

## The China Connection – 2

5/14/16

Maia plans to continue having a service each month or so, dedicated to having a love feast with each *named* discipleship group presenting a dish with a Bible theme (someone from one of the groups actually made a cake that looked like the Bible). They have communion first, then the feast, then the rest of the evening dedicated to reporting what God has done in their discipleship journey either as an individual, or as a group. Here is the report of their second service doing this, which will put them somewhere in the first book around week ten. Abbey, our translator is reporting:

Papa,

These were the amazing dishes they made this time:

“Methuselah” by Maia (Potato Salad)

“Love the Lord” by Samuel (Kanto Cooking)

“Drive Satan away” by sister Feng from Plum Blossom (the black round ones looking like jelly)

“United as one” by Lamb (the pitaya fruit in small squares)

“Be fruitful” by Thirst for Stream Water (cherries)

“Count the Lord’s blessings” by Thirst for Stream Water (the white round ones)

“A pure heart” by Thirst for Stream Water

“Become as one” by Thirst for Stream Water

“A passionate heart” by Thirst for Stream Water

“Rose of Sharon” (cakes with rose buds on top)

“Trees with good fruits” (green vegetables with flower shaped carrots and mushrooms on top)

“His kingdom in the full measure” made by Lamb

“Five barley loaves and Two fishes” made by Walking Together

“Fishers of Men” by Walking Together

This time Maia limited the sharing number to 10 discipleship groups and each group had 5 minutes to share. They shared either a witness or a certain theme they had chosen in advance:

**Power of Seed:** Sister Hu shared that she had been sick for more than one year and was even hospitalized last year. When she joined the disciple study, it turned out that there was another newly found illness in her. She was fidgeting and couldn’t sleep well and it seriously affected her work and study. Just when she was planning to quit in week 3, she had a dream. In her dream, she was taking her elder son to a park. She found the scenery there was amazing so began to wonder if she should enter it. Then she heard a voice: *This is where the Devil dwells. Are you sure you are still going?* Then she heard someone singing a hymn. So she followed that singing back to home. Then she found her home was anew. It had everything she needed and full of the finest things. Suddenly she was awake and realized it was a dream. So she was thinking maybe it was wrong to quit since it was in the Lord that there was everything she needed, and returning to her comfort would not bring her the latter richness. So she continued her study in discipleship. Two days after she made up her mind, she was completely healed!

**Walking Together:** Theme—Accompany (or walk with as in supervise)

A sister shared that she used to have a number of spiritual friends and as time went on, now there are only three left. She thought that was because their time hadn’t come yet. After she joined the disciple study, she began to believe it was because she didn’t fulfill her responsibility to accompany them. All the difficulties we each go through could be the help and comfort for new believers. And in the supervision process, we’re less prone to indulge ourselves. To *accompany* is

especially important for our kids since they are our inheritance. Our responsibility is not only for the salvation of ourselves, it is for the Lord's second coming. So she always wants to accompany one of her sisters. Through this discipleship study, she learned that as long as she has a humble and passionate heart, she is able to accompany her sisters so as to love each other.

**A small family devoted to the Lord:** Theme—Love your neighbor

(I will record this story in the first person):

It had been quiet for quite a long time since our neighbor sold their house. One day, I heard a loud noise. It was like the sound of decorating. I thought it would last just a short period. However, I began to notice our new neighbor did a lot of changes. The big gates were removed. The living room was expanded. The kitchen, bathroom .... it turned out that every room was under reconstruction. And it took two years! Every time I saw the mess, I felt so annoyed. It seemed they changed every room at least three or four times.

The worst of it came with a huge dog and the doghouse they built was 3 meters away from my son's room. It severely impacted his life and study. I called the management office, and they were abused by my neighbor when they tried to talk with her about it. I called the environmental protection bureau and they could do nothing with it. I was so filled with anger and the anger increased daily. There was no place for Christ in my heart for a long time. I even thought about poisoning the dog, and I mixed water with 1% of chlorine bleach to spray upon the doghouse. So it was a long-term provocation for me.

However, the discipleship study drove my anger away and increased the Lord's love in me. So one day, I was in high spirits and made a Macha Cake with all my heart and emboldened myself to knock on my neighbor's door. A nanny came to open the door and I saw the hostess (owner) sitting arrogantly inside with splendid jewels all around her and her head held high. She was very surprised to see me, but I came with love and explained to her I just made a cake to share with her. So I said to her: "Congratulations to you that you have finally finished the remodeling of your home and moved in." To my great surprise, she began to share with me her story. She is a divorced woman with two children. For their education she moved from Singapore to China. I found that when I tried to connect her with love, it turned out she was someone so in need of a sense of security. And what really made my day was when I heard her say to me: "I am going to remove this doghouse."

**Four Living Beings** Theme—(by Samuel, Maia's son): Value, submission, cherish and glory.

(I will record in the first person)

The elder (in our church) said to me: "There is no brother willing to share, so I appoint you, Samuel, to share." So I prayed about what should I share and nothing came out. And this afternoon the elder asked me again, so I went back to pray, and the Lord said to me: "If you don't share this time, there will be no opportunity for you later on." And four words appeared in my mind: value, submission, cherish and glory.

On *value*, I've found that the more I endeavor to read the Bible and pray, the more I find myself *valueless* since all of me and what I have belongs to Him. The only advantage we Christians have is that we have God. If we live according to Rev 7:17 and always center our lives around Him, we will have enough faith, hope and love.

Speaking of *submission*, it shows in the outward that we obey our authority, but it also has an inner side to it. As for me, a lot of times I am not submissive in my heart. The inner pride in me is hard to be obedient. Every time I overcome one kind of proudness, there comes another greater proudness. I found learning and praying for a humble heart is a life-long lesson. We should never use our weakness as an excuse for making a mistake. Our weakness is not something for us to

show to the others, but a sacrifice to the Lord. We should offer our weakness and disadvantages to God as sacrifices.

On *cherish*, if we find ourselves living in comfort, we should be careful not to be carried away—that would lead us to abusing God’s grace and seriously hurt ourselves. We should always retreat to His presence and God always reminds us to not forget who He is. We should learn to quickly repent and cherish all the blessings from Him. If we don’t cherish His blessings, even the blessings would become curses.

Speaking of glory, we should never rob God’s glory. When we are praised by the others, never ever even think that I am the fabulous one. Never let your right hand know what your left hand did. Let glorifying the Lord and praising Him become our only passion in this life. God is real, passionate, complete and out of our imagination. We should never ever extinguish the praying fire and please don’t applaud for me.

Linda (the host of the service) concluded upon Samuel’s sharing: “It almost moved me to tears. Such a young boy in his early 20s, he already knows he is proud and easy to be carried away. It makes me feel ashamed for myself. I am so proud for such a brother and co-worker among us.”

**Plum Blossom:** Theme—The Lord’s standard, method and objective of choosing disciples.

Basically the spokesperson for this group reviewed the master plan of evangelism. Linda the host of the service concluded: “It is necessary for us to review the Master Plan of Evangelism from time to time.”

**The taste of the Lord’s grace:** A Testimony from a sister in this group.

(I will record in the first person):

The greatest gain for me so far in this discipleship journey is that I have established a relationship with the Lord and realized the importance of confession and repentance. The Lord used a tiny revelation to show me that being able to confess and repent is a blessing, and the more and clearer we repent before him, the greater our blessing will be. And I realized it is a protection for us. Psalms 32:5-6 greatly impressed me and the Holy Spirit urged me to publicly repent for my verbal words. In the very beginning (when I just turned to the Lord in August 2013), I was humble whenever I listened to a sermon. But later on, I began to judge the speaking skills of different pastors. When I visited a church two weeks ago, I didn’t see the pastor I expected. It was another pastor speaking that day, and I found myself judging him in my heart. I told my family in Christ that we need to pray for that church and later I heard an inner voice asking me to be quiet. It told me that what I shared was just my judgment and the Holy Spirit convicted me, reminding me to repent for my thoughts. He that talks much errors much. Our humble prayer should always go before we doing anything that seems right in our own eyes. (This sister both began and ended with repentant prayers)

**Lamb:** Theme—Wait for the Lord

(I will record in the first person)

I am only a new believer and have little knowledge about the Lord. The first day I came here, it was the beginning day of discipleship study. I cried my eyes out in the whole service. During my discipleship process, I’ve learned that the most essential part of our life is to wait for the Lord every day and get refreshed in him. Two weeks ago, I was at home taking care of my daughter since she was sick. That afternoon I had to go for a meeting in my company, and I have this habit of taking a nap at noon and if I didn’t do that, my whole afternoon would be ruined. But that afternoon I didn’t take a nap. It took 40-50 minutes to get to my company. Sitting on the bus, I began to meditate on the Lord’s prayer. I also recited David’s psalms, the one saying that “I thirst

you like a deer thirsts for streams of water.” As I did this I felt a supernatural joy overwhelm me. That whole afternoon I was clear-minded.

**Delight:** Testimony—understanding “equity and justice” before and after I became a Christian.

(I will record in the first person)

I was born in the 70s and had a brother one year younger than me. From my youth, I had always been contending with my brother and accusing my parents for their “son” preference. This accusation continued until I became a mother of two. I moved to France with my husband in 2008 and lived there for two years. In the pursuing of “equity and justice,” I was so unhappy and my husband was the one who suffered by it. My son had a saying: “Daddy has two bosses. One is in his company and the other is at home.” During discipleship study, I began to understand that I am to be a helper to my husband and this understanding greatly improved my family life and I also no longer see my brother as a rival. What I began to understand when I had two children was, the one who has more resources, the greater their responsibilities are. In France, I always felt inequity. French is my third foreign language and that was to my disadvantage while living there. But now I display more of my Chinese advantages rather than focus on my disadvantages.

**Glorious Bride:** Testimony—a world of difference before and after discipleship.

(I will record in the first person)

To be able to stand here, itself, is a witness. I bought into financial training and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on this. We did our homework, gathered from time to time, and persisted doing it for more than one year. But now, only two are still in contact. What we did was only for the worldly benefit. When the study ended, we separated and went ahead with our own busy things. Just as it is written in Ecclesiastes: *Vanity of vanities*. But discipleship study is so different. I always look so forward to our next gathering, and the four of us are so open to each other. The presence of the Holy Spirit is so real and it’s always refreshing. The lord is indeed faithful ... (choking, in tears and gratitude)

**Maia** (concluding the service): Theme—being completely committed to God can change the world

(I will record in the first person)

I first thought about sharing on the theme of repentance and then deleted it. But that was the Lord’s original plan and he made up his mind to work it out and it indeed happened like that tonight.

Anyone who has ever gone abroad would fill out forms in their travels. In those forms they would be asked about their marital status. If you are married, would you write that you are single? That would be unthinkable. Would we not treat our faith with the same attitude when we fill those forms? That’s commitment: a sense of identity.

In our group there is a sister. She has a younger sister who is a Buddhist. Her younger sister noticed that since her elder sister began to learn how to be the Lord’s disciple, she saw that the joy was so obvious inside her elder sister, that even the dishes she prepared were more various than before. Commitment is something that can be seen at any time in a way that others can know our identity. Why did Peter go out to cry when the Lord met his eye the eve before He went to Cross? He cried because he denied his identity with Jesus and, therefore, his commitment to him.

True Christians are His disciples. I hope everyone remembers we are Christians just like we remember our marital status. This is the most prominent, the first, the only one and everlasting identity: we are *disciples* of Jesus. And the more we know Him, the more abundant our joy will be.

It is our mandate to change the culture of this world. The sad phenomenon in this world is that Christians have completely handed our culture over to the world. Look at the books we read, the movies we watch, even the design of our clothes! If we would ever emphasize our identity, if all of our restaurants owners were well-known Christians, would we ever have heard of sewer oil? Why shouldn't *we* cultivate the musicians, the artists, our younger generations for the Lord?

Five years ago, I had a girlfriend who was the head of an advertising company. She went to church twice, but later she became a Buddhist. The reason she gave me for this was that all the songs she heard in the church were just popular songs in the world. They changed the lyrics but kept the tune. My heart was bleeding when she was telling me this. We can't hand our culture to Satan! And I want to remind you: Do not treat your discipleship study as merely for acquiring knowledge. When I first began to learn this discipleship material through skype with Pastor Jay, I was acquiring knowledge. However, this time through (with my group), it is completely different! This time it is more real. A lot of words in our discipleship studies have been telling us about our identity and the way we should live our life. Our identity is someone who has already become His disciple.

As for submission, I didn't expect Samuel [my son] would share the same theme tonight. The Master Plan of Evangelism speaks about *following* and *discipline*. The first of all things for being a disciple is *discipline* and the next then is *to obey*. When you give me your questions, I never answer your questions. I am only a mediator to present your questions to Papa [Jay] in order to ensure my submission to him. Mike Bickle from IHOP once said that the Lord put someone no better than us, above us, in order for us to learn to submit. It is God's heart for us to have mercy. All of us are just clay jars with different destinies. There's no great cause that can be accomplished by one person. The time when we find that our authority is no better than us, that's the time for us to learn submission. And submission is sweet.

In our group, there is a sister. She treats her discipleship study seriously. Once, when she was so fluently sharing in our group, the brilliant sister who had graduated from Peking University was very surprised and said: "She surely is very familiar with Bible." Last week, her husband asked her out to spend the weekend somewhere, and she said: "No, I can't go." He asked why, and she said: "I want to do my homework." Her surprised husband said, "What? You're really taking this seriously, aren't you?" Truly, our identity at home is still as a disciple. We Chinese have a saying, "Be frustrated for one's talent." I think we should really say it this way: Be frustrated for your talent not being discovered because you're unwilling to submit authority and, therefore, can't make yourself obedient. Our Lord Jesus is our model for submission. Let's read Peter 2:21-25.

We need to pay our price for being completely committed and submitted to the Lord as His disciples.

(Maia also shared with everyone what Papa had shared with us last Tuesday during our Skype session. Every time we meet she tries her best to record everything Papa teaches her for later sharing. This was to highlight the benefit of submission to spiritual authority whom the Lord places in your life).

Papa, Maia told me that after she shared this with the congregation, she found the palms and back of her hands covered with gold dust powder!

Hallelujah!!!!

Love,

Abbey