

As we execute our evangelizing plan in the mission field, it is important to remember that mission work does not stop at the point when people hear and receive the Gospel. The work of equipping must begin immediately among those who are new born babies in Christ.

Much of our hard work to evangelize will go to waste if believers don't know the truth and have not experienced true transformation. The pressure from unbelieving family members and friends, the temptation of worldly desires, and the encounter of false teachings, all are imminent threats to new converts. If we don't provide help to strengthen their new found faith, many will fall away quickly. Those who are growing in their faith also need to be trained up so that not only they themselves have a strong faith but they will also pass on the faith to others.

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Apostle Paul told us that God gave some to be evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ, and this is to be carried on until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. God's children will run into problems if they are left to grow up on their own. They need extra help in knowing the Truth and living it out.

In the pioneering evangelism stage, when we first start a church or fellowship group in the mission field, the work of equipping the believers will initially fall upon the missionaries' shoulders. As the church becomes more established and Christians become more mature, God will call and raise leaders to pastor the flock and teach the truth. At that point, Leaders of the church will be taking over the responsibility of equipping from the missionaries. The more mature Christians will be equipped to minister to other less mature Christians in the faith. And the church will keep growing by involving each Christian in the work to the building up of the body of Christ.

In the long run, much of the work of equipping will be done by pastors and lay leaders in local churches. But since many Chinese Christian churches and fellowship groups in Europe are still in a young and developing stage, they are still heavily depended upon outside help. The mission of COCM needs to support these churches and fellowship groups in areas of discipleship and Biblical teaching. We need to provide training opportunities to encourage church leaders and co-workers to be grounded in the truth and mature in Christ. We must also help to train up some leaders to become pastoral workers and missionaries.

There are now more than 250 Chinese churches and numerous Christian fellowship groups in Europe. We estimate that less than 70% of them are under the care of a pastor or full time ministry worker. Even so, many of these churches are small and spiritually weak. One of the strategic priorities in our equipping plan is to provide training for their pastoral workers and church leaders so they can grow in spiritual maturity. For the churches and fellowship groups without full time workers, we shall continue to seek ways to develop innovative programs to train up lay leaders and support their need of discipleship and truth teaching. Let us pray for Chinese believers in Europe to attain maturity in Christ so they can take up the task of evangelization within their own kind and beyond.

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