

ChinaSource

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Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

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Partnering toward Indigenization

Laura Coleman

The time has come for us to experience a more equal partnership!" This proclamation was given by a Chinese leader at the end of a four-day Leader Development Consultation (LDC) held in November, 2008, sponsored by LeaderSource SGA and ChinaSource. This LDC wrestled with how truly indigenized leader development is achieved and the appropriate role of outsiders in leader development work.

Some of the key descriptors of this consultation were "openness," "transparency," "respect" and "understanding." There was a willingness to accept one another and share key ideas regarding leader development. Participants agreed that the time has come for Chinese and overseas leaders to move forward in mutual partnerships.

Three main themes emerged from the four day learning event: principles of indigenized leader development; mutual learning to

achieve indigenization; and the pursuit of indigenization in light of globalization.

Principles of Indigenized Leader Development

The term "indigenous" comes from biology and refers to the natural environment of plants and species. For example, a Karner Blue butterfly is indigenous to the south shore of Lake Michigan. Thus, an indigenous

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Connecting Leaders

Brent Fulton, Editor

Luther points out in his article, “A New Era for House Church Leaders,” (p. 8) that China’s unregistered church is “breaking through the surface of the water” and becoming more visible. This new visibility has implications both for how the church relates to the larger society and for how church leaders can now relate to one another.

While all would agree this is a welcome trend, it does challenge some of the common operating assumptions of those outside who seek to serve the church in China. Whether purposefully or by default

internal resources.

Barnabas’s experience in the Antioch church, recorded in Acts 11, provides a helpful model of how, by playing a catalytic role, we can help leaders during this new era of visibility to enter into mutually beneficial relationships with one another. After coming up from Jerusalem and serving for a time in Antioch, Barnabas sought out Saul, recognizing that his unique background and gifts would serve the Antioch church well. Barnabas did not need to remain in the center of that ministry. His concern was the maturing of the church, not his own future

Chinese church leaders are changing their strategies. Is the global church ready?

due to security concerns, many such organizations have made a practice of isolating those whom they serve in country. In extreme cases, this isolation takes the form of telling Chinese believers that, if they are going to receive assistance from x organization, they should not relate to any other outside groups. Others, through their insistence on certain doctrinal or theological positions, make it clear, implicitly or otherwise, that to interact with Christians who do not support these positions would be unwise, perhaps even heretical.

Understandably many outside partners, concerned for the doctrinal purity of those whom they serve, thus seek to protect them from harmful influences. Yet, taken to the extreme this isolationism not only keeps Christians in China from interacting in helpful ways with their counterparts outside China; it also can promote further divisions inside. As a result, leaders are deprived of opportunities to learn from one another and to share both external and

career or longevity in Antioch. He trusted God for what would eventually come about as a result of bringing Saul together with the Antioch believers. This humility and position of servanthood enabled him to facilitate a partnership that would eventually see the Gospel spread throughout the known world.

One of the most valuable contributions outside partners can make to the development of leaders in China is simply creating the space in which these leaders can come together as peers, encourage one another, grow together and launch new partnerships built on relationships of trust and mutual respect. We echo the challenge that Luther poses at the close of his article in this issue of *ChinaSource*: Chinese church leaders are changing their strategies. Is the global church ready?

Brent Fulton, Ph.D., is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the ChinaSource journal. ■

ChinaSource serves the international faith-based community by identifying critical issues, formulating strategies, convening resources and evaluating results for the promotion of responsible and effective service in China.

The purpose of the **ChinaSource** journal is to provide up-to-date and accurate analysis of the issues and opportunities facing Christians involved in China service and to provide a forum for exchanging viewpoints and discussing strategies. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of ChinaSource or its cooperating agencies.

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Partnering toward Indigenization continued from page 1

church planting strategy is one where churches can survive and thrive naturally in their own environment. Such a strategy avoids planting churches that do not “fit” and are simply a “copycat” of their foreign counterparts. Just as a butterfly has certain natural characteristics in order to be called a butterfly, a ministry needs certain native characteristics to be deemed indigenous.

With regard to leader development, truly indigenized leader development has three critical components: it is defined, designed and done by indigenous leaders. First, it must be indigenous leaders, and not outsiders, who have *defined* the fundamental *nature* of leader development for their own environment. Second, on the basis of those definitions, the indigenous leaders must be the ones who *design* their own leader development programs (curriculum, materials, etc.). Finally, leader development programs are indigenous when they are *implemented* by the local leaders. Outsiders can profitably help with all the above, but they must respect the indigenous leaders’ right and responsibility to be the primary ones who define, design and do their own leader development.

During the LDC, the following principles clearly emerged.

Principle #1: *Outsiders should nurture the capacity of Chinese leaders to define, design and implement their own leader development programs.* The outsiders’ role is not to do the work for the indigenous leaders, but it is to help build the capacity of the Chinese leaders to create and do their own leader development. Indigenous leaders should have clear ownership of their own leader development work from start to finish. Several plenary speakers affirmed the need to build capacity and to explore the core biblical components that are consistent in any culture for leader development.

Principle #2: *Both ministry partners (outsiders and Chinese) should learn from one another (mutual learning) by*

adopting the attitude of humility. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul teaches that everyone should esteem his brother as better than himself. Mutual partnership must be based on genuine respect, not condescending in any way.

Principle #3: *Outsiders should nurture the Chinese leaders while helping to build their capacity to design.* Many Chinese leaders who attended the LDC expressed their strong need for spiritual nurture, marriage and family help, and spiritual retreats. This is a key role that outsiders can play in serving the church in China. Chinese leaders work in an increasingly complex and challenging ministry environment. They need spiritual fathers and mothers to nurture their spiritual lives.

Principle #4: *The role of outsiders should be facilitator and coach.* Coaches are change catalysts who help leaders take responsibility for their own lives and leader development programs.

Our discussion on indigenization shifted from materials to mentors, from curriculum to coaches and from resources to relationships. The three-self principles of indigenization including self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating are essential qualities, but several groups suggested a fourth principle: self-designing. The church in China must build the capacity of its leaders to define, design and do their own leader development programs.

Indigenization in Light of Globalization

The pursuit of indigenization in light of globalization was a major theme of the consultation. This involves the Chinese church working

with churches around the world on a peer level. It is a partnership of resources within the global church and mutual learning between equal partners. Outside ministries do have something to offer the church in China. God has created his church so that we are all part of one body around the world. We need each other to reach the fullness of Christ “in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21).

Chinese leaders at the LDC agreed that ownership and development of their own leader development work is the key, but there must be appreciation for connecting with overseas partners. Mutual learning between the church in Asia, Africa, North America and around the world is already at work. Globalization is the deepening connection between church communities and nations and building up the church worldwide. Indigenous leader development is a piece in the continual movement toward healthy, mutual interdependency.

The strengths and weaknesses of leader development of both the Chinese and overseas churches should be recognized. The Chinese church can offer its precious spiritual heritage to the global church while it still desires more capacity-building.

Healthy Partnerships

The idea of healthy *partnership* was discussed many times throughout the consultation, showing this was one key

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Jim Nickel

In Memory...

Dr. James H. Taylor, III
1929-2009

This issue of the *ChinaSource Journal*

is dedicated to the memory of Dr. James H. Taylor, III,

who completed his earthly journey in Hong Kong on March 20, 2009.

A valued friend, mentor, teacher and encourager, Dr. Taylor touched countless lives inside and outside China. His presence will be sorely missed, but his example of dedicated service and brotherly love stands as a testimony to the goodness of the Lord whom he so faithfully served.



China Partner

Less is More

Disciplining Chinese Believers in a Cross-Cultural Setting

Andrew T. Kaiser

It is common knowledge in the West that Chinese believers are godly, holy warriors of the faith, having been purified through the fires of persecution. It is also common knowledge in China that believers from the West are godly, mature exemplars of the faith, having been blessed by centuries of training and nurturing.

These assumptions underlie many Sino-Western Christian interactions. While examples can be found to support either contention, nevertheless it is more accurate to say that regardless of culture or context, the church, wherever one finds it, is completely full of sinners. The two assumptions above, when placed within the reality of this one deeper reality, create tremendous opportunities for confusion and miscommunication in cross-cultural Christian engagement.

This paper is an attempt to address some of the more common misconnects that occur when expatriates engage in discipleship within the Chinese context. Behind this discussion lies a personal conviction that the key to faithful, lo-

cally appropriate discipleship must be a determination to seek smaller, less prominent roles for the cross-cultural worker.

Basic Convictions

When considering cross-cultural ministry in China, it is important to keep three observations in mind.

First of all, in most Mainland Chinese contexts it can be assumed that there will already exist some form of local Christian body. While there are exceptions, most places will have already experienced some degree of Christian witness. Many of these faith communities may be small, weak and struggling, but they nevertheless do exist. This simple fact means that whatever expatriate

Christian workers eventually decide to do, their actions and words will likely impact already extant local Christians. Before jumping into ministry, it is important to take time and seek out any existing local groups. The outsiders should learn from them so that they can understand how best to support them.

Second, it is important to keep Paul's admonition in Ephesians 4:1-6 always before us as we seek to build the church. In this particular cross-cultural context this means emphasizing humility in such a way that the unity of the larger local Christian community takes precedence over any personal theological or ministerial objectives. At the most basic level, this should cause outsiders to pause and consider before en-

programs, the cross-cultural disciples were able over time (three years!) to help the local Christians find their own musical voice and their own form of service. Faithful discipleship often involves active restraint on the part of the outsiders, offering less of their own preferences and instead focusing on essential, basic principles while leaving practical applications to be shaped and even discovered by local believers in their local context.

Conclusion

If we are truly committed to seeing God's Kingdom grow and increase its influence in China, then we need to actively engage in discipleship and do it well. This means doing what is best for the local church—not what is best, or easiest, or most convenient, or most rewarding for ourselves. The longer I am engaged in cross-cultural discipleship, the more I have come to embrace one simple truth: in discipleship, less is more. Less of me means more of God for more of them. Or, as John the Baptist stated the same principle in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." While at times it may be difficult to see how our "sacrificial service to the Lord" can be anything other than a blessing to the local body, we expatriates are fooling ourselves if we do not recognize the pride and personal gratification involved in even our most "intentional" ministries.

Over the years I have received a few invitations to preach for my local Chinese congregation. This is a registered fellowship with a few thousand worshippers. The thought of standing before them and sharing God's word thrills my heart. In many ways, I can think of few things that would be more validating to me and my ministry. The photos of me in this context would be priceless, fulfilling all the dreams and expectations of the people who have supported me these many years. But...

What would this mean to the local fellowship? Is this the best thing for them? Are Western homiletics better for China than "long" or "wandering" in-

digenous styles of oratory? The process of securing approval and the attention it would bring might prevent me from continuing to associate with the church in the future, perhaps even making it difficult for local believers to continue to associate with me. Once behind the pulpit, the novelty of a Westerner speaking Chinese would likely overpower whatever message I presented. If I were poorly received, how would those I have disciplined over the years react? If I did well, how would this reflect on the local pastors and how they are viewed by local believers?

I have said "No" to this request each time it has arisen, and I continue to do so because I realize that for the sake of God's Kingdom in China, all my efforts need to involve less of me. Instead, I struggle to walk with local leaders along their path to maturity, making whatever guidance and wisdom God has given me available to them. This means more listening than talking, it involves participating in events that I find "boring," joining in activities that were not planned with my scheduling needs in mind, singing songs I do not know, praying in a tongue that is not yet a heart language for me, attending meetings that are "poorly organized," listening to sermons that have more than three points and helping with tasks that seem unimportant to me and give me little personal satisfaction. Ultimately, these local brothers and sisters are the future of the church; it is their faithful yet fully Chinese application of the deepest truths of the gospel that will shape God's Kingdom in China. By choosing the less gratifying, less prominent path to service and discipleship, cross-cultural workers can go a long way towards ensuring that the church God is building in China is a Chinese one, able to speak faithfully the word of God with power and conviction into the lives of the people of China.

Andrew T. Kaiser lives in China with his family. He has been working in China's non-profit sector since 1997. ■

Partnering toward Indigenization

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impact that the LDC had on the participants. Chinese leaders repeatedly expressed their deep gratitude for the self-giving love that many overseas ministries have given to Chinese people over the years.

Healthy partnership includes:

- Openness
- Transparency
- Unconditional acceptance
- Genuine respect
- Communication
- Walking in humility
- Mutual learning
- Sharing of resources

The spirit of mutual sharing and learning among Chinese and overseas ministry leaders was expressed when one Chinese brother said: "We are very grateful to explore partnerships with outsiders. We also feel very heavy. How do we receive the baton and pass it on to the next generation?" This idea is that a paradigm shift is needed for the church in China to have greater capacity. The church must make some generational changes by transferring leadership to the younger leaders. It is that next generation of leaders for which the church around the world is striving!

At the end of the consultation, one Chinese leader said, "My heart was deeply moved during these last few days. I had many reflections. It encouraged me to have some visionary thinking. The first thing that touched me deeply was the realization that over the last 200 years, the overseas body has been supporting us with patience and love. I know the overseas church has the desire for an indigenized Chinese church. But there is another thing I have thought about: What does the Chinese church actually need? Do we need a good model? Good methods? Structure? *What we really need are healthy leaders!*"

Laura Coleman has been in China service since 1991. She is the Director of Strategic Partnerships for a leader development ministry. ■



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A New Era for **House Church Leaders**

Luther

I **mag**ine a chess game with a strong opponent on the attack. For most of the game, the losing side is on the defensive, thereby using a conservative strategy saving pieces, maneuvering pawns to block and building walls of protection while silently waiting for an opportunity. Then in an instant, the tables are turned. The former defender now takes the long waited advantage, immediately changing strategies to open up, expand and extend in order to win the game.

Bold actions like the following are often predicted before their time, yet a seismic shift is taking place in China that will alter the course of the church. The tipping point is at hand and the game is changing hands. The strategy is changing from defense to offense, from closed to open, from survival mode to expansion.

For the last 60 years, the Chinese church has been on the defensive. The house church went underground in order to survive times of persecution by adopting core values of being low-key, cautious, quiet and closed. Through the Lord's doing, this strategy not only kept the church alive but caused her to thrive and increase a hundred fold.

This phenomenal church growth

coupled with an emerging attitude change by the government has created a game changing opportunity. Not only is there a change in strategy but a change in opponent as well. The church in mission is preparing for expansion. It is preparing to engage the world, tackle its problems and impact communities and society in order to accomplish His will "on earth as it is in heaven." Leading the change are not only house church leaders from the urban cities as well as rural areas but also those from the formerly traditional house church networks. What are some of these changes?

1. "Breaking through the Water Surface"

Breaking through the water surface

(浮出水面) is a Chinese idiom which describes an object underwater slowly rising to the top and thereby breaking the surface of the water. In the same way, the house church movement that was once underground is rising to the surface as a church worshipping openly for all to see and making a visible impact in society.

In this new shift, the house church movement is moving away from existing as an invisible secret body. The Chinese house church leaders are demonstrating a new boldness calling for a church to be a visible witness as Matthew 5 reminds us: "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." It is a church no longer invisible and afraid of

persecution, but a church that has overcome, taking advantage of the changing environment and making a kingdom impact in its communities and in the world.

At the helm of this change is Shouwang Church (守望教会), a key urban house church in Beijing. The Sichuan earthquake occurred just a day after Shouwang was raided by 30 police during their Sunday worship on May 11th, 2008. Senior Pastor Tian Ming (主任牧师天明)¹ publicly stated later that “although having been raided over 20 times, we have never criticized the government.” Contrary to focusing on protecting themselves after the raid, the following Sunday they immediately mobilized their efforts on earthquake relief, raising funds and sending seven short-term teams to Sichuan. Instead of defense, they played offense. Instead of just surviving, they are extending.

Shouwang Church is not the exception. While still under pressure and persecution, thousands of house church Christians throughout China were mobilized for earthquake relief. It has been estimated by a researcher that house church Christians provided sixty to seventy percent of the short-term volunteer relief force and almost one hundred percent of long-term volunteers for the Sichuan earthquake.

2. Open Door Policy

Another dramatic shift taking place in the house church is the moving from a closed to an open door policy. In the past, house churches closed their doors to outsiders inviting only the trustworthy and truly committed. New believers and seekers were invited to separate Bible studies for a season of observation before joining Sunday worship. This church policy was necessary as house church leaders were often arrested due to secret informants hidden among seekers and even committed members. Furthermore, limited space and resources could not accommodate weekly visitors or casual observers.

Zion Church (锡安教会), another key urban church in Beijing, opened its

doors two years ago with an open door invitation for all to join in Sunday worship. Originally trained and ordained in the Three Self Church, Senior Pastor Ezra (主任牧师金明日) returned to China after several years at Fuller Seminary. Upon returning to Beijing, he chose to be independent from the Three Self thus identifying with the house church as well as labeling his church “open and independent” (开放的独立教会). Following in the direction of Shouwang Church, Pastor Ezra also broke from the unwritten house church value of being “low key,” renting a large office space which seats over 200. Today, three Sunday worship services are fully packed with a weekly attendance of over 700 in total.

Is this open door invitation extended to foreigners as well? In theory and practice, the answer is yes. Zion often has foreign visitors and already has an American singing in the church choir. Unlike the past, when the presence of foreigners endangered the local house church, foreigners now may actually help this new breed of churches as their presence could provide more legitimacy to the open church movement. However, before the world rushes to attend, informants will be watching foreign attendance very closely. It could cost a few visas before foreign involvement becomes the accepted norm. The risk to bear is no longer on the Chinese but on the foreigner.

3. From Marginalized to Mainstream (从边缘走向主流)

Almost completely absent of Christian presence a decade ago, the urban centers are now becoming the center of bustling house church activities. The face of Chinese Christianity is changing from the marginalized to mainstream.

In the 70s and 80s, the house church grew by the millions among rural peasants in the countryside. Beginning in the 90s, rapid church growth moved into the cities as rural farmers migrated, moving the once rural house church into the mega cities of China. However, since the mid 90s, a completely separate

church movement (新兴教会) has been taking place among urban intellectuals which include both Shouwang and Zion Church.

Urban intellectuals are now a major part of these new vibrant churches. The term *urban intellectual* includes lawyers, doctors, professors, scientists, engineers, analysts, CEOs, entrepreneurs, artists, civil servants, professionals, teachers, students, etc. Included among these intellectuals are *returnees*, mainland Chinese who studied abroad, found Christ overseas and have returned to top positions at leading universities, research institutes, multinational as well as small businesses and entrepreneur startups.

The importance of urban intellectuals cannot be underestimated as they have the means to influence and shape their communities. Lawyers are using legal means to protect house churches from illegal raids, academics are writing and influencing intellectuals concerning the benefits of Christianity toward society, professors and students are challenging atheism at school and on the web, professionals are wrestling with ethical standards in the marketplace. As a result in mainstream China, Christianity is deemed in a positive light.

4. From Indigenization to Globalization (从本土化转向全球化)

The fourth shift is the stage of the church maturity, moving from indigenization to globalization. In the past, indigenization was important to protect the Chinese church from foreign influences. The Three-Self church based its existence on indigenous principles: self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating. The message was clear to the foreigner: “Keep out of Chinese church control, money and influence.” These indigenous principles for the Chinese church were also important to combat criticism by Chinese intellectuals who claimed Christianity was a foreign religion brought in by foreign devils through imperialism to colonize China.

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Wu's Journey to Faith

Jim Pennington

After a sumptuous meal, we traveled by taxi to one of the many Western-styled coffee-houses in this bustling Chinese city to enjoy a latte and a talk about faith.

Wu¹ is representative of others in his generation. He is university educated, has a job with a high-tech company that, even at the entry level, pays him well enough to be part of China's emerging middle class. His father and mother expect him to continue to rise through the ranks at his work until he is wealthy enough to provide good care for them in their later years. Wu loves and respects his parents, his heritage and his country. Yet, he knows that he is in a vortex of change forcing him to decide what to hold on to and what to let go of, what is valuable for his future and what is best left behind.

I Know the Story

We drank foreign coffee and opened

“I never believed the part in the Bible about hell before, but when I saw my grandmother dying and saw the terror in her eyes, I knew that there really is a hell.”

the Chinese Bible to the passage from Romans 10:9-11 about belief in the resurrection and making confession that “Jesus is Lord” for salvation. Wu responded to this passage by joyfully exclaiming, “I am saved.” To be sure that he grasped the implications of following Jesus, we looked at the story of the rich young man in Matthew 19. When Wu heard the first couple of verses, he sighed, lowered his voice and announced regretfully, “I know the story.”

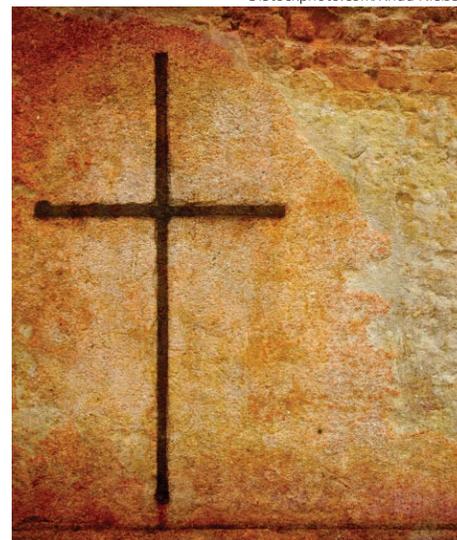
I had known Wu for a couple of

years, first meeting him in the home of a friend where he supplemented his income working as a tutor to the children. We talked about cooking, culture and basketball. He knew more about the NBA than I did, especially Yao Ming and the Houston Rockets. Ten months earlier he had met me at the airport with the news, “I want to know more about God. So many people have been working on me.” From that visit on, I began relating to Wu as a spiritual son, but his journey of faith was not quick or easy.

Two Levels of Conflict

In each visit with Wu, his heart was open; he listened, questioned respectfully, responded honestly and step by step tried to work through his conflicts and difficulties. Wu had experienced the love of God through others; he had come to believe many of the tenets of Christianity and had developed a deep appreciation for biblical values. He ac-

knowledged that his job, perhaps the best one awarded to anyone in his graduating class, was a result of answered prayer (not *guanxi*). This answer let him know that God was present and loving. While riding a bus to a weekend holiday, he confessed that his struggle with Christianity was on two levels. “The first,” he confided, “is the scientific level. The second is the social level.” In each of our subsequent discussions, Wu referred to processing Christianity with reference to these two levels.



The Scientific Level

The scientific level referred to the conflicting claims of Christianity based on the miraculous resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the mysterious application of the effect of that event to bring salvation and transformation to the believer—and the opposing claims of atheistic materialism. In his training as a scientist, he had heard the arguments for materialism over and over throughout the Chinese educational system. He had dutifully read a number of apologetic works given to him by Christians. He also had the opportunity to spend time with a foreign-based Chinese scientist who had come to faith in Jesus. Through the readings and the discussions, the scientific problem was “solved” for Wu.

The Social Level

The conflict on the social level was more difficult. Understanding Chinese society and culture requires a grasp, to some degree, of the relational identity of Chinese society in contrast to the individualism of the West. At the apex of Chinese relational identity is the respect for parents which for generations has been codified and ritualized in ancestor worship. Wu's father owns a factory and is a member of the Party (an effort to prosper more than a devotion to political philosophy). In teaching Wu his personal business ethic, he chided his son to “cheat your suppliers, cheat your customers, cheat your partners.” Wu

described business in China as something that is “very dirty.” Having been disciplined and smart enough to enter and graduate from the university, Wu’s father expected great financial success from his son and easier years later in life for himself and his wife. The pressure he put on Wu to do well on university entrance exams had caused Wu to become ill and consider suicide. Now Wu was set to have his part of the good life in China’s expanding economy.

On one visit back home he had presented his mother with a Bible, a gift she gladly received—that is, until his father made her give it back. It was on that visit, after Wu witnessed to his developing Christian faith, that his father told him to give it up. If Wu lived in Europe or America, and being a Christian could enhance business relationships, then it would be fine, but not in China. Christian faith would prevent Wu from making the “big money.” Christian ethics would prevent him from employing the deception, using bribes and indulging in the immorality required for success in business in China. Wu said, “My father has never said, ‘No’ to me about anything before. He would give me advice. He would tell me what he would do. He wanted me to go into politics but I chose business. He never said, ‘No’ to me, until he said ‘No’ to becoming a Christian.”

Following this visit home, Wu’s faith started to waver. He convinced himself that if he gave up being a Christian and eventually made the “big money” he could help more people in the long run. He refused to go to church services with his Christian co-workers and eschewed baptism.

The Phenomenology of Spiritual Formation

My relationship with Wu was not that of a dispassionate observer but as a loving spiritual father, entering deeper into the experience of Paul when he made reference to his “dear children.”² How is Christian spiritual formation experienced and fostered in the Chinese context, and particularly in the context

of China’s emerging urban middle class? My personal experience has been that there are rational and non-rational components to the process. There are concepts grasped intellectually that combine with transformational experiences resulting in spiritual growth. I asked Wu about how he perceived his own spiritual growth. He did not understand the question. Even after I rephrased it, taking a run at it from other directions, it never clicked with him. Later, I explained my perspective that there are aspects of faith that are apprehended logically and processed intellectually. There are also nonrational, experiential aspects that serve at transformational moments. I assumed that Chinese culture (like Latin American and African cultures) would have a greater capacity (than Western cultures) to experience the nonrational aspects of faith. His response was that it might be true of someone who was uneducated, but for an educated Chinese person, only the logical aspects of Christianity were pertinent to spiritual growth. I believed him—until my next visit to China.

Grandmother’s Death

The first night we were together, after enjoying a tasty feast disguised as an evening meal, we returned to my apartment for coffee and another deep, passionate discussion about his faith. Wu’s latest story began to unfold. His grandmother was dying and Wu traveled back home, anxious to see his beloved grandmother one more time before her life ended. He made it and was with her in her final moments. “I never believed the part in the Bible about hell before, but when I saw my grandmother dying and saw the terror in her eyes, I knew that there really is a hell.” A few days later when Wu was looking at the box that contained his grandmother’s ashes he asked himself, “Is this what life is all about? Will it all be over when I end up as a box of ashes?”

It was this critical event and the perception that his grandmother was entering hell that reconnected Wu with the process of his own faith journey. Some-

thing happened deep within Wu’s psyche or soul that brought him to believe something he did not believe before and to choose a path (following Jesus) that he had found difficult to choose before. Still, Wu continued to waver for some time between the call of Christ and the lure of “big money.”

Generalizability

How much of Wu’s story is similar to the stories of other young urban professionals who are the faces of leadership in the coming decades? How much of his struggle is shared by his peers? Can the Third Church continue to reach these men and women for the gospel and equip them as agents of change in Chinese society? The answers to these pertinent questions can provide valuable help in the structure and implementation of leadership development in China. Wu’s perception of the church in China is that it is populated with uneducated peasants, mostly older women, who have little in common with him. Wu has allowed my wife and me to build relationships of mutual trust and respect with him, relationships that the Lord has used for shared spiritual growth.

The nature of the call of Christ is unchanging, the love of the heavenly father and the work of the Holy Spirit are unabated, even as they move through flawed human vessels. The life of Jesus moves life to life, heart to heart like the love of parents for their children. Cross-cultural ministry requires the utmost of respect and humility following the example of the one who washed feet. It is my humble thought that those in the West *can* be useful to developing leaders in China by loving, respecting and imparting who we are in Jesus, with utmost reliance upon the Holy Spirit for the miracle of transformation into the image of Jesus. Paul expressed this dynamic of parental love to the church in Thessalonica: “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Th. 2:8).

Continued on page 13



Toward Healthy Partnerships in Leader Development

Susan

At a recent gathering of experienced church leaders and trainers from across China, participants were asked to reflect upon how the contributions of outside organizations could best promote the development of indigenous leader development. Here are some of their thoughts.

The Concept of Indigenization

For some participants the idea of “indigenization” was a new concept while others said they never considered it since the church in China is already indigenous. Still other participants noted that Chinese leaders should take ownership for the building of their own leaders, to design, establish and sustain

proach to leader development and anything from outside is not to be welcomed. In a global era, several participants pointed out, the mutual sharing of methods and resources is both natural and desired. Thus, the emphasis should not be upon the origin of these things but rather on how they are utilized. The key is who controls the process. Participants also emphasized the importance of a Kingdom mindset with the goal being to build up the church, not simply to create something that is unique to China.

Giving and Receiving

Overseas churches and organizations have given much in the development of church leaders for which the church in

Most participants came away with a desire to pursue greater partnership and unity with other groups in country. They sought to recognize and appreciate the fact that God blesses different churches and movements with unique purposes, visions, gifted leaders and resources without partiality; thus, the need to learn to treat others’ ministry with more peer respect and to be more open in mutual sharing of resources.

Acknowledging the value of China’s unique spiritual heritage, some also stressed the need for Chinese church leaders to document the precious lessons that God has taught the church of China in a way that can be imparted to more people. This would allow them to appreciate and confidently keep what God has already given the church of China (spiritual life), while being open-minded to what can be learned from the overseas body. It would allow them to recognize the strengths and weak-

Healthy partnerships will result when all involved recognize the fact that it is ultimately up to the Chinese leaders to design and actually do the work of raising their own leaders.

their own leader training efforts and to grow out of dependency on the overseas body in finance and other resources. The church in China is able to raise up its own future leaders and should take the main responsibility in developing Chinese leaders while being open-minded to the assistance, input and experiences of overseas friends.

A caution was given that an extreme emphasis on indigenization could result in hypernationalism, or the idea that there must be a uniquely “Chinese” ap-

China is grateful. At the same time, there is awareness among leaders that they are both givers and receivers. They do not want to be viewed by outside entities as simply the recipients of programs or resources but want to shift from the mentality and position of receivers to that of givers. What they have received, they also have a responsibility to pass on to others. They need to determine how they, as “givers,” should treat other churches in view of how they would like to be treated as “receivers.”

nesses of both Chinese and overseas churches in leader development so as to know what to keep (such as the precious spiritual heritage of the Chinese church) and what to avoid (such as taking by default that whatever is “imported” is better than “domestic,” or to “clone” whatever is introduced to the Chinese by overseas partners).

Developing and Caring for Leaders

Participants resonated with the asser-

tion that true leader development consists of more than just imparting knowledge. They were impressed by the need to add spiritual and practical elements into their existing theological training and to focus more on the building of the leader (spiritual life and holistic development) rather than just processing him or her so that he or she can teach or do certain things. They also saw a need to change their own attitude as builders of leaders, to be more committed to the calling of the individual, understanding that only life can impact life, and to befriend leaders they are training.

Relationship, Relationship, Relationship

Much discussion revolved around the relationship between church leaders inside China and those from outside who seek to serve them, as well as relationships among church leaders themselves from various fellowships, streams or traditions. Participants stressed the importance of being open-minded, respectful and accepting of people of different theological positions or those having different ministry approaches, as well as the importance of open communication and accountability. Overseas partners were encouraged to give a higher regard to relationship building with the local leaders than to projects and work and to help in nurturing the life of local leaders (by sharing with them personal experiences with the Lord, being their friends and coaches, etc.) rather than just working together with them. Likewise, the local Chinese leaders felt they needed to interact more with the overseas partners concerning future challenges and opportunities.

Participants also urged overseas partners to work more closely with the Chinese in the area of resource distribution in order to avoid waste or inappropriate usage of overseas resources. Finally, they brought out the need for overseas ministries to know Chinese culture better, to communicate with the local leaders more; to trust and respect them more.

Healthy partnerships will result when

all involved recognize the fact that it is ultimately up to the Chinese leaders to design and actually do the work of raising their own leaders, with the church taking responsibility, instead of sending emerging leaders to seminaries overseas or relying on outsiders to produce curriculum. Leaders in China do desire to work differently in their future relationships, both with national and overseas partners. They desire to work with more sharing of resources, more giving than receiving, more communication, more openness and transparency, more unconditional acceptance and by walking in humility—always learning.

Susan is a LeaderSource staff person. ■

A New Era for House Church Leaders

continued from page 9

An indigenous biblical church movement that is completely Chinese reaching China for Christ still needs to be valued. However, if the future of the Chinese church is global, then the needs for a church for global impact will be different. Recently at a leadership conference, in Hong Kong, on indigenous partnerships, Pastor Tian Ming reminded the foreign participants: “The Chinese church is already indigenous. We can thank the Chinese government for that. Our challenge is not being more indigenous but being more internationalized. Our need now is not indigenization but globalization.”

A church with a global vision for missions must learn globalization. No one is asking the American church to become more indigenous. In fact, a church that is too indigenous can lead to an unbiblical form of nationalism. The end goal is not for the Chinese church to be more indigenous, but to be a church that is effectively reaching its own people as well as reaching cross-culturally in a global world. The Chinese church is doing the first part well. The need now is to become more culturally sensitive and aware of global issues in order to have an impact in the world. Globalization is the growing

need for the Chinese church in order to have a global impact in the 21st century.

The chess game has changed hands. We are witnessing in the Chinese church the greatest movement of God in the 21st century. The church in China is on the offensive, shifting from underground to the surface, from closed to open, from marginalized to mainstream, from indigenous to globalization. It is a church maturing from a position of receiving to giving, becoming a church poised for global impact. This game changing strategy will require a completely different way of ministry operations in China. As Chinese church leaders are changing their strategies, is the global church ready?

Endnote

1. A major distinction from the past is the mention of church names and pastors. In this new visible open church era among urban churches, these pastors are not in hiding anymore. They have counted the cost and are willing to let all know their pastoral occupation as their identities are no longer a secret to the government and community. ■

Wu's Journey to Faith

continued from page 11

The Story So Far

The story of Wu (so far) has a good conclusion. He has made the decision to follow Jesus, risking the loss of his job and his chances for the “big money.” In an e-mail, he made this report. “I evangelized one of my co-workers, we talked about God and Jesus for almost two hours one night, and I gave him a Bible which can inspire him further. He is very interested. I hope one day he can know him totally. I think this can show how I feel about him, I trust so I spread.”

Endnotes

1. Not his real name
2. 1 Cor. 4:14, Gal. 4:19

Dr. Jim Pennington is President of Firefall International Inc. He and his wife, Nancy, are involved in spiritual formation and leadership development in several Asian nations. ■

China Road

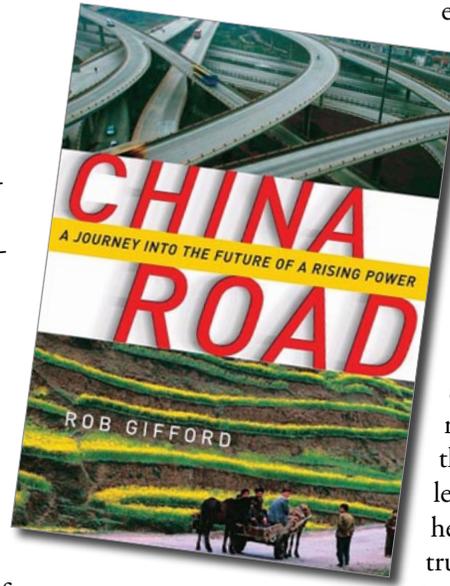
China Road: A Journey into the Future of a Rising Power by Rob Gifford. Random House Trade Paperbacks, reprint edition 2008, 352 pages. ISBN-10: 0812975243; ISBN-13: 978-0812975246; \$11.56 at Amazon.com

Reviewed by Kay Danielson

I will admit it: I'm a sucker for a road trip. It probably has something to do with the fact that road trips were a part of my growing up years, which were spent in Pakistan. We lived in the southern port city of Karachi and every summer my family would pile into our old Volkswagen bus and drive 1000 miles north to the hill station of Murree for an annual conference and to escape the blistering heat. One summer, we started that annual trek north approximately seven weeks early and took the "scenic route" through Afghanistan staying in Kabul for a month while my dad served as interim pastor at the international church. From Kabul, we drove back into Pakistan via the fabled Khyber Pass, a route that Alexander the Great had taken (on chariot, most likely) several thousand years before. Our road trips weren't limited to Pakistan, either. We drove across Europe one summer, and I have traveled by road to/through each of the fifty United States.

For the past few years, I have been dreaming and scheming about doing a China road trip. Some days the urge to take three months off, buy a SUV and drive from Beijing to Kashgar is overwhelming. So when I saw the title of Rob Gifford's book, *China Road*, I instinctively knew that this was a book that I was going to like. When I finished it, I realized that it was the book I wanted to write!

As he was nearing the end of his assignment as the Beijing Bureau Chief for National Public Radio, Rob Gifford decided to hitchhike across China from Shanghai to the Kazakhstan border, along Highway 312, the "Route 66" of China, if you will. The highway travels from the glittering lights of Shanghai west through the manufacturing and high-tech corridors of Jiangsu, into the agricultural heartland of Anhui and Henan,



els across Ningxia by bus, he meets a pair of traveling abortion "doctors" who believe they are fulfilling their patriotic duty by aborting unborn babies in their eighth month. Somewhere between Xi'an and Lanzhou, he finds himself in a village church, where he is eventually asked to give the morning sermon when the itinerant preacher they are waiting for never shows up. As he journeys further west, into the regions that seem less and less like China, he meets professors and truck drivers who offer insights on belonging to minority nationalities in modern China.

With a reporter's knack for asking the right questions and getting people

Rob Clifford decided to hitchhike across China from Shanghai to the Kazakhstan border.

Along the journey, he meets a colorful cast of characters and we get to meet them in the book.

up onto the arid plateaus and mountains of Shaanxi; across the deserts of Gansu and Xinjiang, finally ending at the border with Kazakhstan.

Along the journey, Rob meets a colorful cast of characters and we get to meet them in the book. There are the Communist Party "babes" in the Shanghai Starbucks who see nothing contradictory about using their party connections to get rich. In Shaanxi, he meets a Daoist hermit who lives in a cave high on the holy mountain of Huashan to escape the rat race, but then tells Rob to call his cell phone if he has any more questions. As he trav-

to talk, these characters give the reader a glimpse into the thinking of the ordinary people of China as they talk about what it means to be Chinese in a changing China, and what those changes are doing to the psyche and soul of the people. Some of these observations force the reader to stop and ponder the implications. A radio personality in Shanghai, who hosts a popular call-in show offering advice on love and relationships to young people, tells Rob that "many people now believe that, if there's no law against it, then it's all right. To many in the cities, morality—a sense of what is right and wrong—

doesn't matter anymore—people, especially young people, are *mishi-le*. Lost.” (p. 20) A truck driver observes that: “In the West, people have a moral standard that is inside them. It is built into them. Chinese people do not have that moral standard within them. If there is nothing external stopping them, they just do whatever they want for themselves, regardless of right and wrong.” (p.54) After attending an Amway sales rally, the eager salesman tells him: “We want to live. Right now we are just *shengchun*. We are just surviving. We want to *shenghuo*. We want to live. You know? Really live!” (p. 192) On a bus in western China he talks with a man about Western perceptions of China: “What do most people in the West think about China?” the man asks. Gifford responds that China confuses Westerners because it seems to be a capitalist country run by a Communist Party. The man on the bus replies: “We're all confused about China. It's a confusing time for many people. There is so much change.” Finally, Rob asks the man what people in China want most from the West, and without hesitation he answers: “What we want most is respect.” (p. 200)

More than anything, this book deftly portrays the contradictions of modern China and the resulting conflicted emotions that anyone who encounters China (whether as an insider or an outsider) must eventually deal with. The neon lights of the city announce that consumerism has arrived, China is at peace, and people can now have space to live without government interference into their personal affairs. At the same time, however, the consumer boom is inaccessible to the majority of the people, the peace is an uneasy one, and since there are no checks on state power, there is no protection from the government. (p. 14-16) The communist experiment failed, but the Communist Party is still in power. How can this be?

Many of the people he meets are torn between a deep love for the country and anger at the people in power (p.

xvi), and Rob is honest about his struggle with this as well. After his encounter with the abortion doctors and their cavalier attitude toward life, he comments: “The bus rattles on across the fringes of the desert, and I continue to fume and to hate China.” I doubt if anyone who has spent time in China has not shared that sentiment at one time or another, and his candor is refreshing. Towards the end of the book, as he is trying to make sense of it all, he declares (and I agree) that: “It's impossible to be neutral about China. Love it or hate it. For myself, I have always tried to retain my own unity of opposites, attempting to keep love and hate in balance—and if you're not confused, then you simply haven't been paying attention.”

Therein lies the beauty and the helpfulness of the book. As Westerners, we are too easily stuck in a “black-and-white,” “either-or” thought process when it comes to China, and this book challenges that. Is China about to become a superpower or implode? Are the Chinese people more free or less free? Is democracy possible or are they destined to live under authoritarian rule? This book helps us to see that the answer to these questions is the quintessential Chinese one, namely “perhaps.” The deeper questions about morality and relative versus absolute truth that are raised in the course of his conversations are not so easily answered but must be dealt with by those of us engaged in China.

With his skillful weaving of historical and cultural insights into the stories of people, Rob makes this very complex and confusing society accessible—even to those who are just beginning their China journey.

Every three or four years a book comes along that I consider the current “must-read” book on China. For now, *China Road* is it. And, if I ever get around to taking my road trip across China, this book will be my guide.

Kay Danielson has lived and worked in China for 18 years and currently works in the field of cross-cultural training. ■

INTERCESSORY notes

please pray

1. **For humility, understanding and wisdom** for Chinese leaders and leaders from outside China as they work together to develop more leaders for today's world.
2. **For wisdom as the Chinese church works** towards transferring leadership to younger leaders requiring generational changes.
3. **For insight, humility and love** for cross-cultural workers as they seek to wisely disciple Chinese Christians.
4. **That Chinese leaders who desire change in their own lives and churches** in order to meet the challenges of globalization will experience God's grace, discipline and wisdom.

Developing Standards: Shaping a God-Centered Leader Development Culture in China

A ChinaSource White Paper

Bringing together insights from seasoned practitioners and up-to-date analysis of the rapidly changing church situation in China, this paper provides the theoretical framework for ministry leaders to think through the issues related to leader development. It presents the Program Indigenization Model (PIM) as an overall framework for sound leader development practices, integrated with the Leader Emergent Pattern (LEP) and Heart Motivation Model (HMM). It also makes important cross-reference to the findings of previous research contained in the 2006 China Church Leadership Survey.

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