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Member Care for Chinese Missionaries

Ruth Chang and
Brent Fulton,
Guest Editors

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Member Care for Chinese Missionaries

ChinaSource Quarterly **Autumn 2022, Vol. 24, No. 3**

In this issue . . .

Editorial

Member Care Is Part of the Mission

By Ruth Chang and Brent Fulton, Guest Editors

The sending of missionaries from China and the high attrition rate among those sent have highlighted the need for better member care. Standing in the way of providing this needed ministry are deep-seated theological convictions and cultural values that make it difficult for Chinese workers to even consider or understand what member care is. Unless these barriers are addressed from a solid biblical foundation it will not be easy to convince Chinese workers that member care is a necessary part of fulfilling the great commission.

This issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly* speaks to these barriers and to the areas that have suffered so much due to the lack of attention to the needs of workers from China.

In our lead article, we seek to clarify what member care is as we look at the biblical basis for missionary care as ministry. Emphasizing the need for a holistic approach, we point out various areas that need to be addressed.

Two articles in this issue unpack the theological and cultural assumptions that prevent a fuller understanding of member care in the Chinese context. Asking why it is so difficult for Chinese workers to recognize the value of rest, Peng Xiaohui points to the Confucian emphasis on duty that is embedded in the language and symbols of the culture. Dennis Ahern surveys the role models of the Chinese church, for whom suffering was a key part of their Christian identity. Both authors touch on the concept of "eating bitterness" as central to the Chinese ethos of ministry. While suffering is a necessary part of the Christian life and certainly has had a significant place in the contemporary Chinese church experience, Ahern reminds readers, "There is no place in Scripture that teaches us to feed bitterness to our Chinese brothers and sisters by abandoning them and their member care needs."

Daniel Sher continues this theme in his article on fatherhood and missions by looking at how the Chinese understanding of what Christ said in Matthew 19:29 has led some Chinese workers to neglect their families, believing that this demonstrates the depth of their Christian commitment. Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 3 is not given as much importance. Unfortunately, it is often the breakdown of relationships within the family that results in workers having to leave the field. Using the example of Abraham, Sher maintains that God's way of blessing the nations is through families. He urges missionary husbands and fathers to return to the core of spiritual fatherhood and to reflect on the call to fatherhood even as they respond to the call of the great commission.

In her article on missionaries and marriage, Lisa Tsai offers some surprising observations from her field research on cross-cultural workers from China. Her practical suggestions for agencies and field leaders provide a roadmap for helping workers thrive by nurturing healthy marriages.

Our book review for this issue looks at *China's Ambassadors of Christ to the Nations: A Groundbreaking Survey* by Tabor Laughlin, who also conducted fieldwork on Chinese cross-cultural workers. While highlighting some of the key issues affecting Chinese workers' longevity on the field, Laughlin's work also points to the need for further research, particularly in the current era when it has become more difficult for sending

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Member Care for Mainland Chinese Missionaries

Breaking New Ground in a Developing Field

By Ruth Chang and Brent Fulton

In recent years, the church in China has answered the call to send out missionaries to different parts of the world, especially those places that are no longer accessible to Western missionaries due to various reasons. These servants have very strong faith and are courageous. They are willing and prepared to die for Christ.

Globalization has created the reality that most cultures are currently in a state of flux as they are influenced by other cultures and influence others in return. Depending on their previous exposure to other cultures, different servants will have different advantages and challenges. Generational differences also exist, which necessitate differences in approaching how to train younger servants in comparison to older ones, who may already have some world and workplace experiences.

We hear of success stories from some corners of the world, yet most of what we hear are stories of an inability to continue, discouragement, returning in shame, and even loss of faith.

Interviews of those who have been sent out point to a lack of clear calling, improper screening, inadequate training, financial struggles, and no ongoing support from sending churches as contributing factors.[1] Looking specifically at the cultural tension faced by Chinese believers going to Islamic countries, Wu Xi notes that hidden personal issues often manifest on the field. The Chinese workers find themselves behaving differently in their new environment. Wu mentions interpersonal conflict and flaring tempers as examples.[2] In her interviews with Chinese cross-cultural workers, Lisa Tsai found that the most common reasons for leaving the field were children's education, financial issues, marriage and family considerations, team conflict, life crises, and security concerns.[3]

We hear different statistics on the attrition rates of Chinese missionaries but, in general, there is agreement that they are very high. This has created a deep desire in the hearts of believers to do something to help Chinese missionaries survive better and thrive. "How can we help?" This is a question that many of us are asking and trying to answer.

Some overseas Chinese workers who themselves are or have served as missionaries with well-established foreign missions organizations, as well as non-Chinese workers who have served in China or alongside mainland Chinese Christians realize that one of the greatest needs is member care.

A holistic approach to caring for missionaries is needed. This desire to help is very strong. However, realizing there is this need does not necessarily mean there are clear methods and means to meet this need. Wang and Kam raise the question of who should take the lead: "Can a local church serve as a sending structure and provide all the care and supervision needed? Can a network provide these functions? Should this be entrusted to sending structures or even to the local Christian body in the field?"[4]

Even the basic understanding of what constitutes member care does not exist for Chinese. Many flat-out say they do not need it without understanding what it is. They think of it as a Western missionary idea or strategy that does not work in their context. They think that pursuing this member care idea is a sign of a lack of faith and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, the question again is, how can we help? How can we somehow reach these Chinese missionaries to provide the loving support they need? How can we convince them that other brothers and sisters in the Lord have been called alongside them to walk with them and give them some tools to help them live well, serve well, and grow while serving?

What Is Member Care?

What we commonly refer to as "member care" has been around as long as the *Missio Dei* itself. God comforted the disgruntled prophet Jonah by providing shelter from the hot sun following his delayed, but ultimately successful, cross-cultural campaign in Nineveh. When Jonah complained about the shelter's untimely demise God patiently counseled him, pinpointing his problem with anger. Onesiphorus often refreshed Paul when he was in chains for the gospel (2 Timothy 1:16), as did Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:18). Facing trials in Macedonia, Paul was comforted by the coming of Titus, who in turn received encouragement from the Corinthian believers (2 Corinthians 7:6, 13). John commended Gaius for his efforts on behalf of brothers who had "gone out for the sake of the name," asking Gaius to support them in their journey (3 John 5–8).

Member care involves helping missionaries see themselves as God sees them. Duane and Sandy Hammack of Sacred Journey write:

> Every person on earth has a spiritual reflection problem, even those called to be missionaries and pastors. While all have their *best reflection tool—the Bible*, and most have completed a theological graduate degree, all have this problem to some extent. None of us are capable yet of seeing ourselves as the triune God does every day. At best, we see some *degree of reflection of Christ* in ourselves. For some, they remain woefully *pained and lacking* in God's vision of *who they really are.* It grieves them to see the fallen impact that a poor self-reflection has on their families, leadership of their church, or in their ministry to the lost world to which they are called. A significant part of caring for the soul is helping others agree more with God about who they really are in his sight and not in their own. Reclaiming their original *Eden reflection* is hard work and takes a journey of intentionality to grow.[5]

The foundation for member care is the great commandment to love God and love one another. Supporting each other is crucial to show to the world what Christianity really is. It is the way to show God's love to the world. We need to practice it. As Ruth and her colleagues wrote in *Serving Together: Caring for Chinese Missionaries* (see Resource Corner):

> We have to remember that missionaries are humans, too. What does this mean? It means that they are like other human beings with their unique personal qualities, desires, needs, proclivities to certain sins, to inherit certain illnesses, to be affected by their families of origin, and their need for a savior. Serving as a missionary does not mean that they are immune to problems that most people experience. As human beings, they also need what all human beings need in order to thrive and survive. They need warmth and relationships; they need emotional support and physical sustenance. Missionaries may have the motivation and passion to serve the Lord, but that is not enough to enable them to serve well, serve long, and continue to grow and thrive. They need the support of God's people. God uses his people to meet the needs of his servants who are specifically called to carry his gospel to the rest of the world.[6]

We consider Chinese member care to be in its infancy. We are still finding our way around. Many have reminded us that we need to humble ourselves, to realize that there is a lot we do not know and understand. Member care approaches and strategies that have been utilized by well-established Western mission organization cannot necessarily be directly implemented with Chinese missionaries in their unique contexts and situations. We need to learn from the folks we are trying to help and ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and discernment about how to approach providing member care. Perhaps a more basic question that needs an answer is "How can we convince our brothers and sisters that we need one another?" We need them and they need us; we are in this together.

A Way Forward

In order to figure out how best to provide care for mainland Chinese servants, there are several areas we need to diligently study and explore. We need to understand the obstacles to helping that are due to deeply ingrained cultural values, especially the deeply ingrained shame and honor cultural value and the emphasis on doing over being. Understanding these obstacles will enable us to know how best to introduce the unforced rhythms of grace, concepts of self-care, and healthy rhythms of work and rest.

We need to understand marriage and family roles, what it takes to develop trust, and the depth of the missionary's understanding of spirituality and spiritual formation. These insights are critical to addressing marriage and parenting issues, promoting healthy relationships between workers, and introducing the importance of supportive relationships on the field. Some theological thinking—such as their understanding of suffering—may be distorted, with a stronger emphasis on sacrifice and martyrdom, forgetting the centrality of the great commission for Christ's church. Even what it means to be called to serve and what giftedness means, need to be understood. Without understanding who these servants are and what their needs are, we cannot answer the question, "How can we help?"

Perhaps a more basic question that needs an answer is "How can we convince our brothers and sisters that we need one another?"

The articles in this issue will provide readers with a starting point to deepen their understanding of cultural barriers and issues facing those who seek to help Chinese missionaries. We also address some common issues related to basic human needs regardless of culture. We recognize that when it comes to member care, one size does not fit all, and the needs of those being sent from China are complex. We are nonetheless hopeful that, as we begin to facilitate a conversation with these servants around their unique needs and challenges, we will together find practical ways to encourage emotionally and spiritually healthy missionaries from China who are sent into the world to make emotionally and spiritually healthy disciples.

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[1]Wang and Kam. "Reflections on Chinese Missions: Influencing Factors and Lessons Learned." *ChinaSource Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2020). Accessed August 25, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/reflections-on-chinese-missions/

[2] Wu Xi. "The Heart Cries of Frontline Workers in Muslim Countries." *ChinaSource Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2020). Accessed August 25, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/the-heart-cries-of-frontline-workers-in-muslim-countries/

[3] Lisa Tsai. "Concerns of Cross-Cultural Workers from China." *ChinaSource Blog,* September 22, 2021. Accessed August 25,

2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries/concerns-of-cross-cultural-workers-from-china/
[4] Wang and Kam.
[5] See *Sacred Journey*, Spring 2022. Online newsletter of Duane and Sandy Hammack. Accessed August 25, 2022. https://mailchi.mp/0d4ff63d88f9/on-the-journey-spring-sacred-journey-update?e=edf17a6c53.
[6] Ruth Chang and Ling Huei Wang, *Serving Together: Caring for Chinese Missionaries*, (Cosmic Light, 2022), Introduction.

Ruth C. Chang received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Rosemead School of Psychology in 1980. Since 2006, Chang has been an associate staff of Narramore Christian Foundation, serving missionaries as well as speaking and writing about marriage, family, and other relational topics. From 2006 to 2012, Chang and her husband lived in Asia and served as tentmakers where they had opportunities to serve Chinese church leaders and families and other foreign tentmakers serving in Asia. She is one of the authors of the recently released Chinese member care handbook entitled Serving Together: Caring for Chinese Missionaries*.*

Brent Fulton is the founder of ChinaSource. He has served as the first president of ChinaSource, the managing director of the Institute for Chinese Studies at Wheaton College, and the founding US director of China Ministries International. Dr. Fulton holds MA and PhD degrees in political science from the University of Southern California and a BA in radio-TV-film from Messiah College. An avid China watcher, he has written and taught extensively on the church in China and on Chinese social and political phenomena. He is the author of two books and is currently working on a new book on Western narratives about the church in China.

Editorial: Member Care Is Part of the Mission **Continued from page 2**

churches to maintain contact with and serve those who have been sent out from China.

In the Resource Corner we feature *Serving Together: Caring for Chinese Missionaries*, a handbook newly released in Chinese and forthcoming (October 2022) in English. Bringing together the insights of pastors, counselors, and agency leaders with deep experience in serving Chinese cross-cultural workers, this handbook makes a welcome and timely addition to the existing member care literature.

Member care is not an add-on, a luxury, or a distraction from the "real work" of cross-cultural ministry. As Lisa Tsai states in the conclusion to her article, "The well-being of missionaries is part of the mission."

It is our prayer that the articles in this issue will raise the profile of this vital service to God's servants, prompting deeper discussion and sparking new practical efforts to prepare and to come alongside those being sent.

Marital Issues Facing Chinese Missionaries

By Lisa Tsai

China is in the beginning stages of sending cross-cultural missionaries. In my dissertation research on Chinese missionaries' view of member care, I found that this is a new concept, and most missionaries and mission agencies are not even aware of the existence of current online resources. Some agencies and churches try to offer member care services; however, for financial reasons and due to the limited number of experienced member care providers, they cannot do much. In this context, when ChinaSource asked me to write an article on the issue of missionary marriage in China, I gladly accepted, despite its challenging nature. Reviewing my interview notes and conducting a review of the relevant literature led me to the following conclusions.

First, marital satisfaction has a high correlation with mission effectiveness and longevity.[1] In this regard, marriages of Chinese missionaries are the same as others. As Brierley states, marital and family problems are the third overall factor in missionary attrition.[2] Recently, there has been a growing interest in predicting the lives and effectiveness of missionaries from a family perspective.[3] According to my findings, children's education and marital satisfaction are among the top five factors in premature departure from the field.

Most of the people I interviewed said that despite the amount of stress they often encountered, doing missions together actually allowed them to experience higher marital satisfaction.

Next, there is a great deal of similarity in the success or failure of marriages between missionaries, Christians, and non-believers. This is somewhat surprising because it appears that missionary marriages experience a high frequency and intensity of stress, such as exposure to a range of environments, cross-cultural and counter-cultural adjustments, living away from previous support systems, demands from missionary organizations, and balancing family life with the demands of missionary work. These exposures may cause or trigger mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety; however, these stressors do not necessarily lead to negative effects. According to Rosik and Pandzic, "The missionary experience does not appear to have a differential impact on marital satisfaction of husbands and wives."[4] On the contrary, most of the people I interviewed said that despite the amount of stress they often encountered, doing missions together actually allowed them to experience higher marital satisfaction, a finding that is also consistent with Jones and Jones.[5] The types of marital challenges faced by Chinese missionaries and missionaries in other countries are not very different in content, but they are very different in order of importance; for example, children's education was an important factor for all missionaries and had a significant impact on the length and quality of their lives on the field.

Then, the educational background of missionaries correlates highly with their external resources and the places they can go. Relatively speaking, couples with higher educational backgrounds have more options about placement, their children's educational choices, and greater ease in raising funds. Those with a college education also tend to have higher expectations of the quality of life. For instance, their hope to provide better educational opportunities for their children is much higher than those missionaries who receive less education. They also desire more involvement and expect to have more of a voice in setting vision and rules instead of simply obeying and proceeding. If their voices are not respected, it will hurt their motivation to commit to and cooperate with their team. Therefore, the leadership style and decision-making procedures should be more flexible for these people.

Missionaries with lower levels of education tend to focus more on the needs of their daily life and finances. They are relatively more tolerant of hardship, more independent, humble, optimistic, and more content with life; these internal resources offset the negative impact of environmental factors, and they have greater resilience to stress and lower chances of burnout.

Furthermore, even though missionary couples from around the world experience similar environmental and internal challenges, Chinese couples have fewer resources for language learning and financial, spiritual, and psychological support than do Western missionaries. Chinese missionaries have fewer opportunities to work for reputable international mission agencies, so from recruitment and equipping to educating their children, Chinese missionary families often live with higher expectations and lower support. The high expectations come from their churches and mission organizations. These expect their missionaries to go to dangerous and poor areas to work, and sometimes their request for missionaries does not match the missionaries' equipping. I noticed that some mission leaders over committed to certain goals during mission conventions, then hoped the frontline missionaries would accomplish what they had promised.

Finally, the more freedom missionary spouses had in determining their ministry role, the less marital conflict they had and the greater was their happiness. This was one of the most obvious findings from the couples I interviewed. As Crawford and DeVries noted, when missionary spouses are free in choosing their roles, they are more willing to extend their service.[6]

Why Do Missionary Marriages Succeed?

Shared love maps. According to Gottman, the love map is that part of the brain where you store all the relevant information about your partner, that is, their hopes, dreams, and so on.[7] Emotionally rich couples are very familiar with each other's worlds. The couples I interviewed and the couples I cared for had this quality, and even though they were living in extremely difficult circumstances with limited external resources, they could often cope with these pressures if they were willing to understand and respect each other's needs, cries, and expectations.

For example, because her husband had to focus on missions, a missionary wife needed to work very hard in a factory and also had to take care of two young children, but she told me she felt privileged to support her husband. She felt that as a young believer she was not qualified to do God's work, but she respected her husband's calling and was willing to take care of the family so that he could focus on his calling and not worry about the needs of the family. At the same time, the husband appreciated his wife's contribution, and whenever he had the opportunity to learn about marriage and family (which is rare for them), he put aside his other work for a while and invited her to study with him. He often expressed his appreciation for his wife's efforts rather than taking them for granted. Couples usually have a clear understanding of their roles and division of labor before they enter the mission field, and this enables them to treat each other with more respect.

Turning towards each other instead of away. One of the interview questions was: How would your life and

marriage be different if you were not in a missionary role? The most frequent response given by the couples was that being in a missionary role made their marriages stronger. They felt that if they had stayed at home, they would not have received as much training and warnings about potential threats to their marriages, and they would not have deliberately worked on their marital relationship. Instead, as missionaries, they deliberately work on their communication and conflict resolution skills, and they prefer to grow as a couple and face the challenges.

They emphasized that as missionaries they are asked for more and given more. They have more accountability partners, increased awareness of spiritual warfare, guardrails set in place for their relationships, and opportunity to form prayer partners. Thus, they have less opportunity to withdraw from each other, especially when they are working with a team. Relatively speaking, they have more opportunities to turn to one another and connect. Gottman notes that this turning to each other is the foundation for emotional connection, romance, passion, and a good sex life.[8] By doing this, couples build an emotional bank account—a bank balance that gives them enough relationship resources to cooperate and support each other in the face of all kinds of difficulties (such as children's education, environmental hardships, financial stress, and others).

Letting your spouse influence you. Partners in a relationship must be willing to accept influence and share power. While most of the couples I interviewed had equal power and allowed each to express him- or herself freely, I also noted with sadness that one wife was not allowed to have her own voice; her talents were silenced and ignored. Her mental, psychological, and physical condition worries me. What makes me sad is that not only did the husband believe his wife's sacrifice for the family and his work is spiritual (spiritual meaning it is good in God's eyes), but the wife also believed so. According to John Gottman's research, when a man is unwilling to share power with his partner, there is an eighty-one percent probability that his marriage will self-destruct.[9]

Ability to create shared meaning. According to Gottman, marriage is more than just raising children, sharing chores, and having sex. There can be a spiritual dimension which has to do with creating an inner life together—a culture rich in symbols and rituals, and an appreciation for the roles and goals that bind a couple together and lead them to understand what it means to be part of a family.[10] When asked what advice they had for couples who want to do cross-cultural missions, their responses always began with sharing the same calling, or at least a strong acknowledgement of that calling. They explained that conflict is unavoidable, and couples will fight over different issues whether they are missionaries or not. However, because they have the same calling, they can create shared meaning in their lives and are willing to face challenges and build relationships with churches and institutions together. This shared meaning helps them become best friends and life partners.

Because they have the same calling, missionary couples can create shared meaning in their lives and are willing to face challenges and build relationships with churches and institutions together.

Shared expectations about life and children's education. Couples' expectations about their lives and their children's education play an important role in determining how they live their daily lives. Couples who have a higher tolerance for hardship have more flexible educational choices for their children, their life expectations are more aligned with their resources, and they generally experience less marital stress. They are more likely to be content and to focus on new experiences rather than on pain and loss. They have lower levels of marital tension. They can turn a crisis into a good memory. For example, during the first night that one couple spent

at their mission site, many termites entered the room, and they thought it was a terrorist attack. Since it was midnight and very dark outside only the sound of the termites could be heard, and it resembled that of military drones. However, the next day, when the locals told them it was termites and they were good protein to eat, they sorted out the termites on the floor, cooked and ate them.

Providing Support for Chinese Missionaries

1. First, in the screening process, choose those who have already sharpened each other and found their balance. These couples respect each other, have a common vision and a clear division of their roles in marriage and mission. Second, consider living ability and expectations. By "living ability," I mean the survival skills that will be needed in a different culture; for instance, in a mountainous area, learning mountain climbing and keeping oneself oriented in the mountains. Missionaries also need to know how to survive and take care of themselves in a different culture without external assistance, for example, doing administrative work, cooking with local ingredients, and so on.

Family assessment should include personality, psychopathology, character, family patterns, resilience, spirituality, cultural adaptability, cohesion/connectedness, communication, and relationships.[11] Choose couples who are teachable and open to new experiences and flexible toward change.

2. Equip couples from the beginning of the recruiting process for re-entry into their home culture. Provide timely and appropriate training and support according to their mission cycle and personal needs. Checking in weekly helps them sort out their struggles and keep from storing up issues. The availability of social support is a significant predictor of the success and adjustment of cross-cultural workers. Other research supports the idea that organizational support, especially training and preparation, is vitally important for cross-cultural workers' mental health and effectiveness on the field.[12]

3. Member care service needs to be targeted to missionaries in their first term, especially those who are entering parenthood or raising young children.[13] There are many areas in which churches can provide care, such as moral support, financial support, prayer, communication, and re-entry support. In addition, caring for the missionaries' families back home can help to keep them free of worries.

Organizations must cultivate a culture of appreciating and equipping missionaries rather than consuming them. Rather than putting them in a panic because they must explore and learn on their own and saying, "Have faith in God and the Holy Spirit's guidance," they must value their overall development. Organizations can show this by providing them theological, cross-cultural, language, and interpersonal skills, along with other types of training.

4. Resources and new ways of learning are abundant and flexible in today's rapidly changing China. These are seen especially in the area of education. Fully understanding and making use of these innovative changes will make up for the lack of educational opportunities for children's education. Helping with the children's education can reduce a missionary couple's stress load.

Conclusion

The well-being of missionaries is part of the mission. Since the church does mission through its missionaries, attention needs to be given equally to mission and missionaries' care. The welfare of the missionaries will determine the quality of the mission. Member care should not be seen as a burden for churches; rather it provides an amazing opportunity for churches to bridge the spatial distance between the missionary family and the church.

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Fatherhood, a Sacred Leadership Calling

By Daniel Sher

The Chinese church has responded energetically to the need for cross-cultural, global mission. With a heart and determination to commit and never look back, many missionaries and their families have been sent to the ends of the earth and entered the harvest fields.

The same DNA is in them as in the older generation of the church—charge, charge, charge into serving. Any kind of suffering is all for the Lord. They were inspired by the sacrificial love of Jesus: how could they not offer up their whole heart and soul to the Lord? Was there anything in this world that they could not give up for the Lord?

Such determination is admirable, but such a "charging in" also creates challenges that must be faced. In recent years, the number of missionaries and their families who have been derailed or even completely destroyed in missionary service has reached distressing, heart-wrenching levels.

One of the subjects that has not been brought up and explored is this question: In their ministry, have they not offered up to God what he required, and have they given up what God did not want them to give up? The answer is most definitely yes—in the area of building up their families and developing as parents.

Many who serve in the Chinese church have the theological view that if you are committed to ministry, God will take care of your family. There exists subconsciously, then, the idea that you can build family relationships without putting in any time or investment. This, coupled with the biased understanding that the Bible teaches that if someone wants to serve the Lord, they have to leave their parents, wife, and children behind, leads to the belief and practice that it is perfectly okay to abandon your family in order to serve the Lord.

This interplay of factors has led those committed to serving, especially among our brothers, not to put the deepening of their marriages or the development of their parental duties at the forefront of their ministry. They have not recognized the need to spend time building this "safety net" that is so deeply connected with their survival. However, when there is no safety net, or when the net breaks, or the ministry collapses through major setbacks, then the heartbreaking outcome is the shattering of lives and the undoing, or even complete disintegration, of ministry. But this is avoidable.

Of the many relationships in this safety net of survival, this article will offer a concise view of just one of the more neglected—fatherhood.

The Call to Another Ministry: Fatherhood

Missions scholars often cite the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:1–3, where God will bless the nations of the earth through Abraham, as an important foundation for missionary theology. But *how* God will fulfill this promise is to be understood in light of Genesis 18:17–19:

> The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

This passage shows that Abraham’s *fatherhood* is closely linked to God's blessing of the nations and is a part of his calling. God’s promise to bless him and the nations was fulfilled through his role as the head of a family and a tribe, commanding and teaching his children and their descendants to keep the word of God and to live it out through all generations.

This neglected connection should allow many key brothers who “charge in” to reflect on the call to fatherhood even as they respond to the call of the great commission. God’s command to Abraham, the father of faith, highlights not only the importance of verbal proclamation, but more crucially the need for mission that lives out God's way of life, and for godly homes and families to be a major vehicle for the great work of mission. How very important is the call to spiritual fatherhood!

The Core of Spiritual Fatherhood

The Christian faith emphasizes fathers as the “head of the family,” referring directly to the God-given leadership, responsibility, and function of fathers. As fathers, it is they who are primarily responsible for raising their children.

As missionary workers lead people to the Lord and make disciples, how can they not also hope to see their children hold fast to their faith?

Spiritual fatherhood in the father-son and father-daughter relationship begins with the lifelong formation of sons from boys into men, and daughters from girls into women, through a father’s parenting. It is to let children know that God created man and woman for his own purposes, that they may live out the great glory of being a man or woman.

Fatherhood is not only about nurturing children to live as men and women according to God’s design, but also about nurturing them to become godly, spiritual fathers and mothers to the next generation. Although not everyone will become a biological parent, the Word of God will be passed on through the many spiritual parents who have been nurtured. These spiritual parents will lead, shepherd, and teach spiritually, so that the faith will be handed down through the generations and spread to all nations.

As missionary workers lead people to the Lord and make disciples, how can they not also hope to see their children hold fast to their faith, live out the glory of being created by God, and go on to pass the faith from generation to generation? This is the reward for responding to the holy calling of fatherhood. May no father lose this reward.

The Formation of a Father

Effective fatherhood is not a natural process. It needs to be learned, and thus it is necessary to have clear objectives. I believe that God’s will for a mature father is to shoulder the leadership responsibility of being “head of the family” and a “hero dad” to his children. God wants fathers to lead with steadfast truth, courage,

wisdom, and a tender heart.

To be effective as a father like this, one must first understand God's idea of how to be a true man. After many years of study, I have come to the conclusion that what God wants in a man is a "resolute and tender Christian knight."

The concept of the "Christian knight" is derived from the book *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*,[1] which represents God's vision of manhood. Honor and faithfulness are the language of the Christian knight and his signature traits. "Resolute and tender" are descriptions I have added to the qualities of the Christian knight.

The Christian knight displays resoluteness in undertaking God's mission and defending the truth and the home. This resoluteness is the result of a long and rigorous training in biblical truth, biblical values, biblical beliefs, and personal spiritual disciplines (including physical training). When facing God and his loved ones, the Christian knight displays a gentle, tender spirit. This resoluteness and tenderness are perfectly combined and displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. Cultivating this character is thus the method for the formation of a spiritual father.

Conclusion

I believe that this world cannot do without fathers, and that fatherhood is a sacred office to which we are appointed by our heavenly Father. When fatherhood is renewed, learned, and undertaken in Christ, God will surely do something new in the relationships between fathers and their children.

When fathers respond to the call to lead as fathers after our heavenly Father's own heart, his grace and mercy will come to the world. The family, and indeed the whole earth, will experience renewing grace when the promise of Malachi 4:5–6 is fulfilled—"And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." So, fathers, let us arise and answer this call.

Translated by ChinaSource.

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[1]Robert Lewis. *Raising a Modern-Day Knight: A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to Authentic Manhood*, Revised & enlarged edition. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, A Focus on the Family book, 2007.

Daniel Sher was born and raised in Taiwan. After graduating from college with a major in civil engineering, he worked in a variety of jobs. He then went to the US for advanced studies in business administration in 1990 with his wife Joy and their two sons. To further pursue his calling, Daniel attended the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1992, with a focus on integrating mission and profession. At the same time, he began to develop an interest in studying leadership.

In 2001, after getting his PhD in intercultural studies, Sher started his seminary administration and teaching career, first with China Evangelical Seminary North America, and then with GETS Theological Seminary. His teaching focused mainly on missions and leadership.

Currently, Daniel Sher is the founder and president of an organization that focuses on equipping church leaders with leadership development and coming alongside as they serve and lead.

Rest? Is It Permitted?

Some Observations on Rest in the Chinese Cultural Context

By PENG Xiaohui

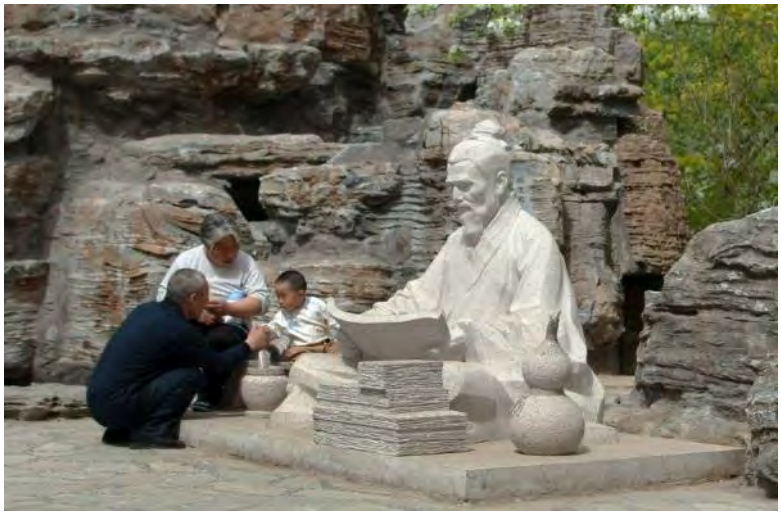

Image credit: Courtesy of a friend of ChinaSource

I was born and raised in Taiwan and later came to the United States for graduate study. In the first half of my life, I was strongly shaped by Chinese culture, and, in the second half, by American. As a result, I ended up living within the tension between these two very opposite value systems. The observations shared here are based on my growing-up experiences, personal reflection, and years of working with the Chinese population, especially in church circles. This essay is not intended to generalize Chinese Christians' experiences or address all issues related to "rest" among them; rather, it examines some possible cultural influences upon the concept of rest in the Chinese context.

When I was young, I would never dare to ask for rest. If I had asked my parents if I could take a break from studying or rest, they would have replied, "What are you talking about? What is rest? You are behind on your math questions. You are behind on your science project." Even if I were on time with every assignment, they would have still said, "Just go preview the next lesson. Make sure you are ahead of the class. Make sure you know everything, even before the teacher instructs you."

This is how my family views rest. "Rest" is a word that does not exist in our dictionary or daily life; Chinese people generally have a hard time knowing what rest is or how to rest. Working hard 努力 *(nǔ lì*) is *the* virtue to develop, and parents will do everything to make sure their children attain this characteristic because they believe this is the only way to succeed. This value is reinforced rigorously both at home and at school.

However, I did observe one kind of rest that was permitted in my family. When I was a little girl, I remember watching my grandmother rest; she took a nap after lunch every day which always lasted only about 30 or 40 minutes. Then she woke up from her nap and resumed her busy scurrying around the house. Everyone in the family respected her rest and never disturbed her nap. I was told, "She has worked so hard all her life that she deserves this rest." It seemed like rest only came with elderly status after a life of hard work.

Confucianism and Rest

When looking at the cultural values and beliefs that might influence the Chinese concept of rest, we must begin with Confucianism. Confucianism is a shame-based, internal value operating system which has run for thousands of years in Chinese society, no matter whether the governing party is monarchal or democratic. One compelling and ground-setting teaching from Confucius 2,500 years ago was, "If you govern the people by rules and control them by punishment, they will avoid crime but have no personal sense of shame. If you govern them by means of virtue 德 (*dé*) and control them with ritual 禮 *(lǐ*), they will develop their own sense of shame and thus correct themselves."[1] In simple words, if you want to have an orderly society with a low crime rate, create an internal shame system in your people so that they will self-regulate and self-monitor their behaviors. Moreover, they will watch each other and make sure that everyone is "doing the right thing."

This governing system was welcomed and put into practice by many emperors throughout Chinese history. After thousands of years of implementation, Chinese people could not avoid becoming accustomed to this shame-based, internal operating system. Despite efforts during the Cultural Revolution to root out traditional Chinese culture, including Confucianism, this shame-based mentality still grasped Chinese hearts firmly and losing face 丢臉 *(diū liǎn*) is still the biggest offense someone can bring to oneself or one's family or company.

How does this shame-based, internal operating system relate to rest? Since working hard is the model virtue, rest becomes its antagonist. When resting, you are not trying hard enough (不努力 *bù nǔ lì*) and the time to do more things is wasted (浪費光陰 *làng feì guāng yīng*). As a result, the choice to rest is recognized as a sign of laziness (懶惰 *lǎn duò*) or lack of endurance (不能吃苦 *bù néng chī kǔ*) which are poor character traits to possess, consequently bringing shame to the person. Furthermore, in a society that highly values conformity, rest can be perceived as minding one's individual wellbeing and neglecting the group's benefits; in other words, being selfish or self-centered. Therefore, rest not only implies a character flaw but brings shame to a person in the collectivist culture.

Moreover, "吃苦 (*chī kǔ*) eating bitterness" is a highly regarded quality in Chinese culture. "Eating bitterness" could be understood as everlasting endurance and can be achieved by being diligent and working hard. Additionally, the ability to "eat bitterness" and the capacity of how much bitterness one can eat are considered as a true expression of one's character. If nothing goes well, as long as one can eat bitterness, no shame will be brought to self, family, or the group he or she belongs to. One will actually earn praise and recognition by simply eating bitterness in spite of other failures. With this guaranteed honor and admiration, rest then becomes an obstacle to obtain this status. It might even be perceived as a sign of weakness or lack of determination.

Confucianism and Other Moral Principles in Practice

When I was in high school, there were about 1,000 students in each grade. In order to manage us well, the school divided us into different classes. Each class was named after one of the virtues. When I introduced myself outside the classroom, I would say, "I am a senior in the Honesty class." Or another person would say, "Oh, I am a freshman in the Justice class." Inside the classroom, we would study *The Analects* (論語 *lún yǔ*), a collection of sayings attributed to Confucius, as well as additional moral principles rooted in *The Analects*. We would be asked to memorize all of them by heart because we would not only be tested on these in the exams but were also expected to live them out throughout our lifetime.

To set the stage, here are some well-known Chinese proverbs regarding diligence and working hard which require "eating bitterness":

- Bend one's body to the task and exhaust one's energy until one's heart ceases to beat (鞠躬尽瘁死而后已 *jǔ gōng jìng cuì sǐ ér hòu yǐ*).
- Diligence is the means by which one makes up for one's dullness (勤能补拙 *qíng néng bǔ zhuó*).
- Diligence is the mother of success (勤奋是成功之母 *qíng fèn shì chéng gōng zhī mǔ*).
- Strive unremittingly (奋斗不懈 *fèn dòu bú xiè*).
- Every second counts (分秒必争 *fēn miǎo bì zhēng*).

In addition to *The Analects* and these Chinese proverbs, the Three Fundamental Bonds (三纲 *sān gāng*) and Five Constant Virtues (五常 *wǔ cháng*),[2] Four Anchors (四维 *sì wéi*),[3] and Eight Virtues (八德 *bā dé*) were taught repeatedly throughout our years of schooling. Outside school, we were reminded of them everywhere we turned. On the walls of the villages and the signs of many shops and restaurants, you would see virtues spelled out or incorporated. Even some streets are named after the virtues. Growing up surrounded by all these "principles of life," we were so programmed in this value system that how we behaved, conducted ourselves, and functioned were naturally driven to meet these expectations. Rest seems to have no place in the Chinese way of life.

Rest and Chinese Workers

If you look at a schedule of a retreat for a Chinese church, you will see the schedule is packed with speakers and workshops with no downtime on the program. If a break is scheduled, people will try to get together and find something to *"do,"* instead of resting—"*doing nothing."* This tendency of *doing* is not because people do not need rest but because not working hard or not being productive or diligent entails shame. No shame should be brought to the name of Jesus and the church; therefore, these Chinese Christians will persist in working hard and will not rest despite their true condition: empty, exhausted, and depleted.

Moreover, if we try to interpret and understand the concept of self-denial from the Confucian perspective, we throw out the need for rest. "Eating bitterness" becomes an important means to demonstrate one's faith through self-sacrifice. Because of this, these Chinese Christian workers will ignore or suppress the need to rest (considering individual well-being) and push through all their tasks in order to accomplish the group goals. Not only can they save the group's "face" by these self-denying acts, but they can also possibly win honor and recognition for the group, and even for Jesus. As a result, "eating bitterness" tends to become a measure of a Christian's dedication to God and the church. Rest, again, is not taken into consideration when serving the Lord and others.

When talking to a Chinese worker about rest, one can anticipate some resistance due to the unique cultural makeup and influences. These Chinese workers do not dismiss rest intentionally; they simply might not be accustomed to the concept and the value of rest. Rest might even seem to be a foreign language to them for which they do not have the vocabulary due to lack of a common practice in the cultural context. Therefore, most Chinese workers might have to be introduced to rest through some solid biblical teaching before they can actually entertain the idea of rest.

Although rest is not encouraged or well-accepted among Chinese workers, it may be permitted with a solid biblical foundation and gentle guidance. When we become more and more aware of the context of our Chinese workers' experiences, and the virtues that Chinese society values, it is possible to open up a dialogue and invite the Chinese workers into God's *shalom* in a culturally sensitive way. After all, rest is not a task to be completed but a gift from our loving Father in heaven.

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[1] *The Analects of Confucius* 2.3.

[2] The three fundamental bonds comprise society's most basic relationships: father and son, husband and wife, and lord and retainer. The five constant virtues are benevolence (仁), righteousness (義), propriety (禮), wisdom (智), and trustworthiness (信); these serve as a shorthand for all Confucian virtues. See Sāngāng Wǔcháng. *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China*, s.v. "Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Cardinal Virtues." Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Co., 2009. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://chinaconnectu.com/wp-content/pdf/ThreeFundamentalBondsandFiveConstantVirtues.pdf.

[3] Propriety (禮), justice (義), integrity (廉), and honor (恥). See Billy Shyu. "The Four Anchors Are Traditional Chinese Vir-

tues." *Nspirement*, April 21, 2022. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://www.nspirement.com/2022/04/21/virtues-of-the-four-anchors.html.

[4] Taken from a speech in which Dr. Sun Yat-sen outlined his Three Principles of the People, the eight virtues are loyalty (忠), filial piety (孝), benevolence (仁), love (愛), trustworthiness (信), justice (義), harmony (和), and peace (平). See "Four Cardinal Principles and Eight Virtues," Wikipedia Foundation, last modified June 24, 2022, 03:22. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Cardinal_Principles_and_Eight_Virtues.

Peng Xiaohui (pseudonym) is a licensed marriage and family therapist practicing in Southern California.

Marital Issues Facing Chinese Missionaries **Continued from page 10**

Humbly wait and learn—missions cannot be rushed. Cross-cultural ministry is different from local evangelism. The cost, personnel requirements, and difficulties are significantly greater than for local evangelism. Missions is not a task that can be learned while doing. I encourage church leaders to have humble attitudes—ready to observe, learn, be aware of and equipped concerning the high requirements of cross-cultural missions for all involved including the missionaries, the churches, and the agencies. This follows the heart of God.

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[1] John R. Powell. "Families in Missions: A Research Context," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 27, no. 2 (1999): 98–106.

[2] Peter W. Brierley, "Missionary Attrition: The ReMAP Research Report" in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Cause and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 85–103.

[3] Fred Gingrich, "Assessing Families (Not Just Individuals) for Missionary Service," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 44, no. 4 (2016): 329–347.

[4] Christopher H. Rosik and Jelena Pandzic, "Marital Satisfaction among Christian Missionaries: A Longitudinal Analysis from Candidacy to Second Furlough," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 27 no. 1 (2008): 3.

[5] Marge Jones and E. Grant Jones, *Psychology of Missionary Adjustment.* Springfield, MO: Logion Books-Gospel Publishing House, 1995.

[6] Nancy Crawford and Helena M. DeVries, "Relationship between Role Perception and Well-being in Married Female Missionaries," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 33, no. 3 (2005): 187–197.

[7] John Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York: Harmony Books, 2015), 54.

[8] Ibid., 88.

[9] Ibid., 116.

[10] Ibid., 261.

[11] Crawford and DeVries.

[12] Claire A. Camp, Joy M. Bustrum, David V. Brokaw, and Christopher J. Adams, "Missionary Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Current Member Care Practices," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 42 no. 4 (2014): 359-368.

[13] Rosik and Pandzic.

Lisa Tsai (pseudonym) is a trained family therapist from China and has done research on the needs of cross-cultural workers sent out from China.

Chinese Culture and the Ethos of Suffering in the Chinese Church

By Dennis Ahern

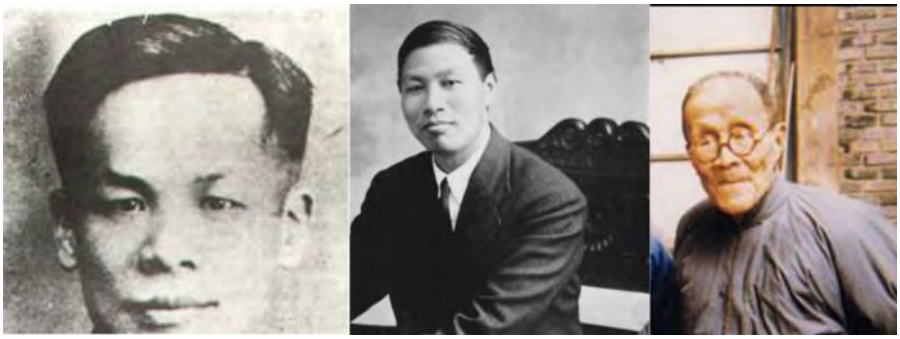

Image credit: Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity; from left: John Sung; Watchman Nee; Wang Mingdao

I am an observer, but I am not a participant, and what I write and share today has to do with my observations over years of working in both the Chinese diaspora as well as my travels in China from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.

I would like to start with language and begin by saying that when we think about suffering in the West versus suffering in the East, our language is different. The English term "suffer" comes from the Latin word *sufferere*, meaning to bear, to undergo, endure, carry, or put under.[1] The Chinese word for "suffer," however, takes us to a different place. One common concept for suffering is found in the expression "to eat bitterness" (吃苦). So, I reflect a lot about this from a linguistic vantage point.

We are already going on different roads. In the Western world, suffering for Christ is a weight to shoulder, a weight on your body; in the Chinese world, suffering for Christ must be consumed. It actually goes into us. If you sent me to provide pastoral care to a Chinese ministry couple serving Christ in the world today, while drinking tea, the topic of balance and self-care might enter the discussion. Once sufficient trust has been established the wife might express herself to me as follows:

> Pastor Dennis, my husband—he works too hard. He is gone many nights of the week. When someone connected to our ministry calls, he drops everything and goes out the door. The children see him go and seem to understand most of the time that he is serving Jesus, but the Jesus he serves has made me a lonely wife.

Chinese church history possesses a legacy of suffering that is spiritually essential to one's calling; therefore, member care is, I believe, ontologically difficult to both pursue and receive. Rather than embracing as legitimate the self-stewardship of one's own spiritual and emotional health, member care feels selfish. That is because suffering is to be ingested. Suffering is to one's calling what tofu is to *mapo doufu*.[2] Remove the tofu, and "pockmarked grandma bean curd" is no longer; it ceases to exist.

In the Western world, suffering for Christ is a weight to shoulder, a weight on your body; in the Chinese world, suffering for Christ must be consumed. It actually goes into us.

Because the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, a noted church historian has indicated that every Christian should thank a martyr when they reach heaven.[3] Chinese Christians, with their culture and history, will thank the Chinese martyrs more than once. So, how has the historical context of "eating bitterness" shaped the way Chinese gospel workers practice their faith?

Let us briefly examine three well-known Chinese Christian leaders from the past who have profoundly shaped the history of the Chinese church's view of suffering: evangelist John Sung (Song Shangjie; also known as John Song); the father of the house church movement, Watchman Nee; and Pastor Wang Mingdao. Let us see, individually as well as collectively, in what way they have shaped how Chinese church leaders view suffering.

John Sung

In his last letter before he died, John Sung stated the following:

> The father did not use those mighty warriors to kill Goliath nor those encumbered with steel armor and bronze helmet to defeat Goliath. He used one who was despised even by his own brothers, but his heart was single, fully trusting the Lord. He was David, who had close communion with his Lord. He picked up five stones, despised by the people. What are these five stones? They are five truths: to suffer with Christ, to crucify with Christ, to bury with Christ, to rise with Christ, to ascend with Christ. With these five stones, we have more than enough to kill Goliath.[4]

Looking at a summary of his ministry, while his cause of death was intestinal tuberculosis, basically, he worked himself to death. He was gone from home at the peak of his ministry up to eleven months out of the year. His wife had five children and he was not home for the birth of any one of them. Looking back on the influence of his ministry, conservative numbers would place 100,000 Chinese as having been converted as a result of his labors.[5]

Watchman Nee

In the concluding paragraph of *The Spiritual Man*, *Volume One*, Watchman Nee wrote, "The cross needs to be borne faithfully and to be borne increasingly faithfully. Let us gaze upon our Lord Jesus who 'endured the cross, despising the shame.'"[6]

We read in the concluding paragraph of *The Spiritual Man, Volume Two*:

> When a believer has experienced the practical treatment of the cross, he finally arrives at a pure life. All is for God and in God, and God is in all as well. Nothing is unto self. Even the tiniest desire for pleasing oneself is crucified. Self-love has been consigned to death. The present aim of existence becomes single: to do the will of God: so long as he is pleased, nothing else really counts: to obey him becomes the sole objective of life. It does not matter how he feels; what matters is obeying God. This is a pure walk.[7]

In the conclusion of his book *The Normal Christian Life,* Nee wrote:

> Oh to be wasted. It is a blessed thing to be wasted for the Lord. So many who have been prominent in the Christian world know nothing of this. Many of us have been used to the full—have been used, I would say, too much—but we do not know what it means to be 'wasted on God.'[8]

To summarize Watchman Nee's ministry: His cause of death was probably 20 years of imprisonment. Not one Christian was present at his death; his body was cremated and given to a sister. His wife had already died years before. Conservative estimates place 2,300 churches worldwide specifically related to his ministry, many of them house churches.[9]

Wang Mingdao

Finally, we turn to Wang Mingdao's summary on suffering for the believer. Many of his journals and other writings are published in English, but let me just choose one quote of his primary words that have impacted me: "If we would be God's faithful workers helping others, we must let him train us through suffering, the suffering he permits for us."[10]

Wang Mingdao's cause of death was the impact of 22 years of imprisonment, solitary confinement, torture, and interrogations.

In his writings Wang Mingdao lists six benefits of suffering. The theme is very powerful and very strong in his life.

1. Suffering presses Christians to look up to God, to depend upon him, to come near to him and pray to him. This in turn releases innumerable blessings from God.

2. Suffering helps Christians in strengthening their faith.

3. Suffering edifies and strengthens believers so that they want to leave all unrighteousness and be made holy.

4. Suffering alerts believers to the fact that this world is not our permanent home, and therefore we need not love it too much. Instead, we can press forward with that which will help us in our eternal dwelling place.

5. Suffering can help Christians practice complete obedience, for which we will receive an eternal reward.

6. Christians can be trained through suffering, so that they can be workers who comfort and help others.[11]

Conclusion

From my viewpoint, the leadership legacy established in the Chinese church is that of the suffering servant. Suffering is the *confirmation*—no, it is the *ordination* of the gospel worker's testimony in a Chinese context. This is a significant hurdle to overcome when delivering member care. Who believes they are worthy to receive care when the faithful witnesses who preceded them had little to none?

> There is no place in Scripture that teaches us to feed bitterness to our Christian brothers and sisters by abandoning them and their member care needs.

In June 2017, two Chinese missionaries were martyred in Pakistan.[12] Afterwards, I was able to meet privately with a team of Chinese missionaries serving in Pakistan. I asked the members of the team if anyone from their agency had visited them to provide member care. I learned that I was the first person from outside their context to ask such questions. No one had visited them.

I grieve that isolation is often the normal Christian life for Chinese gospel workers. I also grieve when we fail to follow the Lord's command, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34–35).

If God calls us to "eat bitterness" for the sake of the gospel, then our calling is to chew as best we can. One day the agony and the pain will be no more, because Jesus Christ has said, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

There is no place in Scripture that teaches us to feed bitterness to our Christian brothers and sisters by abandoning them and their member care needs. Rather, the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:15–18 speaks of those who have devoted themselves to the service of the saints and who have refreshed his spirit. The new commandment that Jesus Christ gave in John 13 asserts that loving others is how the world will know we are his disciples. We know that the spiritual and emotional care of missionaries and pastors matters to our beloved shepherd, Jesus Christ.

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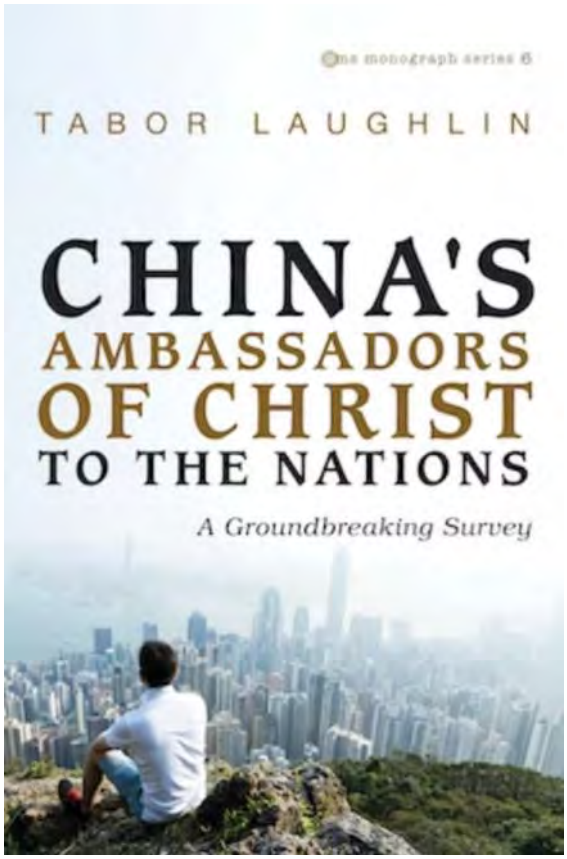
[1] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "suffer (v.)," accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/suffer.
[2] Mapo tofu (麻婆豆腐) is a popular Sichuan dish. For background on the dish, lots of pictures, and a recipe, see "Mapo Tofu Recipe," *China Sichuan Food*, November 23, 2020. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://www.chinasichuanfood.com/mapo-tofu-recipe/.
[3] Kevin A. Miller, "Tomb of the Unknown Christians," *Christian History* 27 (1990):2, quoted in Alvin J Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), p. 39.
[4] Timothy Tow, *John Sung My Teacher* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1985), 241.
[5] G. Wright Doyle, *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, s.v. "John Sung." Accessed August 26, 2022. http://bdcconline.net/en/stories/john-sung.
[6] Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man Vol. 1. (*New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1968), 207.
[7] Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man Vol. 2.* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1968), 256.
[8] Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life.* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1985), 284.
[9] "Watchman Nee's Life and Ministry." Living Stream Ministry. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://www.watchmannee.org/life-ministry.html.
[10] Wang Mingdao, *Chinese Church Iron-Man Wang Ming Dao Looks at the People*, trans. Evelyn B. Solomon (Touliu: Conservative Baptist Press, 1988), 481. While the passages quoted come from the section of the book, "The Benefits of Suffering," the publishers make a case for analysis of Wang Mingdao's messages as a study of the Bible through the lens of suffering.
[11] Wang, 462–481.
[12] "Mourning Two Chinese Christians Killed in Pakistan," *Chinese Church Voices: ChinaSource Blog.* June 20, 2017. Accessed August 26, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/mourning-two-chinese-christians-killed-in-pakistan/.

Dr. Dennis Ahern currently serves as WorldVenture's pastoral counselor, providing member care to workers in many locations. He and his wife Denise have been involved in missions for 43 years, including serving in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and the Philippines from 1981–1995 and then serving as WorldVenture's southwest regional director from 1995–2004. He received his BA from Lewis and Clark College with a major in religious studies, his MDiv from Western Seminary in pastoral studies, his ThM in missiology from Fuller Seminary, and his DMin from Bethel Seminary in congregational and family care.

Book Review

Chinese Missionaries and the Care Gap—How to Help

Reviewed by Jesse Carroll



China's Ambassadors of Christ to the Nations: A Groundbreaking Survey by Tabor Laughlin. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications-Wipf and Stock, 2020. Paperback, 168 pages. ISBN-10: 1725257963; ISBN-13: 978-1725257962. Available from Wipf and Stock and Amazon.

I have a colleague who always wants us to put things we need her to pass on or send out on the front of her desk so that she can see them and remember to do what is necessary. Her mantra is, "Out of sight, out of mind." Our missionaries are often "out of sight, out of mind." We only see them at the time of their commissioning service, and when they return for home assignment. In between, there is a big gap. This gap is being filled by what we know as member care. Many of China's missionaries are being sent to different parts of the world; yet their member care is weak. However, their back-home leadership is concerned about member care and can learn from more experienced sending organizations.

About the Book

Tabor Laughlin, the author of *China's Ambassadors of Christ to the Nations: A Groundbreaking Survey,* received his PhD in intercultural studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Laughlin converted his dissertation for publication under the Evangelical Missiological Society Monograph Series. The purpose of his monograph is "to explore the experience of Chinese missionaries, factors contributing to building relationships cross-culturally, and the extent to which Chinese missionaries' experiences contribute to their retention on the mission field" (p.1). The contents include: an introduction, literature review, research methodology, presentation of findings, analysis of findings, and finally, the conclusion and recommendations. This structure shows proper research that can contribute to the topic of Chinese missionary sending being done by entities in China.

> How have Chinese cross-cultural workers succeeded or struggled in cross-cultural relationships?

Laughlin interviewed twenty-five missionaries from mainland China who are connected to house churches. They have been serving outside China and ministering among non-Chinese host cultures for at least two years. His findings include the basic information of the interviewees and focus on cross-cultural relationships and adaptation. His research coalesced into two questions as mentioned on page 105:

- How have Chinese cross-cultural workers succeeded or struggled in cross-cultural relationships?
- What prefield and on-the-field experiences have contributed to Chinese cross-cultural workers' retention in cross-cultural service?

These are some critical questions related to member care for missionaries. The two questions address the issues and uncover factors that will enhance the process of member care.

In the findings, Laughlin mentions that while the needs of Chinese missionaries are similar to those of missionaries from other sending countries, they are closest to those of the Korean missionary movement. Both are from East Asia and have monocultural backgrounds that emphasize filial piety. On the other hand, China has a closed, authoritarian government which restricts religious freedom. While in a cross-cultural setting, missionaries from China can remain in the field and build cross-cultural relationships while learning the language; self-disclosure and mutual trust within the host culture can take place. Furthermore, while prefield training helps missionaries get to the field, they would like to receive more technical or business training for sustainability in their financial matters.

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Reliable but Not Dated

I am amazed by Laughlin's effort to interview twenty-five missionaries serving outside China. It shows his affinity with the practitioners on the ground—trust is an issue. His experience in missionary sending is also an advantage allowing him to design the interview comprehensively. On the other hand, as I read this book, I struggled with what the date of this research might be. The duration of the research is not stated. From the bibliography, the latest reference was published in 2017 (*The Souls of China* by Ian Johnson, p. 155). Therefore, a simple estimation would be that the research was carried out before the world entered the unprecedented phenomenon of COVID-19. Since the Chinese church is sensitive to social change, the timeline is essential for readers to be able to adjust their expectations in reading.

East Asian Filial Piety

One exciting discovery is about the impact of filial piety on Chinese missionaries. The Chinese missionary movement can learn from the Korean missionary movement about how to handle this issue. Laughlin correctly recognized its importance because of Chinese culture and the "one-child policy" (p. 109). Adult children have an obligation to care for elderly parents. Therefore, the worst-case scenario for a Chinese adult couple would be taking care of four elderly parents and one child. Sometimes, the adults have low incomes and cannot sustain the family's welfare. This would be a great cause of concern for a family wanting to do mission work, as neglecting the care of the parents would be seen very negatively. On the brighter side, since Chinese live in community, relatives and cousins will often take care of each other's families. In addition, if the missionary is from a Christian family, the pressure to take care of their elderly parents will be less. The peers in

the family will understand the mission being carried out by the missionary.

Cross-Cultural Relationships and Personal Experience

From the perspective of member care, Laughlin mentions that "one common reason for missionary attrition for Chinese is failure to adjust cross-culturally and establish relationships with people of the host culture" (p. 1). The literature review also starts with the topic of building effective cross-cultural relationships and missionary attrition (p. 15). Yet, what is an excellent measure to prove the validity of this statement? Cross-cultural adjustment and relationship building are hard to identify; they are a broad spectrum and not easy to pin down. Also, adjustment and relationship building need time to develop; they are a process.

This process varies based on many factors, most of which Laughlin has covered. However, personality traits and life experiences are also factors. A person's personality and life experience will affect their ability to cope with stress. While this research can identify the problems and factors of the issue, it cannot represent what each person is going through. For example, Laughlin describes seven or more elements in making close relationships (pp. 80–82), yet each factor is not represented with substantiating numbers. Laughlin has to analyze and use other mechanisms to check the factors' validity. Perhaps prefield training and on-field support (and postfield debriefing) are more valuable in providing support for cross-cultural workers.

If missionaries from monoculture societies (Korea and Japan) need to overcome many cultural barriers, Chinese missionaries require even more effort to cross the same obstacles.

Social Background

For Chinese missionaries to cross cultures, other issues exist. One of the critical issues is the social setting from which missionaries come. Since China's government is authoritarian with high sanctions, there is a difference in religious adherence when compared to other countries that have certain levels of religious freedom. One's background and life experience are connected to the nation's authority. Most Chinese Christians, if not all, are aware of the government controlling the church's activities. China is a country without Google and Facebook! This has influenced how the Chinese interact with people of other cultures. If missionaries from monoculture societies (Korea and Japan) need to overcome many cultural barriers, Chinese missionaries require even more effort to cross the same obstacles. Laughlin has made this observation clear and sharp.

Similar Yet Different Training

Thus, prefield training and on-field support for Chinese missionaries must differ from that of missionaries from other backgrounds. Laughlin mentioned prefield vocational training which is helpful; perhaps prefield cultural orientation is even more needful. There is much prefield cross-cultural training for Chinese missionaries taking place outside China; this not only avoids security sanctions but is also beneficial for cross-cultural experience. The prefield training for Chinese missionaries might be longer as there are more matters to cover. However, the other aspect of their learning is always active—they would like to put their new knowledge into practice as soon as possible.

In addition, a strong distinctive of Chinese Christians is sacrifice and suffering. They are willing to endure tougher training in order to better serve in the kingdom of God. To make the training effective and efficient, it

should be in partnership with overseas Chinese Christians. Overseas Chinese Christians understand the cultural background of mainland Chinese missionaries and have experience living cross-culturally. Their partnership could minimize hindrances in training.

A Missionary Mentor?

For on-field support, an emerging topic is the missionary-mentor: more experienced missionaries will mentor new missionaries on the field. To mentor Chinese missionaries, a mentor must not only know the culture of the field but also needs to comprehend the culture of the Chinese missionaries. The mentor needs to stand in the gap to eliminate unnecessary barriers for the Chinese missionaries to live in a cross-culture setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Laughlin has made a great effort to interview Chinese missionaries. He detects some issues closely related to Chinese missionaries, like the issue of filial piety which most Chinese (not only in China) still adhere to. He could have utilized the Chinese church's historical background to understand various influences on Chinese missionaries. Since Laughlin is aware of various influences on the Chinese, he could have been more daring in proposing creative ways to walk alongside them. Nevertheless, this book could be an excellent start to understanding the emerging missionary member-care movement coming from China.

In addition, readers should also consider learning about this movement from original Chinese literature. With the rise of Chinese Doctor of Missiology programs in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, China's Chinese mission leaders are expressing their voices through research and writing.

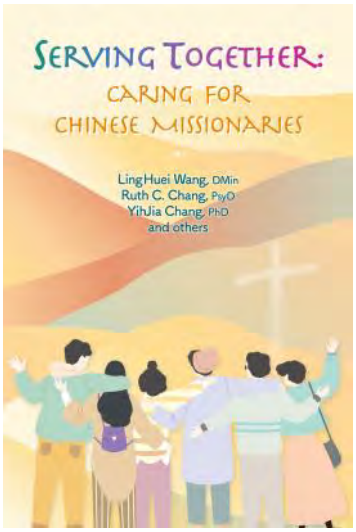
Editor's Note: A Chinese version of the dissertation that the book is based on is available in the ResearchShare section of the ChinaSource website.

Our thanks to Wipf and Stock for providing a copy of China's Ambassadors of Christ to the Nations: A Groundbreaking Survey *by Tabor Laughlin for this review.*

Jesse Carroll (pseudonym) is part of the Chinese diaspora and grew up in a country in Southeast Asia. He received his PhD; his dissertation is titled "The Gospel Travels along the Silk Road Again: An Assessment of Gospel Transmission along the Ancient and New Silk Road by Chinese House Churches." Dr. Carroll is on the faculty of a theological institution, mentors doctoral students in their research, and trains students who are doing intercultural studies. At the same time, he is also on the national boards of two international mission-sending organizations.

RESOURCE CORNER

A Tool for Those Who Care for Chinese Missionaries



Serving Together: Caring for Chinese Missionaries by Linghuei Wang, DMin; Ruth C. Chang, PsyD; Yih Jia Chang, PhD; and others. Cosmic Light, 2022, 392 pages. Available in Chinese and English (forthcoming).

This handbook introduces a holistic approach to caring for Chinese missionaries that starts from recruitment and continues all the way to retirement (or final re-entry). It contextualizes lessons learned from seasoned member care providers who have served missionaries from many different nationalities to the unique experiences of Chinese missionaries; addresses issues that are specifically and especially relevant to missionaries sent from China; and creates specific suggestions and guidelines for churches, mission organizations, and missionaries on how to work together to provide the best ways to help missionaries survive, thrive, and fulfill God's calling in their lives.

A core emphasis of the handbook is to enable missionaries to see the importance of living out the great commandment in their daily lives while fulfilling the great commission— remembering to nurture their love relationship with Jesus and others (including family members), and from that foundation, to influence others for Jesus and serve him effectively.

Available in Chinese at Ambassadors for Christ Resources: 陪你同行, 與你同工-華人宣教士關懷指南.

The English version is available from Narramore Christian Foundation.

What People Are Saying about *Serving Together:*

What a joy it is to hold the first edition of this groundbreaking book about Chinese member care in my hands! Written by well-selected Chinese practitioners who deeply understand the culture, content, and context of member care, and its application to Chinese cross-cultural workers, this handbook is an example of contextualization I hope many other national missions movements will follow. It's a real treasure from which all of us who work in cross-cultural ministry can learn.

-Harry Hoffmann, Coordinator, Global Member Care Network (GMCN)

I welcome this long-awaited missionary member care manual for Chinese churches. This manual addresses many critical issues and practical needs missionaries face every day on the field and when they return home. As a missionary who has been on the field for more than twenty years, and who has recently served as a team leader of a Chinese team with members from different parts of the world, I have seen and can identify with many topics presented in this manual. This comprehensive manual is a valuable tool for every missions agency and sending church to better support and care for their missionaries of Chinese descent.

-TJ, Missionary Serving in a Creative Access Region

ChinaSource Perspective

Member Care for Workers from China—a Growing Understanding

By Narci Herr

My first introduction to Chinese Christians going out as cross-cultural workers was in Hong Kong. From time to time a graduate of the seminary where I taught would return from the mission field and speak in the chapel service. Those talks were always fascinating. I was listening to someone from the culture that I had gone to serve share experiences that often mirrored my own in entering their culture. Once I nearly laughed out loud as a speaker lamented the difficulty of learning the Thai language. "It's a tonal language!" he exclaimed. This coming from someone whose own language—Cantonese (which I had struggled to learn)—has seven tones (some say nine, depending on how you count them). I could identify completely with his frustration.

But other challenges didn't resonate quite as much. My HK colleague who went to serve in Afghanistan among Muslims had to give up a major part of her diet to avoid pork. I like pork, but it's not my main meat. Education, often a significant problem for Chinese missionary families, wasn't a problem for my children. The schools in HK produce students who are fully equipped to enter university—both in Hong Kong and abroad. As an added bonus, the public schools our children went to were run by the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong. They had a Cantonese-based, Christian education at no additional charge to us.

The more involved I got in the missions community of Hong Kong, the more I realized that my Chinese brothers and sisters who answered God's calling to cross-cultural missions faced both similar and very different challenges than my husband and I had when we arrived in Hong Kong on a blistering hot and humid July day in 1981.

After joining ChinaSource in 2012, two early projects that I worked on dealt with cross-cultural missionaries sent out from China. The first was the spring 2013 issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly* on "China's Indigenous Mission." It was guest edited by two Chinese workers, one from mainland China, the other from outside of China. I was both appalled at my ignorance of the church in China's efforts to reach the unreached beyond their borders and amazed at the history and commitment of those workers who were sent out. Since then, we have done two further issues[1] as updates on the indigenous missions movement—each time my understanding and awareness improved but the amazement remained.

My second early project was to make publicly available the findings of an American cross-cultural worker's dissertation, which was based on interviews with Chinese missionaries. Since ResearchShare wasn't started yet, we created a hybrid series of *ChinaSource Blog* posts that introduced and pointed to sections of the dissertation that were posted on the website as articles—Missions from China—A Maturing Movement.

In each of those projects,[2] the topic of member care came up. The high rate of attrition was mentioned in some and the lack of understanding and resources to care for the workers was lamented. I am thrilled that in this issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly* we focus on the need for member care and how we, as part of the body of Christ, can help. It is particularly significant that the majority of writers are themselves Chinese. As Jesse Carroll notes at the end of his book review—studies are being done by Chinese mission leaders who are con-

cerned about this issue and resources are being developed. Let's continue to learn from our Chinese brothers and sisters and join with them to support their efforts in bringing the gospel to those who have yet to hear.

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[1] Wu Xi, "Cross-Cultural Missions from China," *ChinaSource Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (2016), accessed August 24, 2022, https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinasource-quarterlies/cross-cultural-missions-from-china/ and Wu Xi, "Doing Missions with Chinese Characteristics: Developments in the Indigenous Missions Movement from China," *ChinaSource Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2020), accessed August 24, 2022, https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinasource-quarterlies/doing-missions-with-chinese-characteristics/.

[2] See Dan Chevry, "Beyond the Books: The Heart of Prefield Mission Training," *ChinaSource Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (2013), accessed August 24, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/beyond-the-books-the-heart-of-prefield-mission-training/; Roy, "The Church in China and World Evangelism," *ChinaSource Quarterly*, 18, no. 4 (2016), accessed August 24, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/the-church-in-china-and-world-evangelism/; Wu Xi, "The Heart Cries of Frontline Workers in Muslim Countries: Interviews by the Guest Editor," *ChinaSource Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2020), accessed August 24, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/the-heart-cries-of-frontline-workers-in-muslim-countries/; GJ and Si Shi (四石), "The Impact of Family Issues on Chinese Missionaries: Thinking Through an Approach to Spouse- and Children-Needs of Chinese Missionaries," *ChinaSource*, June 22, 2017, accessed August 24, 2022. https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/the-impact-of-family-issues-on-chinese-missionaries/.

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