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# 天國視野 Kingdom Perspective

Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the United States and Canada

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## It Takes a Village

Pastor Amos Lee

One area of concern we have noticed in recent years has been the loss of young adults in the church when they leave home for college. Samuel Smith, in his “Report projects 35 million youth to leave Christianity by 2050”, published in the Christian Post September 2019, cited a study which was collaborated by Pinetops Foundation and the Veritas Forum, estimated that by 2050, 35 million youths raised in families that call themselves Christian will say that they are not by 2050. This calls for a heightened sense of concern.

Furthermore, this is not only true of youths, but the faith in general does not fare any better either. It is forecasted that “Christianity in America will make up just 59 percent of the country’s population by 2050, compared to 73 percent today.” In the “... ‘best case’ scenario, it indicates that the population of the religiously unaffiliated will double to 30 percent of the total population in 2050 and in the worst-case “... as many as 42 million people raised in Christian homes will disaffiliate from Christianity by 2050.” In such a scenario, the question asked by Jesus in His generation needs to be asked again in ours – “...When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b)

***Gone are the days as the adage goes,  
“The Bible said it, I believe it and that settles it.”***

Amid such negativity, Greg Stier, leader of Dare 2 Share Youth Ministry asserts that if it is true, that would provide a great opportunity for the American church to flip the switch in 2050. He said that at least 215,000 churches will need to be planted by 2050 just to maintain the status quo. Church planting? Yes! But planting viable and healthy congregations that are developing disciples who are growing in the knowledge of God and His Word, becoming more and more like Christ. In the words of Paul, “...presenting everyone fully mature in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28)

There are many ways to look for a solution to this issue, but from an educational perspective, we need to relook at what we do in that aspect of ministry in the church. One, it is imperative for the church to not only teach about the Bible and the knowledge of the truth even though that is important, but we also need to move higher up in the cognitive domain of learning from knowledge to comprehension, application, synthesis and evaluation. For example, it is important to know the facts, the what, the where and the how but to also need to know the why. Gone are the days as the adage goes, “The Bible said it, I believe it and that settles it.” In a culture where the majority are believers, that is well and good. But when we have in our midst, a sizeable number of people

who are unbelievers, biblically illiterate and encountering the issue of our faith being challenged and even maligned, we should do better. What are believers to do? The apostle Peter, writing to the believers in the first century has this sound advice for us today – “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (I Peter 3:15-16). Knowing why we believe what we believe and living out the truth of what we believe is an important aspect of discipleship, especially in this post-Christian culture.

Two, the role of parents in raising healthy disciples and thus, healthy churches in the discipleship process. In God’s design, parents are the “go to” in the nurture of the faith of their children (Deuteronomy 6: 4-9) and when parents relegate that responsibility to someone else or to an institution, even to the church, the abdication of such a duty will come back to haunt them. Through the pandemic, God has, in a strange way brought this truth back to us in a real manner when churches are closed for activities and everyone is sheltered in place, meaning, parents must take care of their children physically, emotionally, socially, educationally, and spiritually. The task of discipleship and teaching falls naturally on the parents when schools and churches are closed.

***“...free ...to live out the truth with confidence so that your children will walk in THEIR faith with confidence as well.”***

But what are parents to do? They need to:

- **Know the Word.** You cannot teach and model what you do not know.
- **Know why you believe what you believe.** It is not enough to know the facts but to know why the same is true. That way, your children will not be embarrassed by not being able to respond to the many challenges to their faith posed by their peers.
- **Live the Word and be the role model for your children.** Knowing the truth and why it is true will set you free to live out the truth with confidence so that your children will walk in **THEIR** faith with confidence as well.
- **Bond with your children.** Relationship is everything with your children. Like the maxim says, “Rules without Relationship leads to Rebellion.” Ever wonder why so many of our children are so eager to leave home (and faith) when they reach the magic age?

Hence, parenting is an important aspect of Christian Education in the church and the key to the solution of many growing pains, mental health, faith-life and personhood issues of children and youths moving into adulthood. God does not place infants into the hands of parents, father and mother, male and female within the context of a family to love and to nurture for nothing. And it would be well for the church and those concerned about the effectiveness of Christian education and discipleship in the church to take note to not only minister to the children but to consider a comprehensive view of the role of equipping and nurturing the entire church. But you may ask, “Who is equal to the task?” None. But unless we try and stem the tide and more, what alternatives do we have? However, parents cannot do it all alone. They need the support of grandparents, brothers and sisters in the church, the leadership, and the pastors to do the task well. It truly takes a village.

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## 需要整個村莊的努力

李英柏牧師

近年來我們看到一件令人憂心的事情，這就是年輕人離家上大學時從教會流失。史密斯 (Samuel Smith) 在 2019 年 9 月的《基督教郵報》(Christian Post) 上所發表 “預計在 2050 時，將有 3500 萬青年人離開基督教的報告” 中，引用了一項研究，其中估計在 2050 年，在教會中的年輕人，到了 2050 年，有 3500 萬名在白稱是基督徒的家庭中成長的年輕人將說，他們不是基督徒。這使我們倍感擔心。

再者，這不只是青年人的問題，總體上說，一般人的信仰也好不到那裏。據預測，“到 2050 年，美國的基督徒將僅佔全國人口的 59%，今天的比例是 73%。” 在 “……' 最好的情況 ' 中，這表明沒有宗教信仰的人的人口將在 2050 年增加一倍，達到總人口的 30%，而在最壞的情況下” ……到了 2050 年，多達 4200 萬在基督教家庭中成長的人將脫離基督教。” 在這種情況下，我們這世代一代的人，需要再次提出耶穌向祂那一個世代所提出的問題 - “人子來的時候，遇得見世上有信德嗎”？(路加福音 18:8 下)

**常說的：“聖經說了，我相信了，就這樣決定了！”  
的這句話的日子已經過去了！**

在這負面的情況中，Dare 2 Share Youth Ministry 的負責人格雷格·斯蒂爾 (Greg Stier) 斷言，如果這是真的，那將為美國教會在 2050 年改變心意的一個絕好機會。他說，在 2050 年至少需要栽植 215,000 個教會才能勉強維持現狀。栽植教會？是的！不過，我們是要栽植有活力而又健康的會眾，訓練門徒，使他們在對上帝和他的聖言的認識上不斷增長，越來越像基督。如保羅說，“……要把各人在基督裡完完全全地引到神面前。” (歌羅西書 1:28)

解決這個問題的方法有很多，但是從教育的角度來看，我們需要重新審視我們在教會在這方面的事工中所做的工作。第一，教會不僅要傳授聖經和真理知識，這固然重要，但我們必須在學習的認知領域中更上層樓，從知識進到理解，應用，結合以至評估。舉例來，知道事實，其內容，發生地點，以及如何發生是重要的，但更要知道原因。常說的：“聖經說了，我相信了，就這樣決定了。” 的這句話的日子已經過去了！在大多數人都是信徒的文化中，這是件好事。但是，當我們中間有大量的人既非信徒，也不認識聖經

時，我們的信仰就會受到挑戰甚至中傷。信徒該做什麼？使徒彼得在寫信給第一世紀的信徒時，在今天給我們正確的忠告。“…有人問你們心中盼望的緣由，就要常做準備，以溫柔、敬畏的心回答各人，存著無虧的良心，叫你們在何事上被毀謗，就在何事上可以叫那誣賴你們在基督裡有好品行的人自覺羞愧。”（彼得前書 3：15-16）門徒訓練的其中一個重點，尤其是在這種後基督教文化中，就是知道我們為何相信我們所相信的，並活出我們所相信的真理。

第二，父母培育健康的門徒，從而在訓練門徒的過程中建立健康的教會。在上帝的設計中，父母是養育兒女信仰的關鍵人物（申命記 6：4-9），當父母將責任轉嫁給其他人或機構，即使是教會時，這樣放棄責任在將來會為他們帶來問題。通過新冠狀病毒疫情大流行，教堂關閉活動，並且所有人都要留在家中避疫，上帝以一種我們想不到的方式把這真理臨到我們，這就是父母必須在身體，精神，社交，教育，和靈命上照顧他們的孩子。當學校和教堂關閉時，門徒訓練的工作自然落在父母身上。

## **當父母將責任轉嫁給其他人或機構，即使是教會時， 這樣放棄責任在將來會為他們帶來問題。**

但是父母要做什麼呢？他們需要：

- **認識真道。**你無法教授和示範你不認識的東西。
- **知道為何相信你所相信的。**僅僅了解事實是不夠的，還要知道為什麼這是對的。當你這樣教道你的孩子時，他就不會因為無法應付同輩對他們的信仰所提出的許多挑戰而感到尷尬。
- **活出真道，**成為孩子的榜樣。認識真理(及心中盼望的緣由)能給你自由，讓你更有信心自由地活出真理，好叫你的孩子也能同樣有信心活出他們的信仰。
- **與孩子建立良好的關係。**對孩子來說，關係就是一切。就像這句話所說：“沒有關係的規條會導致反叛。” 有沒有想過為什麼我們這麼多的孩子在達到特定的年歲時就如此渴望離開家庭（和信仰）？

因此，養育子女是教會基督教教育的重要一環，也是解決兒童和青年人在成為成年人中所有的成長之痛，以及其精神健康，信仰生活和人格問題的關鍵。在家庭中，上帝有目的地將嬰兒放在父母的手中，有父也有母、有男亦有女，在家庭中去愛與養育他們。對於教會，以及關心教會中基督教教育和門徒訓練的成效的人來說，他們不僅要注意服侍孩子，還要思考裝備和培育整個教會的一個全面的看法。但你也許會問：“誰能當得起呢?？”沒有人可自誇。但是，除非我們嘗試遏制這潮流及其他的辦法，否則我們還有哪些選擇呢？但是，父母們不能獨自努力，他們需要祖父母，教會中的弟兄姐妹，牧師和領袖們的支持才能美好地完成任務。這工作確實需要整個村莊共同努力。

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