

Reaching out to Mainland Chinese

走近心靈

如何向大陸人傳福音

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Table of Contents

Forward

Section I. Word Becomes Flesh

1. Preaching by Example
2. Be Humble
3. Building Relationship
4. Listening Is a Service for Friends
5. Faithful in Little Things
6. Team Work
7. Open Your Heart, Open Your House

Section II. Dialogue with Sinners

1. When It Comes to Sin, Start with Self
2. Tell the Whole Truth
3. The Cost of Discipleship
4. Face the Sins by the Church
5. Is Despair A Sin?
6. My Friend, You Are Wearing Tinted Glasses!
7. A Life of Pain

Section III. In the Beginning Was the Word

1. Stand Fast First in What is Greater
2. Pursue the Whole Truth
3. Refrain from Arguing the Unarguable
4. Jargon that No One Understands
5. Put an End to Anti-Intellect and Anti-Culture
6. Seek Another Language
7. Love is Patient

Section IV. O Great Is Chinese Culture

1. Preaching via Chinese Culture
2. The Tiger's Backside
3. Solving a Nationalism Complex
4. Criticizing Confucius
5. What Good Is the Gospel?
6. Sing Different Songs on Different Mountains
7. Be A Little More Chinese

Epilogue

Foreword

This is a ministry handbook on how to evangelize Mainland Chinese intellectuals that is specific, constructive and comprehensive.

This is an important and serious subject. Rather than offering a line of professional how-to's, the author chooses to speak to us as a friend, relating his own experiences and suggesting basic principles. To many Christian workers and laymen who have a burden to reach out to the Mainland Chinese, these principles might be common sense but are needed as special alerts and reminders. For example:

- Because of the potential misunderstanding of sin by the Chinese, we should always speak of sin in terms of man's relationship to God.
- Do not focus only on great things when preaching the gospel. Do the little things with love as Jesus did.
- Do not fuss over minor details, but always present the gospel in connection with the message that Jesus is Lord.
- Do not step on the land mine of the Mainland Chinese by saying "You Mainland Chinese."
- Identify yourselves with the Mainland Chinese, never saying "You" but "We" instead.

If you are reaching out to the Mainland Chinese, or are interested in doing so, this ministry handbook is especially written for you. It has four sections, each with seven chapters, and a summary is provided at the end of each chapter. It is written with ration, affection and insight, and can be of great help to every Chinese and English-speaking Christian eager to learn how to reach out to people from a different cultural background. This handbook is suitable for use in personal study, small group discussions, or adult Sunday School classes.

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Section I. Word Becomes Flesh

A heart full of love can touch another heart.

Chapter 1. Preaching by Example More Important Than Preaching by Word

1. Preaching by Example vs Preaching by Word

The ancient Chinese education theory has it that teaching by example is more important than teaching by word. The teaching here mainly refers to teaching others how to be a real man. Moving from education to faith, we ponder on preaching. In addition to preaching by words, which includes speaking and writing, we also preach by example, i.e., to manifest the Word of Life. If what a Christian preaches is not what he practices, then who would believe in what he preaches?

Thus, preaching by example is more important than preaching by word. This is the fundamental principle of preaching the gospel.

2. The Chinese

There is an old Chinese saying, "Listen to his words, and observe his acts." It is how people make friends and deal with others. It concerns practicality, especially practicality of life. This is one of the characteristics of the Chinese. It matters little how eloquent and persuasive you are. The Chinese are most concerned about what kind of a person you are -- Are you a good person or a bad person?

Chinese scholar Lin Yu-tang observed, "In reality, no Chinese has ever been converted to Christianity because of doctrines. Every Chinese converts through his contact with a Christian who practices the teaching of loving one another." Aside from his extreme qualifier of "no Chinese ever", Lin's observation in general is right on target.

When you preach the gospel to the Mainland Chinese, do not forget that they are all too familiar with big words, false words, and empty words. What they desire to experience personally is pure honest love. It is utterly repugnant to them when the one preaching is not perceived to be as admirable as the one being preached to.

3. A Lifestyle Worthy of the Lord

What is preaching by example? It is to preach by how we ourselves live, that is, to preach with our whole being, by our integrity and character. In the final analysis, it is this idea: Word Becomes Flesh. Paul prayed for the Colossians that, "you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and

understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." "To lead a life worthy of the Lord" most adequately summarizes the essence of preaching by example.

Preaching by example is to speak through one's character. A Christian's character is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his life, with such traits as humbleness, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. When a Christian has such traits in his character, others will be able to see in him the living gospel, to see Christ Himself.

Preaching by example is to preach through daily life. The ministry field is in your marriage, family and relatives, in the work place, in the society and culture. A beautiful quote from Mother Teresa illustrates what preaching by example is:

You must let people see Jesus in you.
Let them see how you pray and supplicate.
Let them see how you lead a holy life.
Let them see how you live with family.
Let them see your family has peace.
When they see what you have done, you can look them in the eye,
and say, "This is the Way."
You have preached the message of Christ, through your life and experience.

Summary:

1. We need to preach by word and by example. The latter is often the more effective.
2. Preaching by example is to preach by how we lead our life.
3. Preaching by example is to preach in daily life through our character.

Chapter 2. Be Humble

1. Get Off Your High Horse

A person preaching the gospel should be humble. The spirit of humbleness is best illustrated in the tax collector's prayer, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." (Luke 18:13) As we preach the gospel, we must remember: One, I am not the truth. I err. What I preach, I have received from my Lord Jesus. But I have not learned it in all its breadth and depth. Often I have understood it incorrectly or imprecisely. Even the part which I do understand, I do not always communicate properly. Two, even if I preach the truth correctly, I do not live according to it perfectly. If I have not committed blatant sins, I may carry hidden faults.

Gospel preaching is simply one sinner telling another sinner that Jesus Christ wants to save every sinner. Therefore an ambassador of the gospel should never boast of his own virtues, credentials, knowledge, wealth, achievements, importance, etc. Let alone boasting about the American or the Western way. If you must boast, then boast as Paul did, boast of your weaknesses.

Beware also that you do not employ a full-court press when you preach the gospel to people. That is for basketball, not for the gospel. Haste makes waste. If you know little of what your friend is struggling with, do not zealously dump your personal evangelism materials on the guy and push him to make a decision. You may scare him away from ever making friends with Christians or coming to church.

2. Refrain from What You Do Not Know

We live in an era of knowledge explosion, information explosion. One is likely fairly ignorant or amateurish on subjects outside of his own professional areas. Therefore when we go out and preach, we need to humbly admit that we do not know everything. There are many things we know little about. And for things outside our expertise, we should comment on them as little as possible.

When you preach the gospel to people with a background in science, unless you are indeed knowledgeable on evolution, do not criticize it carelessly. You might bluff those who are semi-informed, but not the experts, who will find many loopholes in your arguments. It would be better if you simply explain the fallacy of scientism rather than recklessly attacking evolution.

Of course this is not to say that we should dodge these questions. If these are indeed what our friend is concerned about, we should first be honest with him, "I apologize, but I do not know a lot about it either." And then we could introduce him to views and books by experts and scholars.

3. What We Do Know About, We Must Speak Up

Grasping the Biblical truth is the basic requirement to preaching it. When we preach the gospel to people, the most important thing is that we present it clearly. Be especially clear on two points. One, Jesus is Lord. Man cannot save himself; he needs a Savior. Two, Man is sinful. Whether one is a good person or a bad person, he is a sinner before God.

But the God we believe is also a self-hidden God. So we must be honest with our friend, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God." For secret things such as the doctrine of the Trinity, we can only humbly say, I do not understand it fully, nor can I explain it clearly, but, yes, I believe it.

4. Know When to Stop

Mainland Chinese can talk. This is a well accepted fact. When we preach the gospel to them, we should know when to stop. There is no need to address every flaw in his thinking. Concentrate on presenting the gospel clearly. After you have made your points to some degree, stop and give him a chance to digest and reflect.

Except in very rare cases, in general, we cannot convey the full picture of the gospel in one or two settings. So do not try to present the whole truth from Genesis to Revelation in one visit. Know the proper limit. As the Chinese would say, Do not force people to drink up the whole well.

Finally, no matter how well your presentation goes, in all sincerity, tell them, I am only an interpreter and a messenger. To meet the real Truth, please open the Bible yourself, where you will find the word of God, the living water of life.

Summary:

1. I am not the truth. I am only the messenger of the truth.
2. Refrain from commenting on things that you do not know much about.
3. Concentrate on presenting the gospel clearly.
4. Know when the discussion has gone on long enough.

Chapter 3. Building Relationships

1. The Chinese and Relationships

Relationships are very important to the Chinese. It is a prominent characteristic of the Chinese culture, and is the ABC's to understanding the Chinese.

This has been well testified to by scholars. Xu Lang-Guang says, "The character traits of the Chinese stem from their appreciation of a mutually-dependent, situation-oriented lifestyle." By contrast, we deify individualism in America. Yin Hai-Kuang argues that family-centeredness is the stronghold of the Chinese traditional culture, and filiality is the heart and soul of family-centeredness. Using Ferdinand Tönnis' classification, Yin recognizes the Chinese society as the *Gesellschaft* Society, in which an interpersonal relationship is an end in itself, where its individual members expect close relationships with one another.

Paul has a formula or a principle when it comes to preaching the gospel, "I have become all things to all men, so that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor 9:22) To preach the gospel to the Chinese, you must become Chinese, so that you might save some Chinese.

Before you can "become all things" to them, you would need to find out what kind of "things" they are. That is, you need to know their lifestyle, culture, history and society. Especially, you want to understand them as a unique people in terms of how they think and what they value.

2. Fourfold Relationships

Man exists in relationships. He is related to nature, to others, to himself, and to God. These four relationships are basic and true for everyone. So the issue is not whether one has such a relationship, but how to build a relationship and what kind of relationship to build.

We believe that "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom 8:14). We Christians address one another as brothers and sisters. We sing, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim His handiwork." We discover that there are two "I"'s within ourselves, the Old Man and the New Man, who are opposed to each other. These all describe different relationships.

The secret to Christian living is that one is able to say, Jesus, you are my Lord. My relationship with the Lord is not only my most important relationship, but also the foundation of all my other relationships.

3. Building Such Relationships

To preach the gospel to the Chinese, we should build the kind of relationship with them that is pleasing to God, as Jesus did.

When Jesus preached the gospel to the prostitutes, tax collectors, fishermen and various other kinds of people, he took the initiative to make friends with them. He said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." So, how did he build relationships with them?

The most basic element is that Jesus loves them, laying down his life for his friends. This kind of "selfless love" is the surest way to build a relationship with your friends from Mainland China. Respect them, accept them, help them, trust them, understand them, forgive them, serve them... This is how Jesus builds relationships with people around him. Above all, Jesus gives them the gift of faith, brings them to the home of his Father, and reconciles them to God. Reconciling men to God is the goal of building relationships with seeker friends.

To preach the gospel to Mainland Chinese, it is foremost that you must learn to respect them, from respecting their person to respecting their family culture and mother country. If you disrespect them and their culture and country, then you will have a hard time preaching the gospel to them.

Summary:

1. Relationships are highly esteemed by the Chinese people.
2. Christians should build relationships that are Christ-centered and pleasing to God, with the view of reconciling people to God.

Chapter 4. Listening Is a Service for Friends

1. To Listen Is to Serve

It is a shame that we now live in a world where no one is listening to others any more. If we think preaching the gospel means "I talk, you listen," we are refusing to serve our friends. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has proposed "the ministry of listening." He says, "In fellowship, a person's first obligation to others is listening to them. Just as one listens to God if he loves God, so he listens to his brothers if he loves them." In preaching the gospel, our first obligation to our friend is also listening to him. Whatever he may say, we listen with love, because it is what the Lord wants us to do. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well gives us an example of a great listener.

2. Double Listening

An ambassador of the gospel should develop the discipline of listening. First, we need to listen well to what God speaks to us through the Bible. Then we learn to listen to one another at home, at work and at church. Finally, we listen to the world, "trying to enter other people's world of thoughts and feelings, striving to understand why they resist the gospel, in order that they might see that the gospel you are sharing with them does indeed satisfy their deepest needs." John Stott would call for "double listening," where the Christian stands between the Word and the World. "We listen to the Word of God, so that we might discover more the riches of Christ. And we listen to the World, so that we might know what riches of Christ the world needs, and we might know how to bring the riches of Christ to the world."

There is a wonderful proverb: Why does God create men with two ears and only one mouth? Because God wants us to spend twice as much time listening as speaking.

3. Listening Vigilantly

Christians listen with their ears wide open. You listen to the miseries and celebrations in people's lives, you listen to the trivial and the important, and you listen to their struggles in the family and their sense of helplessness in the crises of the nation and the world. You listen to anything and everything that has to do with human life.

You listen, not just to what people say explicitly, but also what they may have expressed implicitly, even if they do not realize it themselves. Therefore there are several levels of listening:

The basic level is Cultural Listening. People from different cultural backgrounds may speak of the same idea, but often they mean very different things. For example, if you do not understand such slogans as "Corporate Interest Overrides

All" or "Nation's Interest Above All Else," you do not understand what Mainland Chinese mean by "corporate" or "nation."

A culture consists of subcultures, and what affects a person most directly is his subculture. Ludwig Feuerbach's statement, "One thinks differently in a palace and in a hut," exactly reflects what subculture does.

The next level of listening is Ethical Listening. We live in an era in which there are no common moral and ethical standards. There are similarities between Christian ethics and non-Christian ethics, but there are more dissimilarities. If you do not know where one is coming from ethically, you will be at a loss to understand him.

The highest level of listening is Value Listening. Who is the God he actually believes in? (According to Luther, whatever one relies on is his God.) How is his relationship with this God? How does he determine the value of things? What does he think man is? How to live a meaningful life? These directly concern how one would respond to the gospel, and you must listen to them carefully.

No matter how you listen, the goal is the same: you want to understand your friend's physical and spiritual needs, so you can tell him in concrete terms, "Jesus can satisfy your needs." It is just common sense for every doctor -- you diagnose the illness before you give your prescription.

Summary:

1. It is our obligation to our friends to listen to them, and understand their needs.
 2. We listen to people in the context of their culture, ethics and value system.
- Through listening, we find out how to help people meet their needs in Christ.

Chapter 5. Faithful in Little Things

1. Having Friends Over for Dinner

Perhaps it is human nature, but it seems that we all desire to do great, momentous things, or at least we dream of doing them. Of course we also complain that we cannot do great things because they are too hard for us. The fact is, what is hard for us is usually not great things, but the little things, daily things. We often fail to do them faithfully.

The Chinese enjoy eating. Having friends over for a dinner is an important way to socialize for the Chinese. The main attraction, however, is really not the dinner itself, but the fellowship. It is easier to make conversations at the dinner table. People feel more at ease and less guarded. And to repay the host's hospitality, the guests feel somewhat obliged to listen to what the Christian host has to say. It is just the Chinese way, whether we would like to admit it or not: Once we become friends, things become easier to say, and what is said becomes easier to take.

2. What Jesus Did

Jesus washed his disciples' feet. It seems like a little thing, but it has great significance, for it signifies that "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." The feeding of the five thousand is another example. Those people were hungry; they needed to eat. It was a great multitude, it was getting late, and they were out in the wilderness, so how on earth are you going to feed so many people? Nevertheless, the significance of the story is not the miracle itself, but Jesus' love for the people. When we preach the gospel, we need to learn to do the little things as Jesus did.

3. Day by Day

Little things are there everywhere in our daily life. To give a hand when a friend is moving. To baby sit for a neighbor. To visit a new mother, with a pot of homemade soup. To comfort someone who is ill with a phone call. To pick up a new foreign student at the airport. These are little things. They are not too hard to do. If we don't do them, it is because we WON'T, not because we CAN'T. It is because we have not truly understood Jesus' own heart.

As Christians, we should not overlook the little things. No matter how little it may be, if we do it in love, moved and guided by the Holy Spirit, for the sake of our Lord, then we are doing it not only to our seeker friend, but also to Jesus.

Summary:

1. When preaching the gospel, do not focus only on great things. Do the little things with love as Jesus did.
2. You have the opportunity to do the little things everyday.

Chapter 6. Teamwork

1. Teamwork

I used to think that Americans were all about individualism. But when I got to know them better, I found out that they are also into teamwork. They are into cooperation, collaboration, working together.

Preaching the gospel requires teamwork. When Jesus commissioned the Twelve to preach the gospel, he sent them out two by two. That was the smallest form of a team.

Preaching the gospel is like playing a soccer game. You kick the ball to me, I kick it to the next teammate, and we do this throughout the whole game. Perhaps when you get the ball, it is time to kick for a goal. So you kick it, and it goes in, but the score is really not solely yours, is it? Besides, if God had not given you the talent and health, could you have made it?

2. An Ingrained Shortcoming of the Chinese

A plate of loose sand. That is how Dr. Sun Yat-sen describes the Chinese, who are utterly disunited. Well said. The old Chinese saying, "Three monks, no water," vividly depicts the scenario: One monk shoulders water by himself; two can still share the labor between them; but when it comes to three, they would not be able to work together and therefore would go thirsty. Author Bo Yang even uses the phrase, "intramural fight," for this ugly characteristic of the Chinese.

Many Chinese churches in North America are complex, with the Chinese coming from all over the world. Their opposite political positions alone can start a war. Only in the Lord can we overcome this barrier to love one another. We Christians are commissioned to preach the gospel of peace, to reconcile the world to God. If we cannot be reconciled to one another in the Lord, how can we preach that to the world?

3. Magnanimity

A Chinese proverb describes the stomach of a prime minister to be big enough to pole a boat. That is to say, a person who achieves great things is one who is able to accept those views and ways which are different from his, and who is tolerant and generous to those who do not please him.

Christians who desire to preach the gospel in a team need this kind of big-heartedness. Not only should we be big-hearted toward others, but also to be open to the Lord, so that He can be the true leader of our team.

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of our team. We must work by the Spirit as we preach the gospel, praying always in the Spirit, that we will understand the truth and present it clearly, that we will be able to preach with love, that we will have the

wisdom to know what to say and when to say it. And of course we pray for the Holy Spirit to work in our friends so that they are able to accept the Lord.

We should ask other brothers and sisters in the church to intercede for ourselves and for our friends. Intercession for one another is a prerequisite of any evangelistic teamwork.

The saints before us are also a part of our team. How is that so? They are coworking with us in the sense that we follow their examples in their laboring for the gospel, and we learn from their expositions on the Word of God.

Of course we also work together with the saints of our times, utilizing what others are doing well to complement what we can offer.

Avoid at all cost attacking another ambassador of the gospel, as if you were the only true ambassador and yours were the only true gospel. Such an attack does damage to the Church that is not easily repaired.

Summary:

1. Preaching the gospel requires teamwork. We need to work together, not to attack and render one another's work ineffective.
2. Be led by the Holy Spirit, intercede for one another, learn from the saints in the past, and work together with contemporary gospel workers.

Chapter 7. Open Your Heart, Open Your House

1. A Great Saying

There are two sayings that I like very much, "Faith is the way home," and "Going home is a journey for life." To connect faith and home is very appealing to a Chinese.

A prominent feature of Chinese culture is its family-centeredness. Early in the twentieth century, Chen Du Xiu presented his findings on the fundamental difference between the East and West, stating that the West is individual-oriented and the East family-oriented. Other Chinese philosophers concurred, and noted that the family-centeredness manifests itself in the relationship between family members, where there is a mutual obligation toward one another, as well as a one-way subjection for children to parents, wives to husbands, and the younger to the older.

In ancient Chinese literature, "The Book of Rites" spoke of the Chinese ideology of the Grand Union. It portrays the Confucian ideal society, "Treat your elders as elders, and extend it to the elders of others; treat your young ones as young ones, and extend it to the young ones of others." And it depicts how the family is the foundation of a kingdom.

For the Chinese, HOME will always be his comfort zone, safe haven, fortress, and paradise, where he enjoys life with his loved ones.

2. House Church

HOME is the best place to share the gospel with the Mainland Chinese. The key is moving all the functions at church to the family level, from Bible reading, praying, preaching, to singing, sharing, witnessing. We can make it so that others refer to our home as "the church that is in so-and-so's house."

Many Mainland Chinese feel uneasy going to church at first, but are willing to go to Christian homes to participate in family worship.

Our Chinese friends would feel less threatened by a Christian assembly at home and a sharing of the gospel at home. They do not have to worry about making a mistake, nor will they feel overwhelmed by unfamiliar surroundings. In addition, it gives them a better sense of belonging. Often while the adults are still trying to get to know each other, their children have already become good friends.

HOME is especially suitable for Christians to give their testimony. Those sharing the testimony can be more free and bold, and those listening can respond more directly, whether asking a question or supplementing with his own experience. When it comes to prayer, we can ask our friend directly, "Is there anything I can pray for you?" or "Would you like to pray with us?" Thus, even if he is too shy to utter a prayer, he will learn how to pray through this Christian family.

3. What Is the Difficulty?

For most Christian families in North America, the main difficulty of sharing the gospel at home is not that we do not have a house or our house is not big enough, but that we are reluctant to open our house. Our reluctance to open our house to our friends may reflect our reluctance to open our heart to our Lord.

If our hearts are truly open to the Lord, we should be willing to open our houses to our seeker friends.

Let us pray this way. Lord, you are my Lord. Everything that I own, including this house, you have given to me. They are all yours, to be used as you wish. Lord, I have heard your knocking, your standing with the seekers outside my door knocking. When I open the door for them, I am opening the door for you. Amen.

Of course there is a price for opening our house. We have to clean our house, prepare refreshments, and accept the possibility that our favorite things in the house will get broken by children. There is a price for receiving and loving others. But once we realize that we are paying the price ultimately for our Lord Jesus, it is all worthwhile.

Summary:

1. Our home is the best place to share the gospel with the Mainland Chinese. We can move all the functions at church to the family level, from Bible reading, praying, preaching, to singing, sharing, witnessing.
2. If our hearts are truly open to Jesus, we will be willing to open our houses to our seeker friends.

Section II. Dialogue with Sinners

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Gospel preaching consists of one sinner telling another sinner that we are all sinners.

Chapter 1. When It Comes to Sin, Start with Self

1. About Condemnation

When preachers and priests express disapproval of sin harshly in their sermons, they are often misunderstood as reviling. Thus, condemning sin is perceived as bad temper, and being pointed out as sinners is regarded as being insulted.

There is no getting around condemning sin and proclaiming that all have sinned in preaching the gospel. In other words, there is no avoiding being labeled as reviling and insulting.

Nowadays, the kind of preachers who "revile and insult" are dying out. The new trend is to compliment and flatter, to tell people how wonderful they are, even to the point of painting them as gods. That is not preaching the gospel; that is preaching the devil's message.

To preach the gospel without mentioning sin is to give a false diagnosis. To preach the gospel without telling people they are sinners is to lead people into peril and abyss.

2. How to Condemn

To preach the gospel to the Chinese, we must contextualize the doctrine of sin from the perspective of their culture.

First we must understand that the Chinese have never had the concept of sin as the Scripture has it. Mencius, the ancient Chinese philosopher, teaches that everyone can be Yao and Shun, two of the most celebrated sage kings in ancient China. Chinese Buddhism emphasizes that everyone can become Buddha. The Trimetrical Classic, the first primer in schools in the old days, begins with "Man at birth, good by nature." Chairman Mao's poem muses, "The spring wind blows amid profuse willow wands, Six hundred million in this land all equal Yao and Shun." Thus, from Confucianism to Buddhism to Communism, "man's nature is good" is a deep-rooted belief of the Chinese.

For the Chinese, to "sin" is to commit a crime, and a "sinner" is a criminal. Therefore, when we proclaim to our Chinese friends that all men have sinned,

not only should we define how the Bible views sin, but also we should compare for them how the Chinese use the terms "sin" and "sinner".

Ultimately, the Christian idea of sin is not a legal matter, nor a moral one, but a spiritual one. What sin describes is a spiritual death, a separation and a broken relationship between man and God.

We should keep the Christian idea of sin grounded in man's relationship to God. First, Christianity speaks of sin in terms of creation. Man is created by God, and when he strays away from what God has created him for, he has sinned. Second, it speaks of sin in terms of who and what Jesus is. Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and no matter how moral a person might be, if he rejects Jesus, he has sinned.

When the discussion comes to the moral level, we can emphasize two things. One, the Christian idea that everyone is a sinner does not mean everyone is equally immoral. Or to put it another way, it is not about quantity, how much each has sinned, but about quality, each falling short of God's glory. Two, when the Bible speaks of man's corruption, it is foremost not about outer behavior, but about inner motivation.

3. Self-Condemning

Most Chinese find it offensive when Christians proclaim everyone a sinner. "I consider myself a good person, why do you Christians keep saying I am a sinner?" To help relieve this hang-up, we should use "I" and "we" rather than "you" whenever we speak of sin. We are all sinners. I, who am condemning sin, am also a sinner in front of God.

The apostle Paul did exactly that. He condemned sin, and he also called himself the worst among sinners.

An ambassador of the gospel would condemn both others and himself. If he does not find anything in himself worth condemning, he is probably what Jesus calls the self-righteous kind. He needs to be condemned all the more.

When we condemn ourselves, we should be sincere about it. We should do it critically and harshly, rather than casually. If we condemn ourselves seriously, in essence we have already condemned others.

Of course we need to know whether it is appropriate to mention certain specific sins in public. We should pray for wisdom from God.

Summary:

1. There is no getting around condemning sin in preaching the gospel.
2. Because of the potential misunderstanding of sin by the Chinese, we should always speak of sin in terms of man's relationship to God.
3. Let us not forget to include ourselves when we condemn sin.

Chapter 2. Tell the Whole Truth

1. Self-Puffing

One of the slogans of the Chinese Communist Party has been "Criticize and self-criticize." A parody has arisen in recent years among the people, "Promote and self-promote." It is of course black humor. It also reflects the spirit of the modern world. Philosophy, psychology, education, religion in this day and age are all headed toward the same direction, teaching, guiding and training us how to puff up others and ourselves. To myself, I shall say, "I am so wonderful!" and to others, "You are so wonderful!" Perhaps in essence this can be summed up in a single idea, "Man, your name is god."

This trend has now infiltrated gospel preaching too. Many preachers are refraining from proclaiming people as sinners. They are joining the self-puffing mudslide.

2. Psychological Salvation

Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon coin the term "psychological salvation" in their book, *The Seduction of Christianity*, criticizing the current trend of replacing the gospel with psychology in evangelical circles.

There is the "Gospel of Success." Robert Schuller says, "I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence, counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition." Their whole focus can be summed up in a few buzzwords: health, wealth, prosperity and happiness.

There is the PMA, Positive Mental Attitude, advocating that if you fill your mind with the thoughts of success, you will succeed. E.W. Kenyon, who started the Positive Confession movement, states that what a person says ("confesses") determines what he will receive and what he will become.

And there is the Self-Idolatry. Swami Muktananda taught his followers, "Kneel to your own self. Honor and worship your own being. God dwells within you as You." Kenneth Copeland says, "You don't have a God in you. You are one."

The original gospel declares that the chief end of man is to glorify God. The modern day "gospel" teaches that the chief end of God is to glorify man.

3. Tell the Whole Truth

While the gospel is good news, if our message contains only love, peace and life, then what we are preaching is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls "cheap grace."

"Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian 'conception' of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin."

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

When people learn of the cost of discipleship only after the conversion, some may feel cheated. "Now you are telling me that I also need to take up the cross and repent my sins?!" They are indeed cheated, but not by the gospel, but by those who preach the cheap gospel to please men.

Gospel preaching requires calling for conviction, confession and repentance of sin. When Jesus began his public ministry, he preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Only when people are "cut to the heart" by the gospel message will they hear God calling them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Summary:

1. "Promote and self-promote" has become the spirit of the modern world. Avoid offering a "psychological salvation" in gospel preaching.
2. Gospel preaching requires calling for conviction, confession and repentance of sin, even if it is not pleasing to the ear.

Chapter 3. The Cost of Discipleship

1. Either-Or ?

In his masterpiece, *Christian Theology*, Millard J. Erickson discusses whether God's revelation is propositional (communication of information) or personal (presentation of a person). He concluded, "Revelation is not either personal or propositional; it is both-and. What God primarily does is to reveal himself, but he does so at least in part by telling us something about himself."

Jesus Christ is the center of the revelation. To preach the gospel is to preach that Jesus is the Lord; to believe in Jesus is to believe that Jesus is the Lord. This is not merely an intellectual assent to what the Bible tells us, but also an act of personal trust in, and commitment to, Jesus. The belief in the doctrine of Christ and the commitment to Jesus the Lord is never meant to be separate.

2. Jesus Calls Followers

Paul's gospel message can be summed up in one sentence: "Jesus is the Lord." This is perhaps the Christian doctrine in a nutshell.

And Jesus' message to his disciples has been consistently the same: "Come and follow me." When Peter heard this calling the first time, he gave up his fishing nets. When he heard this calling the second time, he gave up his life for the risen Lord.

When we preach the gospel, we must also present this message to our friends: If you believe in Jesus, would you follow him? Jesus laid down his life for you; would you lay down your life for him?

3. The Cost of Following Christ

The Lord indeed bestows tremendous blessings upon us, for there is abounding grace in him. But we need to be clear with our friends that one cannot have a relationship with the Lord seeking only for gains. And we need to be careful not to lure people to come to Jesus this way.

We should be upfront about the cost for following Christ. The ultimate cost is death, and every Christian is called to put to death his Old Man. We are called to put to death what our Old Man desires, including money, time, pleasures, selfishness, pride, etc. We are not exempt from the sufferings of this world, rather, we may face persecution and martyrdom exactly because we are Christians.

Jesus says, "He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." This is our faith, and this is our message to the world.

Summary:

1. The belief in the doctrine of Christ and the commitment to Jesus the Lord is not meant to be separate.
2. Christ has a demand for his disciples. He calls them to follow him.
3. He who is not willing to pay the cost of discipleship is not worthy of Christ.

Chapter 4. Face the Sins by the Church

1. An Imperfect Past

Mistakes and misdeeds by the Church will often be brought up when we try to share the gospel with our seeker friends. There were various persecution sins committed by the Church over the last two millennia. She hunted and persecuted heretics, she invaded and slaughtered Muslims and Jews during the Crusades, and she persecuted one another amongst herself, e.g., the Roman Catholic against the Reformers and the Reformers against the Anabaptists. Our science-loving friends may bring up the persecution of Galileo and Servetus. And our Chinese friends may also raise issues about missionaries who came under the Western superpowers' protection during their aggression against China following the Opium War.

These issues can become a stumbling block to our friends when we try to invite them to come to Christ.

We must not shirk the issues: "These were past mistakes, other people's mistakes, so they have nothing to do with us." We should not deny that these events were part of Christianity, nor should we soften the mistakes by attributing them to insignificant or counterfeit Christians. If we deny such things, we will continue to hurt our friends and countrymen who have already been hurt by these things.

2. Make concessions

Let us make necessary concessions when dealing with these types of issues. First, let us have the courage to admit that the Church has indeed made mistakes over the last two millennia. Second, let us confess before God and before men the mistakes of our Church. The Bible gave us the example: the Israelites confessed both their own sins and the sins of their fathers. Therefore confessing on behalf of the Church is what God would require of us. Third, we can explain to our friends why the Church has sinned. There might be various specific reasons, but the underlying reason is that each time the Church sinned, she strayed away from God's will and commands.

Of course we should also ask for wisdom from God, in order that we may recognize the various mistakes the Church has made, instead of generalizing different events. For example, in the sixteenth century some missionaries set out as servants to the non-Christian world, but then became lords over the locals. As the historian Arnold Toynbee noted, it is easy to use religion as an excuse for greed, plunder and ambition. Such concrete analysis can actually help people understand what sin is.

To comfort those who have been hurt, to love them with God's love, will be another step that we should take. And this is exactly why we examine and repent of the Church's mistakes. We do this out of love.

3. Is the Church Any Better Today?

The dark side of the Church exists not only in the past, but also in the present. The Church is not adequate, she makes mistakes, and she even sins. We must have the courage to admit these things while we preach the gospel.

Never present the church as perfect, lest our seeker friends feel cheated and turn away once they discover her dark side.

When we preach the gospel calling people to repent, as our Lord did, rather than saying "You should repent," it is better to say "We should repent," because WE are the Church. Our sins constitute the Church's sins.

Summary:

1. Do not deny the mistakes and sins by the Church in the past and present.
2. Let us be humble, admit the mistakes, analyze what caused them, and ask God to keep us from making the same mistakes.

Chapter 5. Is Despair A Sin?

1. The Despair of Man

We can preach the gospel both positively and negatively. To preach the gospel negatively to contemporary intellectuals is to convey clearly that mankind is doomed in a world and life without God.

Perhaps the "Good and Over Song" in the classic Chinese novel The Dream of the Red Chamber is a good example:

Though the virtues of the Gods
All mankind may fully know,
Earthly longings and ambitions
They unwillingly forego.
Yet pause and think ! The wise and brave
Of old, now where are they ?
Their graves o'ergrown and hid with weeds
Themselves a heap of clay.

Though the virtues of the Gods
All mankind may fully know,
Still the heaping up of riches
They reluctantly forego.
Daily they lament their failure,
With their first and latest breath,
When satiety arrives
Then their eyes are closed in death.

Though the virtues of the Gods
All mankind may fully know,
Still the love of lovely women
They reluctantly forego.
The virtues of their living Lords
Daily, women will commend,
Buried, once beneath the sod
To others they their love extend.

Though the virtues of the Gods
All mankind may fully know,
Yet the love of sons and grandsons
They reluctantly forego.
Foolish, tender-hearted parents
In the world are very many --
Filial and obedient children,
Who has ever met with any?

The contemporary equivalent of the "Good And Over Song" may be the American dream.

In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, King Solomon lamented, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Solomon was said to be the wisest man at the time, but that was all he got out of life.

Despair characterizes the modern world, especially the spiritual world of the intellectuals. Despair means living without hope. People simply live, which happens to be the title of a recent popular movie in China.

To preach the gospel is to tell our friends that life is just a series of hopeless events if there were no God and there were no risen Lord. And we may also want to emphasize that this is not simply the Bible's view, but a view shared by the wisest men throughout history.

2. The End of Man

Christians often testify that the end of man is the beginning of God. That is to say, a man will find himself coming to a dead end in life; he sees no way out, for every option has been blocked and leads to nowhere. Only until he realizes that he is on such a path to despair does he turn to Jesus, who is the Way that leads to eternal life.

Despair is a spiritual disease of mankind. In his book The Sickness Unto Death, Kierkegaard grounded man's despair in eternity. Man is created in the image of God, but he refuses the God-centered life and chooses a self-centered life instead. As a result, he loses both the eternal life and himself for his pride, and he ends up living in despair.

Søren Kierkegaard noted that the typical characteristic of despair is that people in despair are unaware of the despair; it is a default condition in which people find themselves. "To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself -- this is the formula for all despair." Kierkegaard believed that everyone in the world is more or less in despair.

Despair is a sin. This is the conclusion Kierkegaard drew from his analysis of despair. In his view, what makes it a sin is that one refuses to be himself before God, admitting himself a sinner.

The gospel not only highlights man's despair, it also explains that it is only because of man's built-in sense of eternity that he is able to feel despair. If he refuses to let God be the center of his life, he will never be able to escape from despair.

Is the center of my life Jesus or myself? That is the great divide between hope and despair.

3. Gospel Is Hope

In his book The Myth of Sisyphus, Albert Camus said, "In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land."

To share the gospel with the Mainland Chinese we must ask: Who strips man of his hope of a promised land? And the answer is: Man himself.

Man wants to build an earthly promised land, so he is doomed in despair.

Let us shout from the mountain top: Do not continue to deprive yourself of your last hope, which is the Gospel.

Summary:

1. From a negative perspective, mankind is doomed in despair in a world and life without God.
2. Despair is a spiritual disease of mankind.
3. Despair comes when man refuses the God-centered life and chooses a self-centered life instead.
4. The Gospel is man's hope.

Chapter 6. My Friend, You Are Wearing Tinted Glasses!

1. In Daiyu's Teary View

Lin Daiyu, perhaps the most famous female character in Chinese literature, is best known for being extremely sentimental and delicate. She gave us such lines as this through her poem when she came to the garden to bury flowers which had been blown down by the wind: "Flowers fade and fly, and flying fill the sky; Their bloom departs, their perfume gone, yet who stands pitying by?" "Three hundred days and sixty make a year, and therein lurk, daggers of wind and swords of frost to do their cruel work." "And when the fleeting spring is gone, and days of beauty over, Flowers fall, and lovely maidens die, and both are known no more."

The way Daiyu views the flowers reflects the way she is: she sees the world through her teary eyes. She thinks and sees everything in tears, and the world becomes a world of pain and melancholy.

Everyone sees the world through his own worldview. It is the same world, but different people would have a different view of it. "My Father's World", a well-known Christian hymn, declares, "This is my Father's world, And to my list'ning ears, All nature sings, and round me rings, The music of the spheres." This is how Christians view the world, because they believe in a Creator. Now, how would an atheist view the world? Because he believes the world comes about "naturally" through evolution, "seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear."

What you see depends on how you think. When we share the gospel with our friends, we can tell them bluntly, "You do not see God because of your worldview and the way you think."

2. Some Advice from an Old Sage

One of my teachers, who has spent his whole life studying Chinese philosophy, discovers that the biggest impact of philosophy and culture is on what we value and how we think. Our opinions may change, but the way we think rarely changes.

In the last half century or so, as Chinese society went through drastic changes, new ways of thinking have risen. The first is materialism, which views the world and every event in terms of matter and physical phenomena. The second is atheism, which denies any savior and thus we are on our own. And the third is Class Struggle, which depicts man against man in any human relationship, and man must fight one another till the end.

It was only after I become a Christian that I summarized this as the "Tinted-glasses Theory." Those of us who come into contact with Christianity after we are already well past our youth, with an already established worldview, would see

Christianity as if we were wearing a pair of tinted glasses. The "tint" on the glasses can be materialism, atheism, darwinism, Class Struggle, etc. This "tint" changes the color of everything we see. Unless we take off this pair of tinted glasses, we will never see the true color of anything.

Even worse, these tinted glasses are often undetectable. We wear them for so long and we are so accustomed to them that we are not aware that we are wearing them.

When we share the gospel with our friends, we can challenge them, "Hey, my friend, do you know that you're wearing tinted glasses?"

3. How About a Different View?

Let us be capable of telling our friends when we share the gospel, "How about taking off your tinted glasses, and looking at this from a different view?"

For example, many find the doctrine of virgin conception unbelievable. We can first admit that it is indeed contrary to common sense. Then we can tell our friend that it is not only we, but also Mary herself, who found it hard to fathom. She asked the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," and, "Nothing is impossible with God."

The keyword is God, along with his power. "Nothing is impossible with God," and that is the key.

If there were no God, the virgin conception would be absolutely impossible. But if there is a God, it is perfectly possible, because everything is possible with God. In fact, if there is a God, and it is God's will that there will be a virgin birth, it would be impossible for Him not to accomplish it, for then God would not be God.

Therefore, the apparent question is if miracles exist, but the actual question is whether we believe that there is a God. The theism and atheism worldviews determine how we explain miracles.

Let me give you another example. I used to think that I needed to reach the Christian standard before I could become a Christian. And why I thought that way came from many years of personal experience: only after I reach the standard of the Young Communist League and the Communist Party that it is possible for me to become a member of the League and the Party.

But it is just the opposite for Christianity. Because no one can reach the Christian standard, God makes Jesus reach that standard on behalf of us, and all we need to do is to accept what Jesus has done for us.

On the surface it is a matter of whether I choose to become a Christian, but in fact it is a tension between two ways of thinking: Do I come before God by His grace, or by my own merits?

There are many other examples. They all tell us one thing: When our friends raise a question, do not go in circles on the question itself, find out what makes him think that way, and solve the real issue there.

Summary:

1. How a person thinks determines how he views the world.
2. Materialism, atheism and Darwinism etc., have become how the Mainland Chinese think.
3. Encourage our friends to take off their tinted glasses and reconsider the issue from a different view.

Chapter 7. A Life of Pain

1. Starting with Buddhism

The Chinese have been deeply influenced by Buddhism. For instance, "Life is suffering", a basic idea in Buddhism, is widely accepted by the Chinese. Even the unlearned know that being born, growing old, sickness and death all contribute to life's pain. It has been asked, "Tears in life compared with an ocean, which one is greater in volume?" It has been stated, "All are consumed in the fire of greed, anger and attachment. All are consumed with pain, bitterness, misery, dejection and despair."

Schopenhauer's philosophy, which was also based on the idea of suffering, was popular for a while among Chinese intellectuals.

As Psalm 90 says, our years come to an end like a sigh. Life is but labor and trouble, and all will end in vain. Jesus says, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

When we share the gospel with our seeker friends, we can use this life of pain to establish a common ground. We can tell them that the Bible also shares the same view that life is suffering and man is weary and heavy laden.

2. The Cause of Suffering

The Chinese are familiar with the saying, "The sea of suffering has no shore." But is there a basis for this sea of suffering? That is to say, what causes life to be suffering?

First we should clarify that suffering is not caused by desire, as the Buddhist believes. God created man and called all his creation good, so man who has natural desire is good. What causes suffering is not man's desire, but man's choice to stray away from God. This is what turns man's natural desire to eat into the sinful desire of greed, and the natural desire to mate into the sinful desire of fornication.

Secondly we should explain that the basic cause of suffering is sin, which includes three parts. One, the original sin of Adam and Eve, who disobeyed God and brought in the suffering for the entire human race. Since then, man must sweat and labor in trouble and distress, until he returns to the ground. Two, Individually, since we inherit the sinful nature from Adam and Eve, polluted in our mind, heart and soul, each of us practices sins and must reap what we sow. Three, sinners live together in a world of sin, so others' sins cause us pain, and our sins cause others pain.

In a world of suffering the only fruit is suffering. The fruit is sowed by man, and the root lies within man.

3. The End of Suffering

Upon recognizing the cause of suffering, we should then ask: Is there an end to this suffering?

We can proceed this way: If there were no God in this world, then this sea of suffering would indeed have no shore. One would get born by chance, his life weak, his effort meaningless. Every event in life would be deemed ridiculous, and it all ends with an inescapable death.

But we propose an alternative: If death is not the end of all, if there is another life after death, and if that life is related to this life, that is, it is related to whether we believe in God, then the sea of suffering indeed has no shore if man does not believe in God.

Now our message is that there is a shore for this sea of suffering. The shore is God's love, Christ's salvation, and grace.

Let those who are in the deep waters call out to God.

Summary:

1. We acknowledge that life is suffering, but the cause of suffering is man's own sin.
2. If one does not believe in Jesus, he is in a sea of suffering that has no shore.
3. Only Jesus can save people from the sea of suffering.

Section III. In the Beginning Was the Word

Truth is plain and complete.

Strive to grasp the whole truth in balance.

Chapter 1. Stand Fast First in What is Greater

1. A Basic Principle

The great Chinese saint Mencius has taught, "If a man first takes his stand on what is greater, then what is lesser will not be able to snatch it away from him. This is what makes a great man." The greater things referred to are the noble virtues such as kindness and righteousness, which distinguishes the human being from the animal. Take hold of what is essential -- this is the basic principle by which the Chinese live and study.

Several Chinese idioms further illustrate this point. For example, "When the head rope of a net is pulled up, all the meshes open." Or, "To hold up a piece of clothing, hold its collar first." If you have seen people traveling with a suit bag, you have the picture of "holding the collar" in this idiom.

All of the above reflect the same idea: Whether it is writing a paper, handling an issue, dealing with people, or preaching the gospel, the first thing is to hold the greater, the essential, the fundamental. God forbid that we "grasp one sesame and lose the watermelon," as the slang says.

2. Christ Is the Essential

The greater, essential, and fundamental in the gospel is Jesus Christ. The core of the Christian faith is that Jesus is Lord.

Peter and the apostles "never ceased teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42), that is, they preached that Jesus is Lord.

Paul proclaimed in Philippians 2:5-11, one of the greatest and most beautiful passages concerning Jesus, that "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (2:11).

To preach the gospel is to preach that Jesus is Lord. To believe the gospel is to believe that Jesus is Lord, trusting Him wholeheartedly.

3. Never Fuss Over Little Things

For someone who is not a believer but desires to understand the Christian faith, there is usually a ton of questions. From Genesis to Revelation, every page of the Bible may present a problem for him. It will be impossible for you to answer every one of his questions. However, no matter how many questions a person may have, the greatest and most fundamental message in the Bible is one: Jesus is Lord. Therefore our challenge to the world will also always be one: Do you believe that Jesus is Lord?

For example, concerning God, we can tell our friend, "The mystery of God is Christ. Unless you know Christ, you cannot know God. No one goes to God except through Jesus Christ. Anyone who sees Jesus sees God."

Concerning the Bible, we can say, "The mystery of the Bible is still Christ. Jesus proclaims that the Scriptures testify about Himself. If you do not believe that Jesus is Lord, you may study the Bible but will not understand, as if a veil has covered your heart."

When we preach the gospel, let us focus on the most essential: Jesus is Lord. Let us always present the gospel in connection with this central message. If we allow ourselves to get bogged down with all the little details, we put ourselves in a hopeless situation.

When we preach the gospel, let us keep people focusing on Jesus, until their hearts are open to God and confesses, "Jesus, you are my Lord." This is what Mencius means by standing fast first in what is greater, and we stand fast on Jesus Christ.

Summary:

1. When we preach the gospel, let us always grasp the most essential and fundamental: Jesus is Lord.
2. Do not fuss over little details, but always present the gospel in connection with the message that Jesus is Lord.

Chapter 2. Pursue the Whole Truth

1. The Opposite Truth

"The opposite truth is to be remembered," proclaims Blaise Pascal. When we preach the gospel, let us strive to preach the balanced truth.

The Bible indeed contains paradoxes. According to Pascal, "Faith embraces many truths which seem to contradict each other." It may seem hard to believe at first, but it is true. Truth sometimes makes us uncomfortable.

Of course the so called contradiction is no contradiction at all in front of God; all is consistent with Him. It is only from the human's point of view that there are contradictions in the Bible. Contradiction exists because human reasoning and logic cannot fully understand, explain, or fit the pieces together.

Take predestination versus free-will as an example. It is stated wonderfully in the Talmud: "Everything is foreseen but free-will is given."

I do not claim to fully understand it. However, since the Bible has given us both sides of the truth, we should embrace both and preach both. What matters is not whether we fully understand it, but whether people come to the Lord.

2. The Failure of Heresies

Many heresies have arisen throughout church history. A heretic is not an unbeliever; on the contrary, he claims that he believes. But what he believes strays away from Christian faith. In various ways, all heresies basically deny that God has redeemed us through Jesus Christ.

This is Pascal's analysis of heresies: "The source of all heresies is the exclusion of some of these truths." A heretic does not remember the opposite truth, so when he is convicted of one truth, he excludes and rejects the other truth. This is sharply manifested in the dual nature of deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Whether one excludes the deity of Christ or the humanity of Christ, he falls into a heresy.

To preach the gospel is to preach the good news that our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to preach. Therefore we preach whatever the Bible has for us to preach, whether we fully understand it or not. We do not add to it nor take anything from it.

3. Truth Is the Whole

It is Hegel's dictum that "The truth is the whole." Isolated facts can never constitute the truth because the truth is the whole, an integrated unity that is organic and dynamic.

The Bible is a complete system, an integrated organic unity, and it has the whole truth. All various aspects of the truth work together and complement one another. Each partial aspect should be viewed in the totality of the whole picture.

A certain pastor has said with humor and wisdom, "Preaching God's Word among Calvinists, I am an Arminian; among Arminians, I am a Calvinist." Something to think about.

Summary:

1. Some aspects of the truth in our faith seem to contradict each other from the human point of view, but they are nonetheless all parts of the truth.
2. Let us take a lesson from heresies and do not be one-sided. Let us preach the whole truth in the Bible, even if we may not fully understand it.

Chapter 3. Refrain from Arguing the Unarguable

1. The Art of Arguing

Many people have commented, "You Mainland Chinese really can argue." Indeed, Mainland Chinese have been well trained since birth in rhetoric. We know how to argue, and we do not easily concede.

Some Christians also like to argue when they preach the gospel. One of their characteristics is to offer "proofs," citing a lot of data and facts, along with logic and reasoning, to "prove" that God exists, that the Bible is the Word of God, that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, etc. The rhetoric and logic traditions came from the ancient Greeks. They approached everything from a "I think" mode, and the first question to every issue is "What do I know?" When it comes to faith, their questions are: "Who is God?" and "How can I know Him?" But the ancient Hebrews approached things based on "I believe," and their question is: "What does God ask of me?"

When we preach the gospel, we should be aware of these two approaches to thinking. For there is a great gap between "I think" and "I believe," between the "logic" and the "logos." To bridge this gap, we cannot rely merely on logic and rationale, but also on faith, prayers, repentance and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Self-Hidden God

God's being cannot be fully understood by man with his finite reasoning. By God's gracious guidance, we can understand Him to a degree, but not fully. Because this self-revelatory God is also a self-hidden God. In Isaiah 45:15 we read, "Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel." Pascal commented that "men are in darkness and estranged from God, that He has hidden Himself from their knowledge."

Even before Pascal, Dionysius and Nicolas of Cusa had already proposed Negative Theology. According to them, there are two different yet complementary approaches to theologies: Negative Theology describes the mystical and indescribable, and Positive Theology the open and evident. Negative Theology appeals to symbolism while Positive Theology operates in philosophical analysis and rhetoric. It is called Negative Theology because as one studies the superior, the higher he goes, the less adequate the language becomes; not only does he find himself unable to describe it, he feels ignorant of what he ought to know.

For God is beyond any concept, any judgment, any logical system, and any philosophical system. He is beyond what man can describe. Thus, nowhere in the Bible a proof was ever offered for God's existence. For the prophets, God was clearly there, has always been there, and it is inconceivable for them to have to prove it. For the apostles, Jesus rose from the dead; they saw Him with their own eyes and they touched Him with their own hands, so there is no need to

prove it. All they have done is testifying and proclaiming, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

3. The Silence of the Saints

Job has asked God the well-discussed question, Why do the innocent and the righteous suffer?

God finally replied, though not in the way Job expected. God asked him who created heaven and earth. God challenged, Stop and consider my wondrous works. But God said nothing about Job's question.

If God says nothing, what can man say? And whatever man says, it will not clarify much, will it?

When we preach the gospel, there is a place for reasoning. However, for those issues that cannot be adequately argued with our language, concept and judgment, let us learn a lesson from Job. Let us humble ourselves before God, admitting our ignorance and withholding our tongues.

Summary:

1. Be aware of the "I think" and "I believe" approaches to thinking.
2. Some issues in the Bible are beyond our finite reasoning. Let us be quiet about these and refrain from arguing.

Chapter 4. Jargon that No One Understands

1. Spiritual Jargon

Some Christians use a lot of Christian jargons when they preach the gospel, and non-Christians have absolutely no idea what they are talking about.

When I first came in contact with Christianity, I was dismayed by this use of jargon. I later learned that I was not alone with my distaste.

If we fill our speeches and articles with jargon, pretentious and convoluted terms and phrases, we are turning the lively good news into something dry, tasteless, unchewable, unswallowable, and undigestable. If people then shy away from the gospel, we will be the culprit.

2. What Must Be Said

To preach the gospel, some messages must be proclaimed. Without them, there is no gospel.

The message that must be proclaimed may be boiled down to: "Jesus is Lord." It is the core and foundation of Christian faith. It is also the essence and focus of all Christian doctrines.

The gospel has a unique message, which comes with its own vocabulary and phrases such as Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, justification by faith, grace, sin, redemption, etc. These must be proclaimed and explained, because they constitute the basics of Christian faith. Preaching without these would not be gospel preaching.

Look at the Apostolic Creed again. In a mere twelve short sentences, all the essentials of Christian faith are stated clearly and neatly. No wonder Christians throughout history have recited and professed it fondly.

But even when we preach these essential doctrines, let us use plain and common language. To paraphrase Paul, "How can men call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them in a way they can understand?"

3. The Lazy Way

The lazy way of preaching the gospel is to pile jargons upon jargons.

When we preach the gospel with the desire that our audience understand it, let us keep these two questions in mind: One, Do I know what I am talking about when I use Christian jargon? Two, Do others know what I am talking about when I talk this way?

To preach the gospel, the message must be communicated, so it may reach people's hearts. As Albert Einstein has said, "You do not really understand something unless you can explain it to your grandmother."

4. The Best Example

How should we preach the gospel? The best examples come from our Lord Jesus himself. It is amazing that his message is never too simple for the most learned and yet never too complex for the most unlearned.

The parable of the prodigal son is a wonderful illustration.

Let us strive to preach the gospel as our Lord did, talking in simple language, to the common folks, so that people can understand our message.

Summary:

1. Minimize Christian jargon as much as possible when you preach the gospel.
2. Preach the gospel as our Lord Jesus, presenting your message plainly and clearly.

Chapter 5. Put an End to Anti-Intellect and Anti-Culture

1. Confucius

According to Confucius, a man of honor would learn comprehensively and integrate what he learns with an all-pervading unity. If a man failed to do so, he would be considered a "small man." However, one of the Gang of Four, leaders of Mao Ze-Dong's Cultural Revolution, was willing to be a "small man," advocating that "knowledge promotes revolt."

We Christians should not be "small men" in gospel preaching, i.e., we should not reject knowledge, despise studies, and glorify ignorance. It will be very hard to reach out to the intellectuals if we do. Confucius taught that senselessness cannot enlighten. Let us take the warning to heart.

2. Do Not Let History Repeat Itself

Responding to liberalism of the previous century, which gave us so-called Christians who did not believe in Jesus, the Chinese church has developed a strong tendency that is anti-theology, anti-reasoning, anti-intellect, anti-culture, and anti-aesthetics. A notable Chinese Christian leader teaches the Christians not to love this world, and "politics, education, literature, science, arts, law, business, music, etc. all belong to the things of this world."

What a tragedy! Chinese culture has no Christian tradition, the majority of Christians in the last few hundred years were not intellectuals, and now our Christian leaders are turning Christianity into anti-intellectual obscurantism. What a fatal error it is!

How long shall we still wait for the end of this anti-culture tragedy in the Chinese church?

3. All Truth Belongs to God

Frank E. Gaebelein, the renowned American Christian educator, had two favorite quotes. One is "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things." (Phil 4:8) The other one is by Jonathan Edwards, the great American theologian, "Just as God is the primordial being, the ontological ground of all that is, and just as he is the foundation of ethics, the axiological ground of all values, so is he the foundation of aesthetics, the ground of all beauty. As all being is either God or is derived from God, so all that is beautiful either is him or comes from him."

Thus Gaebelein emphasized that all truth belongs to God. Speaking of the various forms of arts, he said, "They also have their place within God's truth and, no less than mathematics or science, history or literature, must be united with it." So when we preach the gospel, we must not reject the truth that is in our culture

or knowledge, but rather let us engage it to help people recognize the Truth, i.e., Jesus Christ.

4. A Beggar with a Gold Bowl

Many of our seeker friends want to believe in Jesus too. They are not believers yet not because they do not want to, but because they still have questions. For questions that we are able to answer at the intellectual or rational level, we should answer them as clearly as possible. If we hold the Bible but do not answer Bible questions, are we not like the beggar with a gold bowl?

John Calvin has asserted that one must be a good scholar before he can be a good preacher.

Of course this does not mean that each one of us should become a walking Bible encyclopedia. It is OK to admit to our friends that we do not know certain things. Do not forget to introduce them to some good books.

If we work in a professional area, let us devote ourselves to our profession, highlighting the truth in our profession that can bring people to Christ. Erasmus taught that all studies, philosophies and rhetorics have the same purpose, to enable us to know Christ and glorify him. So it is also our chief end in intellectual pursuits.

Summary:

1. Anti-intellectualism will be a fatal error in evangelism to the intellectuals.
2. For questions that can be answered at the intellectual level, let us answer them as clearly as possible.
3. Let us engage our culture and knowledge to help people come to the ultimate truth, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6. Seek Another Language

1. Beware of the Revolution Language

My generation was educated in the "revolution language" or "battle language." Our vocabulary was full of such terms as knock out, combat, dictatorship, revolution, people, enemy, etc.

We had provoking slogans such as "Fight a good fight." "Fight for the people." "Have all peasants join the war." "Never retreat without full victory." "Against any revolt, attack or it will not fall."

With such language, we were not only the victims but also the ones harming others. Language became our weapon to attack one another.

When we preach the gospel, we must be careful not to be polluted by such revolution and battle language.

2. Do Not Sin When Condemning Sin

We must condemn sin when preaching the gospel, but we must be very careful how we do it. We must never treat people as enemies, mocking, ridiculing, insulting, or attacking them in our revolution language.

Jesus Christ made friends with sinners. He talked to them as friends, sincerely, affectionately, gently, humbly, full of mercy and godly love. He is our example. The rule of thumb is simple: treat others as your own friends.

We will certainly condemn sin, just like the prophets of Israel, who cried out to their people, "Woe to you!" They called people to repent and return to God. They proclaimed earnestly that God did not wish people to perish, but hoped that the world might repent and accept God's grace.

He who condemns sin without any love for sinners is committing a sin.

3. Love Expressed in Language

Gospel means good news, and must be expressed in good language. What I mean by good language is language of love, the language that conveys God's love. This new language is characterized by grace.

Speaking the truth is the basic way to preach God's grace. When we share the gospel and our testimonies, we must obey our Lord's teaching, "Simply let your Yes be Yes and your No be No." (Matt 5:37) We must not lie.

The Bible says, "A gentle tongue is a tree of life." (Prov 15:4) When we preach the gospel, we shall both condemn and comfort. We shall especially comfort and

exhort those with broken and contrite hearts. We shall uphold and strengthen those "bruised reeds" with God's word.

Speak what can build others up, i.e., what can lead people to love God's word, to pursue truth, righteousness, love, and peace, to crave the abundant life that comes from Jesus Christ. In an age of pessimism, let us really learn how to encourage people with God's word, pointing them to the eternal hope in God's love.

Speak what can reconcile people to God and to one another. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matt 5:9) Harsh words, gossips, fault-finding and relentlessness will not bring man closer to God. The gospel is a gospel of peace, and must be conveyed in language of peace at the proper time and place.

Perhaps all can be summed up in the language of love: Jesus loves you.

Summary:

1. When we preach the gospel, let us beware of revolution language.
2. While we condemn sin, we must not treat people as enemies, attacking them in revolution language. Our aim is to call people to repentance.
3. Learn to speak in language of love, speaking in truth, speaking what can comfort, edify and reconcile.

Chapter 7. Love is Patient

1. Three Difficulties

It is difficult to preach the gospel in the current age. It is even more difficult to preach the gospel to the Chinese in North America. And it is yet even more difficult to preach the gospel to the Intellectuals from Mainland China in North America.

What makes it so difficult? Some say that they have been brainwashed by atheism for too long. Some say that they are too puffed up by all their knowledge and learning. And some say that they are too argumentative. They are all correct. And do not forget still one more reason: No sinner is born inclined to confess for being a sinner.

Therefore to preach the gospel to the Chinese, we must be mentally prepared to be willing to keep preaching and preaching, if we really love them. Love is patient, and love never fails. Out of love, we wish them all to believe in the Lord today, but we are also willing not to push too hard.

2. Remembering Our Own Path

In the first few years after I came in contact with Christianity, I was very hard-hearted. None of my Christian friends thought that I would ever become a believer. I was also convinced that it would never happen. But when it was God's time, I became a Christian.

Since then I have not dared to call anyone too hard-hearted to be converted. I am not God, so how would I know?

But here is the funny thing. I had struggled against God for fifteen long years. But when I first began preaching the gospel, I was expecting people to believe right at the spot. When they did not, I was actually surprised.

How forgetful we are. How easily I forgot who I was and who I am.

3. Gentle Rain

There is an ancient proverb that one will not help the new plants grow by pulling them up higher. There is a slang expression that one cannot eat a hot potato with one swallow. When I was a new believer, I kept preaching the gospel to my good friends relentlessly, until one day someone told me, "Buddy, don't push me too hard."

It is one of the reasons why our friends may be offended or embarrassed by our preaching of the gospel. We may have pushed too hard. Not only are we aggressive, but we may even sound threatening or cursing, "If you do not accept Christ today and you die tomorrow, you will regret it." Or something similar. What

do you think our friends would feel? Who would want to listen to this kind of gospel message?

It is much more desirable that we are patient for the right timing, that we bring people to the Lord with great perseverance. Let us be willing to give our friends room to ponder and observe, and willing to wait for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Whatever stage our friend is in under the Holy Spirit, let us keep in step there too.

The Chinese has a saying: The fine gentle rain moistens without making a noise. Let us persevere in a gentle rain style when we preach the gospel.

Summary:

1. When we preach the gospel, let us be zealous in our heart, but be careful not to push too hard.
2. Let us persevere in a gentle rain style when we preach the gospel.

Section IV. Man Is a Creature of Culture

"He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"
(Micah 6:8)

Chapter 1. Preaching via Chinese Culture

1. A Thousand-Year Squabble

Christianity first reached China in A.D. 635. Ever since then, for anyone who has tried to preach the gospel in China, regardless of his branch of theology or denomination, he has had to deal with Chinese culture. According to the Catholic theologian Hans Küng, there are three different models: (1) the apparent assimilation (the Nestorians) or amalgamation (the Manichaeans), (2) confrontation (17th-18th centuries) or Imperialism and anti-Christian movement (19th-20th centuries), (3) adoption (Matteo Ricci) or the indigenization movement.

Some have seen how Christianity approaches Chinese culture as a squabble. Ever since Christianity came to China, it has clashed with Chinese officials and intellectuals many many times, but neither side has gotten to know each other better over the course of time. So what has gone wrong?

2. A Way Out

The problem lies in the total rejection of Chinese culture. Therefore Rev. Ho Shi-Ming has proposed a new approach of evangelism to the Chinese, preaching via Chinese culture. He argues that preaching via culture is the means while preaching Christ is the end.

There are three principles to preaching the gospel to the Chinese via culture. One, do not insinuate Christianity as part of western culture, but emphasize the transcendency and universalness of Christianity. Two, prove from Chinese classic literature that theism rather than atheism is rooted in Chinese culture. Thus Christianity, which returns Chinese culture to theism, is reviving rather than demolishing Chinese culture. Three, it is a cultural mandate to supplement and reform the theism in our cultural traditions so that it more properly reflects the biblical truth.

3. Three Grounds

Preaching the gospel via culture is supported on three grounds.

First, the God whom we believe in is transcendent and immanent. On the one hand, God is not confined by time, space or culture. On the other hand, He can enter any culture and influence it.

Second, all truth belongs to God. "The human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver." These words are offered by John Calvin.

Third, that man is fallen is also reflected in culture. It cannot be overstated that man's sin has influenced his culture. The culture created by sinful men certainly reflects sin. Whether it is the East or West, every culture has been twisted and polluted.

4. The Point of Contact

To preach via Chinese culture, we need to look for the point of contact between Christian faith and Chinese culture.

One possibility is to trace back to the root of Chinese culture, which is theism rather than atheism.

Another possibility is what Hans Küng propagated, that there are several similarities between Christianity and Chinese culture in terms of ethical values which involve making choices.

I believe the issue of human nature is also an important point of contact between Christianity and Chinese culture.

At the same time, let us beware of such Christian concepts as sin and redemption, which the Chinese may find difficult to accept.

Summary:

1. There are different models of relationship between Christianity and culture.
2. Learn to preach the gospel via Chinese culture, and look for the point of contact between Christian faith and Chinese culture.

Chapter 2. The Tiger's Backside

1. The Tiger's Backside

The Chinese have a slang saying that a tiger's backside is untouchable. If you dare touch it, the tiger will jump and attack you with roaring rage. To preach the gospel to the Chinese, we need to understand where their "tiger's backside" is.

When an outsider criticizes the social, political and historical issues of China, many of our seeker friends from Mainland China will perceive it as a slight to Mainland Chinese. For many of them, China's impoverishment, undemocratic government and lack of human rights are their tiger's backside, the untouchable spot.

2. "You Mainland Chinese"

May all ambassadors of the gospel engrave in their hearts the following two statements by the apostle Paul:

"To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1Cor 9:22)

"I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race." (Rom 9:1-3)

To model after Paul, I should become a Mainland Chinese among Mainland Chinese. And if their salvation would require my going to hell, I would do it in a minute.

Why do some brothers and sisters offend the Mainland Chinese when they criticize China? Because they have not "become" Mainland Chinese, i.e., they have not acted as their brethren and kinsmen. They put themselves on a pedestal looking down on others, saying "You Mainland Chinese" unconsciously. No wonder our seeker friends from China feel repelled.

In gospel preaching, what we want people to focus on is Jesus Christ, not our political views, no matter how valuable we think they are. To bring a person to Christ, we need him to recognize his own sin, not how corrupt and evil his country is. In fact, Western society is just as corrupt and evil.

3. The Power of the Gospel

The people in Mainland China have suffered long and hard. It is a well known fact. For many of them, even without your bringing up their pain, they are already deeply wounded. But our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to preach the gospel to the

poor, to heal the wounded, to comfort the mourners. What the Mainland Chinese need is not another sentence of death, but healing and comfort.

"Jesus took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." (Matt 8:17) Let us try to identify ourselves with the Mainland Chinese, putting ourselves in their shoes. Never say "You" again, but say "We" instead. When an ambassador of the gospel says "We" in love, he will know how to take up their pain and bear their burdens.

Summary:

1. Some issues in China are better left untouched by outsiders, lest it damages friendship.
3. To preach the gospel among Mainland Chinese, become a Mainland Chinese, so that you might by all means save some Mainland Chinese.

Chapter 3. Solving a Nationalism Complex

1. A Historical Wound

In the mind of many patriotic Chinese intellectuals, Christianity is still linked to imperialism and invasions by the Western countries that resulted in great instability and turmoil in China at the turn of the 20th century. The uneven and unfair treaties were thorns in the eyes of the Chinese. The protection of the missionaries under these treaties signals a strong linkage between the missionaries and the invasions.

In any typical modern Chinese history textbook, "save China" is easily the most prominent theme.

The independence of the nation, the modernization of the country, has been dreamed of by the Chinese for over a century.

Who does not have a dream? But what is wrong with this dream is that it becomes for many people the chief end. It leads to such slogans as "Nation's Interest Above All Else." For the country's modernization and prosperity, no individual sacrifice is too great. To reach this chief end, anything else may be sacrificed, including democracy, freedom, human rights. The historical wound and shame actually makes it an even more sacred and noble cause, so that no one may even question it.

Under the shadow of this dream, conversion to Christianity is synonymous with being unpatriotic. It is proclaimed, "One more Christian, one less Chinese." Unfortunately, certain theology and actions by some Chinese Christians have seemed to validate such claims.

May the Chinese Christians stand up and say: "We have suffered together with our own people in the last half century, and we suffer only because we are Christians. But throughout all the ordeal, we have never stopped loving our people and praying for our country." Thus the Chinese Christians can shed the label of being unpatriotic, and Christianity the label of Western intrusion.

2. Two Points To Beware Of

To disengage commitment to Christianity from the idea of being unpatriotic, let us be especially careful in two respects.

One, let us face Chinese church history introspectively, humbly admitting in front of God and in front of the world the sins of our forefathers. If we only keep calling attention to how Christians had been persecuted in China, it will not only irritate people but also it is not quite true. Liang Jia-Lin has analyzed the repeated litigation cases brought by the Western church against the locals in the nineteenth century, concluding that in many cases the Western missionaries provoked the riots by their inappropriate handling of the situation. He gave three

types of causes: some missionaries cut in on the property returned to the church for personal gain; some Catholic missionaries were arrogant and rude, insisting that they outranked local officials; and some missionaries meddled in local civil lawsuits. And local authorities, out of fear of westerners, often ruled in favor of those who had joined the church. No wonder there were constant anti-Christian uprisings.

Two, let us view the West sensibly. It is a composite world, with both Christian and anti-Christian forces against each other. Many of the most important anti-Christian doctrines have arisen in the West. Therefore let us never refer to the Western countries as Christian countries.

3. Two Voices

To preach the gospel among the Chinese, Christians should communicate in two voices: the voice of a prophet and the voice of an ambassador of love.

The voice of a prophet is the voice condemning the unrighteousness of this world. When we preach the gospel, we should speak of sins not only at the personal and individual level but also at the corporate and societal level.

The voice of an ambassador of love is the voice proclaiming to the Chinese that God is love, and our Lord Jesus loves the Chinese. We should serve the Chinese with the love of Jesus.

Summary:

1. In preaching the gospel to the Chinese, be careful not to hurt their feelings with respect to their love for the country.
2. Let us view Chinese church history and the West introspectively and sensibly.
3. Let Christians preach the gospel in China in the voice of a prophet and the voice of an ambassador of love.

Chapter 4. Criticizing Confucius

1. Criticizing Confucius

There was a large-scale "Criticize Lin and Criticize Confucius" movement in China in the '70s. Heaven knows how they could tie Lin Biao and Confucius together!

However, it was during the movement that the prominent Chinese Christian leader Wang Ming-Dao, while still in prison, made the following statements: "Confucius is not to be criticized. Those who criticize Confucius bring shame to themselves. Jesus is my savior, and Confucius is my teacher, whom I shall not criticize."

For a Chinese to criticize or denounce Confucius is to bring shame to himself. This is still a statement worthy of consideration for all Chinese Christians today.

2. The Lord and The Teacher

To preach the gospel to the Chinese, you will inevitably face Confucius. So how should you treat and view him?

Some Chinese Christians choose to denounce Confucius completely, claiming the Confucian school of thought belongs to humanism according to the flesh.

Others choose to view Confucius as a great person and teacher, someone to be respected and admired. Respecting him is not the same as worshiping him.

Assuming we can distinguish between respecting and worshiping, that is, we recognize him as a person and not a god, we still have to answer one question: Regarding all the "good stuff" in Confucian teachings and Chinese culture, should we learn it, integrate it, reform it and continue it? Or to paraphrase Jesus, should we abolish it or "fulfill" it?

3. Studying Confucius vs Criticizing Confucius

Since the time of Confucius, there have been many different schools of interpretation on his thoughts. Why can't Christians also contribute and establish our own school? I think it is feasible.

First, return to Confucius' view on "Heaven."

In the Confucian philosophy, "Heaven" is the highest reality. What did Confucius mean by "Heaven"? Most Confucian scholars agree that Confucius was referring to the Most High in the universe, who is personal with will, moral and wisdom.

Confucius' attitude toward "Heaven" can be summed up this way: to respect Heaven, to fear the ordinances of Heaven, and not to deceive or impose on Heaven.

Only in the Bible shall we find the "Heaven" that Confucius himself was not able to find.

Second, reject the errors in Confucius' teachings.

Not all of Confucius' teachings are sound and good. For example, he believed in unconditional loyalty to the emperor and a hierarchical society. He prided himself as a transmitter and not a maker, despising creativity. He lauded governing with moral values and put down ruling by law. He had a high regard for proprieties and music, but a low view of husbandry. These faulty ideas still have an impact on the Chinese today.

We can analyze these errors and defects in accordance with Christian doctrines.

Third, to some degree, accept an ethical double-identity.

This is proposed by Hans Küng. He figures that it is impossible for a Chinese to be totally uninfluenced by the Confucian School (as well as Taoism and Buddhism) in his thinking, behavior and interaction with others ethically. Therefore he allows that a person can be completely Christian in his faith, but Confucian in ethics, as long as the Confucian ethics and Christian ethics do not conflict. Here are just a few examples: "Do not do to others what you would not wish done to you," "Sacrifice your life to preserve your virtue," "To know what you know and what you do not know is knowledge," "Walking in a company of three, I can always learn from someone," "Learn without satiety and teach without being wearied."

Fourth, fill what is lacking in Confucius' teachings.

Great as it may be, the Confucian philosophy is not perfect. What is lacking needs to be made complete or surpassed. For example, when asked what virtue is, Confucius replied, "Love others." It is a rather noble teaching in the ethical realm. But it has not touched the spiritual realm, "Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

When we fill what is lacking in Confucius' teachings, we will be able to see that Jesus is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. When we can see Jesus Christ, we see God.

Summary:

1. There are different opinions among Chinese Christians as to how to view Confucius.

2. What we need to do is to return to Confucius' view on "Heaven," expose the errors in his teachings, extract what is good and fill what is lacking in his teachings.

Chapter 5. What Good Is the Gospel?

1. Man Has Rebelled Against God

Philip Yancey, in his book "Praying with the KGB," wrote an account of his visit to the Soviet Union in 1991, before the collapse of communism. He reported what a Russian journalist, who had a bad stutter, spoke: "We had a lawful country, a society with religious beliefs, but that was all destroyed in seventy years. Our souls were su-su-su-sucked out. Truth was de-de-destroyed. In the last stage, which we have just lived through, even the C-C-C-C-C-Communist morale was destroyed."

The great Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said: "Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.' Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.'"

The translators who translated Solzhenitsyn's book into Chinese were convinced that no matter how technology and the economy might take off, without God, China would have no hope. May the Chinese Christians care not only about the advancing of God's kingdom in heaven, but also about the predicament of their country and people on earth. May the Chinese people turn to God, and the Chinese government realize that prosperity can only be achieved by following God's will.

What is the greatest crisis in China today? The answer is simple: a spiritual crisis.

2. The Gospel Is the Good News

The Chinese are pragmatic. Many Chinese, upon hearing the gospel, will often ask: "What good is it to be a Christian? What benefits are there?" Many intellectuals will ask: "What good is Christianity for China? Can it save China?"

There are two typical responses in Chinese church history. One sees Christianity as bringing salvation to China, thus turning the Gospel into the "social gospel." The other sees the gospel as bringing salvation to individual souls only, nothing to do with the country or society. The former is mostly advocated by the liberals, who ignore the Gospel that Jesus died for mankind. The latter is mostly advocated by the evangelicals, who often ignore their social responsibility.

The Lausanne Covenant clearly states, "We affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty." Therefore, concerning what the gospel can offer for China, let us boldly proclaim the following:

First, Christianity gives us the basis for human rights. The Bible tells us that man is created in God's own image, and hence each person has inherent dignity, value and rights.

Second, Christianity prepares us for democracy, when it comes to pass in China. No man is God, and no one should be treated like God. There should be checks and balances and scrutiny and accountability for every office holder.

Third, Christianity prepares us for nomocracy (i.e., government in accordance with a system of law). Human beings are sinners, and are accountable before God. Man cannot hide from God, so he will have to think twice about his actions.

Fourth, Christianity instills the ethics and proper attitudes in the workplace, because we are called to glorify God at our jobs, which in turn will enhance the economic development of China.

Fifth, Christianity motivates us in science studies and research. The chief end of science is to know God and His creation and the laws of His creation.

Sixth, Christianity provides a moral system and the inner ability to be moral.

Seventh, Christianity produces "Christian men of honor," who are faithful, moral, merciful, lawful, seeking only the glory for God and the good for men.

Of course, the Kingdom of God is not fulfilled on earth. But a Christian still has an earthly responsibility, and must challenge the world in Jesus' name. As American revivalist Charles Finney said, "Now the great business of the Church is to reform the world... The very profession of Christianity implies the profession and virtually an oath to do all that can be done for the reformation of the world."

Summary:

1. The greatest crisis in China today is a spiritual crisis, and it all comes from people's turning away from God.
2. Christianity plays an important role in the reconstruction of China, because the very profession of Christianity implies the profession to do all that can be done for the reformation of the world.

Chapter 6. Sing Different Songs on Different Mountains

1. Constancy and Change

The Chinese have a saying, "Sing different songs on different mountains." It is similar to the proverb "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." But it also means: if you want to sing, and you want the audience to applaud, then you need to know your audience first.

The same can be said of speaking, writing, and preaching. A lot depends on your audience. To preach the gospel, we will offer the constant in an ever-changing world.

What is constant is the Bible, the gospel message, that Jesus is Lord. But the world keeps changing, and so do men.

Constancy and change may be relative. For example, there is only one Holy Spirit. It is a constant. Man's understanding and knowledge of the Holy Spirit, however, can and do change. On the other hand, no matter how much man changes, he is still a creature; no matter how much breakthrough man makes, he is still a finite being.

2. The Gospel Satisfies Every Need

To respond well in an ever-changing world, first and foremost we need to have a good grasp of the constant, the essential truth in the Bible.

But we must also find out what is changing or what needs to be adapted to. In other words, which mountain am I on now?

We should study and understand the needs of this generation. Each individual is unique and has his own need. We should not give the same prescription to everyone. A wrong prescription not only would not help someone, but may actually impair or kill him.

Yes, the gospel can satisfy any person's needs. But the question is: Which needs? So, not only do we want to understand man's general needs, but also we want to know his most urgent current needs. For instance, to preach the gospel to the well-educated Chinese intellectuals, you may often need to answer their questions on evolution; to those sneaking into the US illegally, you may need to help them on legal matters, along with their housing and work needs.

Their different needs become our guide for choosing a point of contact.

Age is also an important factor. If you talk to someone who has just graduated with a Ph.D. about where man goes after death, it is probably the farthest thing on his mind. His focus is on how to develop his career and apply his knowledge

in his work. But if you talk to someone in his fifties, how to handle mid-life crisis is probably his main concern.

Still another point of contact is issues that all Chinese share in common. When someone has just arrived in America, knowing no one and finding nothing familiar, he is most interested in how to adjust and fit in. Other such topics include marriage and parenting. For example, talk to them about how a husband and wife can live happily ever after with Jesus being their Lord.

Or, we can distinguish for people material, psychological and spiritual needs. The modern generation talks a lot about being lonely, being bored, feeling a void, feeling depressed, etc. Let us offer them the best remedy for all these symptoms: our Lord Jesus Christ.

Behind each different need is the human need for love, acceptance, and dignity. It is among these human cries and needs that Jesus is calling us Christians, calling us to serve those needs after His own heart.

No matter how great a man's need might be, may we always sharply see that the deepest need is a spiritual need -- man's greatest need is that he needs the Lord.

A person's specific need is only our point of contact for introducing the gospel to him; it is not the end of the gospel. We do not dwell at the initial point of contact without moving forward. In other words, not only do we know which songs to sing on this mountain, we also know when to sing which song. We shall keep doing so until our friends come to the Lord.

Summary:

1. To respond well in an ever-changing world, first and foremost we need to have a good grasp of the constant, the essential truth in the Bible.
2. But we must also understand each individual's different needs. It gives us a point of contact. And behind the different needs is man's need for the Lord.

Chapter 7. Be A Little More Chinese

1. Do Not Be Western

For many years Christianity has been regarded as a Western religion by the Chinese. No doubt such a view is biased and not fair. But we Chinese Christians must also be honest with ourselves: Have we not also contributed to it? We have copied everything from the Western church, so our Chinese church is distinctly Western.

Yes, Christianity is foreign, in the sense that it comes from outside of China. Therefore it should be foreign, in the sense that it has new doctrines, new ideas, new rituals that the Chinese have never seen. Most importantly, it introduces a Savior, Jesus Christ, whom the Chinese have never known, and a Bible which the Chinese have never read. If Christianity was not foreign but completely native, it would probably not be Christianity at all.

However, for Christianity to be rooted and grow in China, it must become Chinese. It must ooze Chinese, smell Chinese and look Chinese. We must let the Chinese say, "Christianity is our own." Or, "God is speaking to us Chinese."

This is especially important when we preach the gospel. Be a little more folksy, and it goes a long way toward closing the gap between us and our seeker friends.

2. Affection for Home

The Chinese saying, "Meeting people from home brings tears to the eyes," adequately conveys how much affection the Chinese have for homeland. They have deep affection for folks from the same hometown, and to a degree, folks from the same home country.

Let us recognize this affection when we preach the gospel. Let us identify ourselves as Chinese in our minds and in our hearts, receiving the 1.3 billion Mainland Chinese as our own folks. Let us not be ashamed of such an identification, worrying whether we might be too narrow-minded. Let us pray to God that He will remind us constantly how many of our folks are not saved and are still wandering in darkness. Let us sing this song, "Give me a heart for China. O China, we sing in a foreign land, and we weep when we remember you."

If we do not identify ourselves with the Chinese, they will most likely not identify with our message.

3. The Home Voice

Let us speak in a more Chinese way when we preach the gospel.

First, let us make good use of the truths from our ancestors, applying them in our articles and speeches. Chinese culture is among the most ancient cultures in

human history, and the Chinese saints have discovered many truths throughout the thousands of years of history, glorious and wonderful truths. The question is whether we can make use of them, applying them in our faith. I believe we can. For example, we can make use of the Confucian teaching, "Do not do to others what you would not wish done to you."

Second, we can also make good use of the rich wisdom in Chinese culture. There are a lot of parallels between Chinese proverbs and the proverbs in the Bible. For examples: "Happiness consists in contentment." "Forgive others whenever possible." "Unite knowing and doing." "Pursue harmony between Heaven and man." "As Heaven's movement is ever vigorous, so must a gentleman ceaselessly strive along." "Misfortune is where happiness depends; happiness is where misfortune underlies." "The motion of nature is cyclic and returning." "The man of honor is affable but not adulatory." If only we are willing to consider and distill, the materials are plentiful.

Third, let us also make use of familiar elements in the culture, especially those which reflect beauty and elegance. There are many treasures in Chinese philosophy, poetry, drama, legends and myths. They are waiting for us Christians to dig up and utilize to help our kinsmen come to Jesus Christ. For example, "Climb a greater height to enjoy a grander view," a famous poem, depicts wonderfully our spiritual journey, does it not? The pictorial proverb "A silkworm spins silk and ends up trapped in its own cocoon" portrays vividly how some cling to an old worldview and end up in despair, does it not?

Of course, we should also speak according to Chinese grammar, use shorter sentences, employ a few Chinese stories, idioms and poems, etc. We do all these to make our message more Chinese, with the sole purpose of bringing people to the Lord.

Summary:

1. It is a big NO NO to present the gospel in Western style.
2. Identify with the Chinese in our minds and in our hearts. It is the key to becoming more Chinese.
3. Make good use of the truths, the wisdom and the beautiful elements in Chinese culture.

Epilogue

To cross a river, you can use a boat, a bridge, or an airplane.

I am giving you a boat in this book. That is, I am giving you an approach. And not just any approach to evangelism, but a specific approach to evangelism to the Chinese. And specifically to a group called the Mainland Chinese, or the intellectuals from Mainland China.

Behind the approach is a major principle: To the Mainland Chinese, I become Mainland Chinese, so that I might by all means save some Mainland Chinese.

How to evangelize the Mainland Chinese has been on my mind ever since I became a Christian eight years ago. And I am still exploring the matter.

I welcome your exploration with me, and hope that my exploration is of some help to you.

The brothers and sisters at Overseas Campus Magazine have supported me, groomed me and assisted me in my writing career over the years. For this book to be published and translated into English, there is little I can say to express my gratitude except to give thanks to the Lord. Special thanks go to Rev. Edwin Su, the editor-in-chief, and the translator.