moving from CB to CF has, however, no definite format or time, for individual's spiritual growth proceeds differently from one to another. However, spiritual practices and service for the needy are positive influences on spiritual growth.¹⁵ They are identified as important catalysts for CB to grow from devoted CF and to become mature in Christ.

Thus, at the heart of the Chinese small group meetings, practices of contemplative prayer, meditative Bible reading, and listening to God are recommended. CB are encouraged to attend weekly Bible classes, or they are invited to join the outreach team to serve and to evangelize the needy outside the church. Moreover, all CB are urged to find at least one or two other CB to form a group to be accountable to one another's personal spiritual life. Seasonal retreats and meetings for sharing one another's experiences will be held to assure the CB that they are not alone on their spiritual path, but are accompanied by many who share their struggles. Coaching practices will be adopted in small groups to help CB discover their spiritual gifts for service and to get insight into where God calls to them to go. If necessary, mentoring practices will also apply in small groups to keep CB motivated to press on towards reaching the finish line of their spiritual journey.

¹⁵ Greg Hawkins and Call Parkinson, *Move: What 1000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 140-146, 160.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

In light of the goals and strategies that are stipulated in Chapter 4, the implementation of the ministry plan will be explained in the first part of this chapter, which is followed by the second part of the evaluation of the plan.

Implementation of the Ministry Plan

The implementation takes up two phases, each of which comprises two parts. Phase one: (a) embracing spiritual growth: edifying the congregants of why and what spiritual growth is about, and (b) stage one of leadership development through a strategic group. Phase two: (a) stage two of leadership development, and (b) advancing spiritual growth: encouraging ongoing spiritual growth among Chinese congregants through small groups.

Implementation of Phase One: (a) Embracing Spiritual Growth January through December 2017

The plan aims to generally edify the congregants about: (a) why discipleship is the essence of Christian faith, and not irrelevant to the saving faith of Jesus; (b) what

discipleship aims at is being spiritually mature in Christ; and (c) how to reach the goal of Jesus Christ by having a close relationship with God in daily life. To achieve this, a series of twelve lessons are taught once a month in small groups. The topics of the twelve lessons are biblically based and are referred to on page 88. In each of these lessons, three Chinese congregants with a sound foundation in the Christian faith are invited to jointly share the topics with the pastor of the Chinese Ministry. This will not only give hands-on training for them to learn how to prepare and to teach a Bible class, it will also empower and encourage them to become Bible teachers. Also, towards the end of the class, the main points of the biblical truth are summarized and discussed for life application. This is to make known the importance of the life of discipleship and to help promote the necessity of spiritual growth among the congregants of the small groups.

In each lesson, people are also encouraged to freely raise any questions about God, church, the Christian faith, etc. If any of the questions cannot be responded to due to time, they will be collected in written form. A special session is held quarterly during group meetings in order to answer all those questions not yet responded to. In this way, the Chinese congregants have another opportunity to further understand that discipleship is not merely a moral matter but has significance for eternal life that God promised for believers. Also, they would be reminded quarterly that maintaining an intimate and interactive relationship with God is important to attain continual spiritual growth.

In light of the cultural, political, and social influences on the congregants which have been discussed in Chapter 1, this plan does not intend to push for spiritual growth among them, particularly for those from China who are atheists and are survivors of the

intimidating political movements. Indeed, it takes time for their hearts and minds which were shaped by those influences, to be transformed towards biblical worldviews and values. The plan also desires to provide an environment for the Holy Spirit to work on them inside so that they may gradually embrace spiritual growth in their Christian faith. As there is no short cut for spiritual transformation, therefore, this plan is to be implemented repeatedly every two years, to edify and remind congregants about the significance of spiritual growth.

Implementation of Phase One: (b) Stage one Leadership Development
January through December 2017

Recruitment of Potential Leaders (January to March 2017)

After taking three months of prayer to recruit the potential ones for leadership development, eight congregants were strategically selected in April 2017. They have been participating in the Chinese Ministry and helping to run small groups, Bible classes, and outreach services for one to three years. They were identified for leadership development mainly because of their fervency for Christ, keenness to learn new things, and serving attitude for others who need Jesus. More importantly, they were chosen for their willingness to evangelize others to be Christ followers.

Implementation of Leadership Development (Stage One: April to December 2017)

The goal of leadership development in stage one is to equip and to grow the strategically selected ones so that they can become leaders of small groups or outreach teams at the end of the stage one development. Also, it tends to identify two persons

committed to be assistant Bible teachers after the nine-month training. Over this period of time, the monthly training sessions will focus on two parts: skills enhancement and spiritual enrichment.

The first part is skills enhancement. Each of the nine sessions of skills enhancement takes ninety minutes to cover three parts, namely, theory, hands-on practice and group discussions. The ministry skills to be taught include: (1) direction: where the small groups, outreach teams, and Bible classes are at present, and where and how they should be heading; (2) communication (I): essential qualities for public speaking include clarity, engagement, logical presentation of thoughts or ideas, choice of words, tone and volume, pace and gestures, etc.; (3) communication (II): handling feedbacks, conflicts, and surprises; (4) communication (III): leading a small group discussion; (5) worship workshop: preparing and leading musical sessions in outreach or small group meetings; (6) Bible class workshop (I): Bible study and preparation; (7) Bible class workshop (II): teaching a Bible class and leading a group discussion. (8) delegation (I): releasing tasks that others can do and focusing on tasks that only one should or can do; (9) delegation (II): having faith and taking risks with people, yet, not throwing tasks to them.

It is fully understood that to develop a sound Bible teacher will take much longer than to develop one to lead a small group or an outreach team; thus, the training of Bible teachers needs to be held separately in the long run. Two people are committed and have good potentials to become Bible teachers and will be sent to attend formal classes of Book studies, in order to enhance their biblical knowledge and teaching skills. Nevertheless, life applications of biblical truth are emphasized with all developing leaders. They are

reminded that the ultimate purpose of knowing God through Bible classes is to strive towards Christ and to enjoy and glorify God, regardless of where or when they teach the Bible. All selected leaders are assigned to work alongside the pastor of the Ministry to lead small groups and outreach programs, such as Love Meals and the Alpha course for the community, and to assist teaching Bible classes. All this is to meet the short-term goal of the plan so that they will be able to lead on their own soon in those mentioned areas.

The second part is spiritual enrichment. Each of the nine sessions of spiritual enrichment is ninety-minute long. For the first thirty minutes, the developing leaders are divided in groups of two by two, to share their experiences of practicing trust and obedience to God in life, and to pray for one another. The rest of the sixty minutes is open for personal testimonies, life encounters with God, and spiritual disciplines such as meditative and contemplative prayers. The purpose is to let the developing leaders encounter God deeply, so that the spiritual leadership that flows out from them is alive before God. It is also designed to help keep the developing leaders' hearts and minds in step with the Holy Spirit, to strengthen their faith and obedience to God in their ordinary lives, and to motivate them to constantly keep an intimate relationship with God.

During stage one of leadership development, three persons from the selected group desired to take extra time and effort to have one-on-one mentoring and coaching. Through these personal practices, they did go deeper in their spiritual growth and went further to enhance their leadership skills. The mentoring-coaching sessions are scheduled monthly for one and a half to two hours each. Observations on building mentoring and coaching relationships will be outlined later in this chapter.

Implementation of Phase Two: (a) Stage Two Leadership Development
January through September 2018

The leadership development sessions are held once a month, same as stage one, and each session is divided into two parts: skills enhancement and spiritual enrichment. First, for the skills enhancement session, each remains ninety minutes long, but its content and format are different from that of stage one. Instead of teaching theory to the developing leaders, they have to share their experiences, both good and bad, of practicing the ministry skills that were taught. As the developing leaders have been assigned to lead small groups, outreach ministry, or to assist Bible classes from the beginning of stage two leadership training, they discuss how and what to do when facing the difficulties and challenges of leading so that they may improve their serving next time. The topics of the nine skills enhancement sessions are listed on pages 95.

Nevertheless, as the long-term goal of the plan is to develop leaders to lead the Chinese Ministry forward together with the pastor, the first skill session regarding direction is changed slightly. The developing leaders are led to reflect and ponder on where the Chinese Ministry is and should be heading. This is to help prepare them to take up the leading roles to drive the Chinese congregants along with the whole congregation towards the church mission, “to produce fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ”.

Second is the spiritual enrichment session. Basically, the content and format remain similar to that of stage one: to help the developing leaders to live out their trust and obedience to God, to pray for one another for support and needs, and to let the Holy Spirit transform their hearts and minds towards God by meditation and contemplation. The new

emphasis is to listen to God and to discern the will of God. As leaders of the Ministry, in the long run, they must learn to listen and see how and where God is leading, and to discern what is, or is not, the will of God. The three persons who went through the one-on-one mentoring and coaching in stage one continue the practices in this stage to polish their ministry skills and to press on in striving for their spiritual growth. Mentoring and coaching relationships were further observed and delineated later in the chapter.

Implementation of Phase Two: (b) Advancing Spiritual Growth
January through September 2018

Implementation Plan for Advancing Christ Believers towards Spiritual Maturity

As previously said, the process of spiritual transformation has no definite time or format. This is because individual spiritual growth proceeds differently, and occurs wherever and whenever the Holy Spirit pleases (John 3:8). However, it is identified that spiritual practices of prayer and reflection on Scripture as well as the spiritual activities of evangelism and service for the needy are influential catalysts for spiritual growth, advancing believers to followers and to become mature in Christ.¹

Thus, since January 2018, members of each small group have been divided in teams of three persons each to lead a session of Bible study or reflection on a passage in the group meetings. After sharing the main points of the passage, what and how to live out the biblical truth of that passage is discussed. In the next meeting, everyone is encouraged

¹ Hawkins and Parkinson, *Move*, 132, 146-148, 162-163.

to share one's experiences or challenges in observing the truth. This makes everyone not only learn God's words, but also practice them in life. It aims to promote the concept of discipleship among the congregants and to advance the spiritual growth through small groups.

From July 2017 to July 2018, two retreats, with a good number of participants, were held to promote the practices of spiritual disciplines, such as Lectio Divina, contemplation, meditative prayer, and solitude. Since January 2018, some congregants of the small groups have newly been recruited to join the outreach team to serve and evangelize people within and outside the church. All these spiritual practices and spiritual activities are meant to help the congregants to develop a personal relationship with God and to reinforce the transformation of people's hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit to occur constantly and persistently.

Implementation Plan for Moving Christ Seekers to Become Christ Believers (June)

Eight weekly gatherings, including a free meal, were held to reach out to a local community at Vancouver, starting in June 2018. The goal is to move Christ seekers (CS) to become Christ believers (CB). By promotion and invitation, it generated an average attendance of forty-five people to come for the gathering, of whom thirty-five persons were guests, and ten were the Chinese congregants of BWC who keep attended to accompany the CS. The gathering was comprised of a lunch meal plus a video about the Christian faith, a story of one's faith life, or a personal testimony, followed by a discussion session with one another to link the conveyed biblical truth with the guests' lives.

In the last week of the gathering, four persons decided to receive Christ and twelve people showed high interest in knowing more about Jesus and the Christian faith. They all have been invited to join the outreach program which meets regularly on Saturdays, to continue on their faith journey. Another five persons are willing to meet bi-monthly for coffee and tea, to maintain relationships and dialogues with the Ministry. No one knows how and when a person will accept Christ, except the Holy Spirit. Thus, this plan is scheduled to be implemented repeatedly once a year in order to bring an environment for the Holy Spirit to work on the CS to become CB and to live in God's kingdom.

Evaluation of the Ministry Plan

The evaluation of the ministry plan covers: (a) how spiritual growth is measured and the approach to assessment; (b) observations on mentoring and coaching relationships; (c) results of the ministry plan and follow up.

Measurement and Approach to Assessment

Spiritual growth is a matter of transformation of hearts and minds, which is hard to measure. Measurement of spiritual growth is difficult because an individual's spiritual growth does not progress in a linear or predictable way. If spiritual growth is defined, as Hawkins suggested, based on Jesus' teaching of the greatest commandment of loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:35-40), the spiritual progression of Christ seekers to that of devoted Christ followers could be changed to from having no sense of loving God and

loving others to deeply loving God and loving others consistently.² That is to say, the spiritual growth of people can be measured by their loving acts.

Indeed, when people's love towards God is deepened, it can be reflected in their behavior such as taking their own responsibility for spiritual growth, increasing time in spiritual practices and solitude, interacting with God by conversational prayer at any time of the day, and greater levels of daily Bible reading and reflection on Scripture.³ Likewise, when people's love for others increases due to one's love for God, it can be mirrored in their commitment and attitude to service, tithing, and financial support of God's work within and outside church. Nevertheless, it is not possible for the church to know exactly at what spiritual stage a person is at and how far one is in reaching spiritual maturity. Therefore, what the church can and should do is first understand what helps spiritual growth occur and what is needed to encourage people to press on towards spiritual maturity, and then to provide a helpful environment and the necessary elements to facilitate ongoing spiritual growth. The focus of the ministry plan is, therefore, to promote spiritual growth and leadership development by cultivating people's deepening love for God, which will extend to their love for people.

The approach and tools to assess the ministry plan are varied. Firstly, in order to study spiritual growth and related issues, an anonymous survey is adopted to explore how the Chinese congregants embrace spiritual growth. The spiritual growth questionnaire

² Hawkins and Parkinson, *Move*, 10, 26.

³ *Ibid.*, 69-77.

includes: the relevancy of saving faith, and its importance in Christian life, the effect of spiritual disciplines, etc. The congregants' commitment to church life such as small groups, Bible study classes, fellowship lunches, communion, concerts of prayer, etc. would reflect whether the ministry plan induces any positive impact on the congregants in embracing spiritual growth in the Christian life. Thus, how often they attend these activities is also included in the questionnaire, which can be referred to in Appendix C for further details.

Secondly, to examine the effectiveness of the leadership development programs, an anonymous survey is conducted among developing leaders and ministry volunteers. The questionnaire is designed mainly to study ministry skills improvement. The responses of the Ministry volunteers who serve with the developing leaders, reveal the improvement in the developing leaders' ministry skills from others' perspectives. The developing leaders are also required to feedback, whose responses reflect the success of the leadership program from these leaders' own assessment. The questionnaire can be referred to in Appendix D for further details. Regarding the efficiency of mentoring and coaching practices for leadership development, an interview with each developing leader can be done to capture their views on the subject. Generally speaking, congregants' and leaders' spiritual progression is observed this way: their love towards people can be reflected in their commitment and attitude to serving others, while their love for God can be revealed in their Bible sharing, life testimony, prayers, attendance at church activities, etc., though how far they are from spiritual maturity is not possible to assess.

Building Mentoring and Coaching Relationships

The effectiveness of mentoring and coaching practices needs to be done through the lens of relationship. How to build up a healthy relationship with mentorees and coachees is, in fact, the primary concern of all practiced mentors and coaches, which is, also, one of the goals of this paper. Factors that bring on a flourishing and beneficial relationship for leadership development are observed and summarized in two aspects: (a) issues to pay attention to before starting the relationship, and (b) elements to pay attention to in building the relationship.

It is noticed that before starting a mentoring or coaching relationship, two issues are necessary to consider as they may affect the effectiveness of the practice when it proceeds. First, mentors and mentorees or coaches and coachees must have shared values. They may not need to have the same views on matters, but they must be open to one another's values and perspectives in order to work out the relationship in harmony. As leadership development is an issue of character building, growing in spirituality is its goal. If both have shared values, it will give them a good chemistry to develop further and to grow in spiritual arena, which will definitely facilitate the practice to move forward.

Second, mentorees and coachees must be committed to learn and grow in Christ. Initial attraction may start a mentoring or coaching relationship, but the relationship may not last or work well if one is only attracted to it for personal reasons. A person claimed that they were keen to be mature in Christ and they were attracted to a mentor for mentoring practices. However, after a while, it was found that the mentoree had no genuine interest to imitate a Christian lifestyle or to obey Jesus' teachings. That person just

desired to get guidance, comfort, and assistance from a reliable mentor to help them in facing their personal difficulties. That mentoring relationship did not go far, for it lacked the commitment to spiritual growth needed to bloom a mentoring or coaching relationship.

In developing mentoring and coaching relationships, three essentials are required in order to make the practice effective. First, mutual trust is the non-negotiable element to grow a mentoring and coaching relationship. As spiritual growth or leadership development is about a work of heart, mentorees and coachees need to open up their personal life in the process of being mentored and coached. This implies that mutual trust between mentors and mentorees or coaches and coachees is surely important for the practice to be effective. Many people need a safe environment to be open to others; they need to be fully accepted as they are in order to grow and learn. A safe environment can be built with openness, love, and boundaries. This means that obstacles of mistrust, fear and negativity must be replaced by acceptance and respect; attentive listening by mentors and coaches, which displays sincere care and love to mentorees or coaches, must be practiced; and boundaries such as a schedule, confidentiality, covenants, etc. ought to be put in place from the beginning and be observed throughout.

Second, an intentional and committed attitude on the mentorees or coachees is essential for an effective mentoring and coaching relationship. As Wright argues,⁴ an intentional mentor or coach without an intentional learner would not bring the kind of relationship needed for effectual leadership development. Also, aimless affirmation and

⁴ Wright, *Mentoring*, 29-30.

encouragement will not be effective in developing leaders. In order to bear the fruit of building a leader's character, intentional and committed mentality must be carried by mentorees and coachees for productive mentoring and coaching.

Third, a life of growing intimacy with God by mentors or coaches is crucial for a genuine mentoring and coaching relationship. The ultimate goal of leadership development is to develop spiritual leaders to lead people to where God desires them to go. However, mentors or coaches cannot lead others to where they have never been. That is to say, mentors or coaches need to live a life of growing intimacy with God, learning to listen and abide in Christ, encountering God's grace and mercy in life, etc. so that they may lead people to desire a Christ life and show them how to live it out. Without doing one's best to live a life in Christ, spiritual growth or character development towards Jesus Christ will take place for neither mentors and coaches, nor mentorees and coachees.

Results and Follow Up

The results of the ministry plan can be assessed from two aspects: spiritual growth and leadership development. Some follow up suggestions for continual spiritual growth to maturity are included at the end.

Assessment of the Spiritual Growth of the Congregants

Through the plan of embracing spiritual growth, congregants who participate in small groups generally have a better understanding that discipleship is the core of the Christian faith, and that it is Christians' responsibility to pursue spiritual growth towards the goal of becoming like Jesus. These concepts are also extended to congregants who

connect with those of the small groups. To know is one thing, and to practice is another. The result does not bring to those congregants an instant desire for spiritual maturity; however, it will stimulate them to share in any discipleship programs later. People can be forgetful and weak in striving towards the goal of Christ. The plan is found to be effective for edifying and reminding them to press on in the lifelong journey of faith.

The plan of advancing spiritual growth is comprised of two parts. The first part is to move Christ seekers to become Christ believers. The social meetings on weekends open up windows for people who are not church-goers to connect with Christians. It also provides them a safe environment to raise any questions about the Christian faith or related issues. Although most of them have not accepted Christ after the eight weekly gatherings, their minds are more open to Christianity and church, and the seeds of the gospel may somehow be planted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit which will germinate at a later stage. More importantly, the plan expands the pool of potential people who may be suitable for leadership development later. This plan is, thus, considered to run at least once, maybe twice a year.

The second part is to promote congregants to keep moving towards spiritual maturity. Surely, it cannot tell how much every congregant has progressed spiritually, nevertheless, there has been progress. Attendance of small groups is steadier than before, turnout to Bible class has persistently increased, and it is not so difficult for the outreach ministry to recruit new people to serve as before. All this reflects that at least some of the Chinese congregants are not stagnant but advancing in their spiritual growth. However, many of them admit that they do not have motivation to prioritize time to do daily Bible

reading, meditation, or prayer in their personal spiritual life. It is too early to conclude whether the content of this plan is effective or not, for spiritual growth of individuals occurs differently and its process has no definite format or time. Nevertheless, encouraging and helping congregants to establish a close relationship with God remains as the strategic focus of the plan.

Assessment of Leadership Development

Obviously, the influence on the congregants is multiplied by the developing leaders, who help promote spiritual growth among congregants as well as bring the Ministry good attendance in small groups, Bible class, and outreach service. Although they are not fully confident in making ministry decisions, they can lead independently. In fact, because four developing leaders have been sharing the leadership roles in small groups and outreach service, the Ministry has been enabled to serve better in the past two years.

However, the plan cannot be assessed as totally successful because of a couple reasons. First, some of the potential leaders could not attend all the training sessions as planned. They had a hard time struggling with their busy schedules and they could not give as much attention and energy as the plan required of them. Second, two potential Bible teachers who were previously committed now indicate that they do not have enough spare time to attend classes to enhance their biblical knowledge and skills. Nonetheless, those who have done one-to-one mentoring and coaching advanced well in both skills and spiritual enhancement. Their spiritual leadership reveals their spiritual growth by keeping an intimate relationship with God. In sum, the strategy of firstly developing leaders for

sustaining the Ministry and cultivating spiritual growth among the congregants is right, although ascertaining reasonable time and energy commitments from leaders to develop the Ministry is still a challenge.

Follow Up for Continual Spiritual Growth to Maturity

From the results of the above plans, no paradigm for continual spiritual growth can be exhibited, however, some strategic thoughts can be suggested for the Ministry to press on because discipleship is the core of the Christian faith and spiritual maturity is relevant to the saving faith of all Christians. Firstly, as busyness is and will still be the biggest enemy to the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants and of leadership development, renewal of the priorities of life and values through the lens of God and eternity must be carried out with the congregants and leaders. However, since this can only be done by the power of God's Word and his Spirit, therefore, secondly, it is necessary to continue to provide the environment and essentials for congregants' hearts and minds to be worked on by the Holy Spirit and the words of the Bible. The contents of the ministry plan cover all this. The Ministry must use various means to keep teaching and reminding congregants of the significance of discipleship, encourage them to connect with the Holy Spirit and the words of Jesus through prayer and study groups, and help them cultivate a close relationship with God by practicing spiritual disciplines.

Lastly, developing leaders is, indeed, the only way to sustain spiritual growth and to support the Ministry. It is suggested that in leadership development, each developing leader should find at least one potential person to develop as an intern leader. These interns

can be brought along by the leaders to learn how and what to do to be ministry leaders, thus multiplying the pool of potential leaders for future development. Also, one-to-one mentoring or coaching practice does help advance potential leaders' spiritual growth, particularly for the Chinese culture where people do not open their hearts publicly.

CONCLUSION

The false concept that discipleship is insignificant to eternal life or is irrelevant to saving faith contributes to the slow-moving spiritual growth of the Chinese-speaking congregants. The cultivation of atheism, the rule of communism or colonialism, and terrifying political movements results in skepticism in people's hearts and a lack of trust in others, which also causes stagnation in the process of spiritual growth among them. In addition, the values of pursuing success and the culture of working hard for money not only keeps many of the Chinese busy, but also leads them to focus more on this present life, without having the perspective of eternity after death. The Chinese culture of emotional reticence is also an impediment to the spiritual growth of the congregants. All these heart matters need to be transformed in order for one to advance in the process of spiritual growth.

To motivate people to grow mature in Christ, BWC does provide the congregation with many spirited discipleship programs to choose from. However, as it is an English-speaking church, its development and programs for the congregants are geared towards the culture of the English-speaking world of Canada. The Chinese congregants who are mostly immigrants with the above-mentioned background, may not be able to benefit from the discipleship programs of the church for their spiritual growth. Moreover, they may find it difficult to build close relationships in spiritual growth processes, with English-speaking people who do not understand Chinese culture. Thus, the Chinese Ministry serves as a

bridge to overcome the language and cultural barriers to the spiritual growth of the Chinese congregants at BWC.

In light of the needs and challenges of the Chinese Ministry and theological reflection, this ministry plan is designed to enhance the spiritual transformation and leadership development among the Chinese congregants. From the results of the implementation, it cannot be claimed that a paradigm has been found to ensure the success of spiritual growth and leadership development for the Ministry. The reason for that is because the crucial factors for spiritual and leadership enhancement such as the work of the Holy Spirit, the transformation of hearts and minds, and the pace of individual's spiritual growth are not under human control. In spite of all this, however, some strategic thoughts are summarized below for the Ministry to plan in the long run.

First is edification. As spiritual growth is about the change of hearts and minds, it involves the renewal of one's inside, mainly thoughts, feelings and character. Although, the renewal is performed and completed only by the Holy Spirit, Christians can still have a part to play so that they may keep themselves in step with the Spirit. To allow the Holy Spirit to work effectively, they must understand why discipleship is essential so that they may be willing and eager to be mature in Christ. Thus, it is necessary to first teach people that discipleship is a salvation issue, and spiritual growth is, indeed, the core of the Christian faith, which all Christians need to strive for. This edification can be done as per the above plan (a) of phase one.

Second is strengthening. Spiritual growth is a striving process that requires ceaseless strength. Although, by the power of the Holy Spirit, people are empowered to

live not according to the flesh, they still live in the flesh. Undoubtedly, Christians are not living of the world, yet, in this world; there are so many anti-God forces that exist to distract and attract them to turn away from God, such as success, money, power, sex, greed, entertainment, etc. In order to turn to God and be open to the lead of the Spirit, Christians need to be strengthened by keeping their minds full of good and pure things from God. This may occur by prayer, Scripture, meditating in the Spirit, solitude, and spiritual disciplines that help cultivate an intimate relationship with God. That means congregants ought to regularly participate in some church activities, such as small, life support groups, Bible classes, prayer meetings, outreach, retreats, etc. to be strengthened by one another. The above plan (b) of phase two covers the above.

In order to edify or to strengthen the Chinese congregants, the Ministry need to strive for leadership development to take place sooner rather than later. The results of the above leadership development show that the trained leaders not only have the multiplied effect of edifying and strengthening spiritual growth among the congregants, but also of leading the Ministry to advance. To overcome the challenge of busyness, leadership development may be done as unscheduled mentoring and coaching practices. That is, to grab every opportunity to develop potential ones to become ministry leaders by daily conversations, regular contacts, or ministry meetings. Mentoring and coaching are found to be effective in a small group or one-on-one, because the Chinese are shy to open their hearts or to speak publicly.

Third is encouragement and support. Spiritual growth itself is demanding and requires a lot of discipline and stamina in order to strive towards maturity in Christ.

Failures, fatigue, pain, suffering, hurts, etc. may cause Christians to feel like giving up half way. They need comfort, encouragement, and support so that they may move on through the journey. The Ministry has to be patient and supportive in helping congregants to persevere.

APPENDIX A ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Helpful Principles for Asking Questions in Mentoring and Coaching Practice¹

1. Ask open-ended questions. (avoid questions of “yes” or “no” answer)
2. Ask easy questions when a mentoring or coaching relationship is first started.
3. Ask more challenging questions as the relationship is developed.
4. Ask specific, clear and brief questions.
5. Ask questions with an attitude of acceptance and respect.
6. Do not manipulate or pry when asking questions.

Helpful Questions for Mentoring Sessions²

1. Who are you? Who do you intend to be?
2. What is important to you in life? Do you have more choices?
3. Where do you desire to grow? What do you fear?
4. Does failure teach you anything? Who cares?
5. Why should people trust you? What does trust look like?
6. How do you communicate? To whom do you communicate?
7. How transparent is your leadership or personal life? When do you feel insecure?
8. How do you manage conflict? What are the conflicts that you experience?

¹ Gary Sattler and Tom Schwanda, “Learning How to Develop Good Questions” (Leaders as Spiritual Mentors, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, June 22-26, 2015), 3-4.

² Ibid.

9. How healthy are your relationships in different areas of life?
10. What are life-giving activities to you? What are life-draining activities to you?
11. When was the last time that you had a critical change?
12. How significant is integrity to you?

Helpful Questions for Coaching Sessions³

1. Where do you want to go? Why is it important for you to get there?
2. What obstacles are you facing?
3. How devoted are you to go where you want to?
4. What are you learning?
5. What do you want to accomplish?
6. What are possible ways to attain your goal?
7. How will you assess your progress?

³ Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 44-50, 66-71.

APPENDIX B LISTENING GUIDELINES

Helpful Principles for Genuine Listening¹

1. True listening means suspending memory, desire, and judgment, and for a few moments at least, existing for the other person.
2. A good listener needs to set aside one's own needs to tune in to the others, however, completely selfless people do not make good listeners.
3. A good listener's response makes one feel understood and invites one to say more.
4. A good listener does not judge the emotional reaction of the one being listened to because he or she does not know all about the person's history.
5. Better listening does not require any technique, it starts with a sincerity to pay attention to one's private world of experience.
6. If you listen to someone, and at the same time think about your own reactions, you are actually talking to yourself, not listening.
7. Good listening is often silent but never passive.
8. The essence of good listening is empathy, achieved by being receptive to what people are trying to say and how they express themselves. Empathy takes a mind open to other sensibilities.
9. If you do not listen to yourself, it is unlikely that anyone else will.
10. Listening is how one helps people feel understood, and how closer relationships are built.
11. Self-possessed listeners are not isolated or unfeeling, but nonreactive.
12. Saying "I really appreciate your listening to me" encourages people to listen more.

¹ Nichols, *The Lost Art of Listening*, 139-202.

APPENDIX C
SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Questionnaire to Explore How Congregants Embrace Spiritual Growth

1. Do you agree that spiritual growth is merely a moral matter in the Christian faith?
 Yes Not sure No

2. Do you agree that spiritual growth is relevant to saving faith?
 Yes Not sure No

3. Do you agree that Christians must know spiritual growth before baptism?
 Yes Not sure No

4. Who is responsible for the spiritual growth of Christians?
 Christians Church Both Christians and Church Not sure

5. How important are these spiritual disciplines to your spiritual growth?
 - a) Lectio Divina Very important Somewhat important Not at all
 - b) Contemplation Very important Somewhat important Not at all
 - c) Interactive prayer Very important Somewhat important Not at all
 - d) Fasting Very important Somewhat important Not at all
 - e) Solitude Very important Somewhat important Not at all

6. How often do you attend these activities?
 - a) Small life support group Always Sometimes Very rarely
 - b) Bible study class Always Sometimes Very rarely
 - c) Communion Always Sometimes Very rarely
 - d) Concert of Prayer Always Sometimes Very rarely
 - e) Sunday service Always Sometimes Very rarely

APPENDIX D
SURVEY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Questionnaire to Study the Ministry Skills of (Leader's Name)

1. How clear and easy to follow is the leader's instruction?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor

2. Do you agree that the leader always speaks with clarity and engagement in public?
 Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree

3. How reasonable and just is the leader in resolving conflict?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor

4. Do you agree that the leader is receptive to positive and negative feedback?
 Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree

5. How well is the leader in listening and summarizing key points in a small group discussion?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor

6. Do you agree that the leader is effective in encouraging people to share their lives in a small group?
 Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree

7. How well is the leader's preparation for Bible class?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Not Applicable

8. How understandable and applicable is the leader's Bible teaching?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Not Applicable

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