

The History of True Jesus Church (I)

Passages: Deut 11:16–17; Mt 23:15; 3:3; Col 1:27; 1 Cor 3:4–7; Tit 3:5–6; 2 Thess 2:13; Rom 8:13

Memory Verse

“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.” (1 Corinthians 3:8–9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God inspired and directed His workers to establish the church in China.2. The Holy Spirit taught the early workers the correct doctrines of baptism and of the Sabbath day.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All of us were chosen by God to be saved and to serve His purpose in accordance with His will.2. The Holy Spirit dwells within us to help us follow God’s will.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To be an effective worker for God, we must pursue the Spirit’s power and guidance.2. Remember that God gives the increase, not His workers.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Understanding Our Church History – The Pentecostal Movement in China
- B. The Birth of Our Church
- C. The Early Childhood of the Church
- D. Beyond China
 - 1. Taiwan (1926)
 - 2. Singapore (1927)

Life Application

- 1. The Work of the Holy Spirit
- 2. God Gives the Increase
- 3. Establishing God’s Church in a Foreign Land

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The early workers were able to serve the Lord effectively because they relied on the power of the Holy Spirit and trusted in the guidance of the Lord. They were able to serve His purpose because of the power given to them by the Spirit.

Spiritual Teachings

(Teachers: A Google Earth Pro file is available as a supplement to this lesson. It is easy to set up and a good way to engage your students. Simply download the .kmz file, go to Google Earth Pro (<https://www.google.com/earth/versions/>), and import the .kmz file. If using Google Chrome, you may need to toggle import abilities via the settings menu. As an alternative, see Figure 1: Map of relevant locations in China.)

Introduction

Many people do not find history interesting. However, it is important for us to understand the connections between the past and present. By examining the beginnings and growth of our church, we will gain a deeper and richer knowledge of God’s work. Learning about the history of our family teaches us more about our own identity. In the same way, learning about the history of the church will give us a better understanding of God’s will for the church and how it impacts our faith today.

(Teachers: This lesson is based on an adapted translation from the anniversary publication, “30 Years of Preaching in Taiwan,” published by the Taiwan General Assembly in 1956.)

After the Acts of the Apostles

Despite the works of the Holy Spirit and the fervency of the disciples in apostolic times, the churches quickly deviated from the original teachings in the centuries that followed. Many preached their own doctrines, even going so far as to create their own versions of the Bible and institute their own sacraments based on worldly practices. As a result, the Holy Spirit departed, fulfilling the prophecy, “[And] He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain” (Deut 11:16–17). There were no positive changes until the 16th century, when a Christian named Martin Luther initiated church reform.

Luther urged a return to the Bible as the source of truth. Despite his efforts, several denominations arose from Christianity, each preaching their own doctrines and causing much interdenominational strife. Jesus condemned this mentality, saying, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Mt 23:15). However, this reform eventually paved the way for the spread of the gospel in China, and the apostolic church of the early days was finally revived on the Gregorian calendar date of January 2, 1918¹, in the form of the True Jesus Church.

A. Understanding Our Church History – The Pentecostal Movement in China

Do you know when and where our church was first established? How did the Spirit begin the work? Many specific details of our church history have unfortunately been lost to time, but we know enough to understand just how much God has guided our church into existence.

The Lord arranged several factors that led to our church’s formation, but we can trace our history to two key roots: the Pentecostal movement, which had reached China in 1907; and the Apostolic Faith Church, an extension of the Pentecostal movement that was first established in Shanxi Province in 1911. Other Apostolic Faith churches were later established in Beijing, in part because of Elder Peterson. He and a Western missionary with the Chinese name of Mo Lizhi published newsletters in which they stressed the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and the second coming of Christ.

¹ According to the Lunar calendar, this would have been the twentieth day of the eleventh month, 1917 (See Manna Issue #84, p. 2).

The Pentecostal movement had a role similar to John the Baptist's, serving as "[the] voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight' " (Mt 3:3). The movement paved the way for the true church, as all the early pillars of the True Jesus Church were affiliated with the Apostolic Faith. This includes Ling-Sheng Chang, Paul Wei, and Barnabas Chang. It was to these workers that God had begun to "make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).

Ling-Sheng Chang, originally a deacon of the Presbyterian Church, came into contact with the Apostolic Faith Church in 1909. Miraculously, his son, Boquan Chang, received the Holy Spirit. This prompted Ling-Sheng to pray fervently until he, too, received the Holy Spirit at home. Of particular note is that through the Holy Spirit's revelation, Ling-Sheng began to observe the Sabbath day in accordance with the truth.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, 1916, Paul Wei had fallen critically ill, but despite consulting many doctors over three months, was only healed through prayer and the laying of hands within the Apostolic Faith Church. As a result, he baptized into the church and eventually received the Holy Spirit during a family service above his fabric store in Beijing. Elsewhere, Barnabas Chang, a farmer and antique dealer, came to believe when Ling-Sheng preached in his village in Shandong Province. He received the Holy Spirit on a hill when he was returning home from his farmyard, and began theological training under Ling-Sheng a few years later, in 1915. With this, God began to pave the way towards the true church.

B. The Birth of Our Church

The Holy Spirit set in motion several key events in 1917. Paul Wei received a revelation from the Lord about the truth, giving him the understanding that he needed to leave the Apostolic Faith Church. He was also commanded by God to fast and pray for thirty-nine days. During this period, he was guided by the Holy Spirit to be baptized in accordance with the Bible. This occurred on May 26, 1917. The Lord then appeared before him twice: once when he raised his face from the river, and again when he approached the forest beyond the shore.

Paul immediately began to preach in the name of the Correctional Church of All Nations, True Jesus Church. Later that year, the name became shortened when he received permission from the local police headquarters to register his textile warehouse as the official premises of the "True Jesus Church."

The Lord brought together two key workers for His church in 1918 when Ling-Sheng Chang traveled to Tianjin and met Paul, having heard of someone who also preached the correct Sabbath day. It was here that the Spirit gave Ling-Sheng the power to rectify incorrect doctrines, and the two began to work together. Barnabas Chang joined the group in 1919. However, Paul died that same year, leaving others, including his son, Isaac Wei, to continue the work of preaching the gospel.

C. The Early Childhood of the Church

The church grew rapidly after its establishment. Isaac Wei and a fellow member, Ke-Xin Ye, preached and established churches in northern China, while Ling-Sheng and Barnabas preached in southern China. Ling-Sheng eventually retired to his hometown, but Barnabas continued traveling. As a result, Thomas Kuo and Silas Lin, formerly Seventh Day Adventists, came to believe. Together, the three preached in Xiamen and Zhangzhou. There, the Lord paved the way to the gospel in Taiwan, when several Taiwanese Presbyterians were converted in 1925.

Aside from the first three-month theological training seminar, 1926 marked three major organizational changes. First, forty by-laws were passed. Second, the church's headquarters were established in

Nanjing. Its purpose was to centralize all the churches, both inside and outside of China, and establish future doctrine. Third, the official newsletter for the church headquarters, “Holy Spirit Times,” was created. With these changes, the church became more formally organized and united. Much later, in 1945, the term “Church Headquarters” was changed to “General Assembly.”

Unfortunately, Barnabas strayed from the truth when he was sent to support overseas churches. He began to proclaim himself as the church’s founder. As a result, the headquarters began to review the church’s history. Unhappy with this action, Barnabas established his own headquarters in Hong Kong and ordained himself General Bishop. He then began hindering the work of the true church. Despite many calls to return, he refused to listen and was thus excommunicated. Although Barnabas faltered, the church work continued to flourish under the Spirit’s guidance, spreading to nearby countries and beyond.

D. Beyond China²

The gospel’s establishment was only the beginning. The workers were not content with remaining in China. The Spirit gave them the wisdom and courage to spread the gospel beyond its borders. Today, let’s learn about how the gospel arrived in Taiwan and Singapore.

1. Taiwan (1926)

In 1925, several Japanese-educated Taiwanese youths accepted the truth in China. Many Presbyterians accepted the truth that they brought back to Taiwan, so they asked for assistance from the church in China. After clarifying their purpose with the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan on March 4, 1926, the missionary team that was sent traveled all over Taiwan, holding large outdoor evangelical services with audiences of 200–400 people. In the first baptism on March 10th, sixty-two were baptized. In just forty days, God allowed the team to baptize over 100 people, establish three churches, and transform the Christian community in Taiwan.

By November 1926, headquarters for the Taiwanese churches, the Taiwan Church Branch, was established. In 1956, its name was changed to the True Jesus Church General Assembly in Taiwan. Since the First World Delegate’s Conference in 1967, Taiwan has also become home to the International Assembly of the True Jesus Church.

2. Singapore (1927)

In 1925, an elder from the True Jesus Church in Fujian, China, went to Singapore to preach the gospel. That December, five were baptized. In February of 1926, another elder from Fujian joined him in Singapore. Many believers they baptized later became important workers in church development, and by August of 1926, the membership in Singapore had reached fifty.

In January of 1927, a third elder from Fujian also traveled to Singapore and preached in a school called Chung Teck. Fourteen members came to believe and began meeting in the upper room of a shop house that belonged to a brother. One month later, on February 27, 1927, the first True Jesus Church in Singapore was established on 11 Kinta Road.

Life Application

1. The Work of the Holy Spirit

² Additional infographic can be found in Manna Issue #84, p. 28.

If we study the history of the church more deeply, it is inevitable that we will also find hundreds of miraculous testimonies, all tied into the growth and development of the church. For example, the following are brief summaries of eyewitness testimonies that can be found in the 30th anniversary book published by the Taiwan General Assembly in 1947.³

- **Resurrection in Hebei Province:** A widow who was a True Jesus Church member witnessed a dead woman in her thirties being placed into a coffin. The widow immediately prayed with power from on high, crying out, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I ask you to get up!” The dead woman immediately resurrected. She praised God, and the entire village came to believe.
- **Resurrection in Hena Province:** Upon hearing about the healing power of God, four sons sought out the church’s help regarding their recently passed, sixty-five-year-old mother. They invited a deaconess from the church to pray for their mother, and they all prayed for two hours. It was then that their mother rose from the dead, understanding that she had died and resurrected. News of the miracle spread, and the village came to fear God.
- **Healing in Wang Hang:** A cripple of twenty-four years was carried to two workers preaching in the city. The Holy Spirit told one of the workers that should he be baptized, he would be healed. Upon being asked, the cripple agreed to be baptized, so the workers found a suitable site, whereupon they took the man into the water, told him to bow his head, and then cast out Satan in the name of the Lord. The evil spirit immediately left, and the workers promptly baptized him. The man then lifted his head, rose to his feet, and walked.
- **Healing in an unrecorded location:** A mute man was willing to be baptized, but an evil spirit within him insisted that his head needed to face up during baptism. Two workers baptized him in accordance with the Bible, with his head bowed, his whole body immersed, and in the name of the Lord Jesus. Immediately, the evil spirit left. When he came back to shore, he spat something out from his mouth and, filled by the Holy Spirit, began to sing a spiritual song.

God’s Amazing Protection

(The following is an abbreviated version of a testimony from *Manna*, Issue #84.⁴)

In 1946, the church in Nan’ao, Yilan County was under great persecution. A certain church spread rumors that the True Jesus Church was a cult and should be exterminated. The church was targeted two times a week, often in the middle of a sermon. When the persecutors came, they would ring a bell so that the brothers and sisters would know they were coming. Nevertheless, none left their seat, and all refused to deny Jesus Christ.

The attackers would push the members to the ground, grab them by the hair or ears, and hit their heads. They would beat them with a stick and step on them until they passed out. They also targeted the church’s minister, brutally beating him until he passed out. Despite this, he continued to minister every day, and the Nan’ao believers were undeterred in their faith.

³ *True Jesus Church 30th Anniversary Commemoration Special Edition*, (Taiwan: True Jesus Church, 1947), ch. 14 pp./ N2–N3, N6.

⁴ “In Retrospection and Reflection: One Hundred Years of Spiritual Grace”, *Manna Issue #84* (USA: True Jesus Church, 2017), <http://ia.tjc.org/elibrary/ContentDetail.aspx?ItemID=36259&langid=1>, pp. 5–6.

One Sabbath, an angel appeared to the brethren during a service at Nan'ao, and told them, "Violent attackers will come to persecute you today. I will lead all of you to another place. Do not return home to pack, just bring your Bible and hymnbook. Come, follow me." The angel brought them to a broken hanging bridge that had been marked as unsafe and off-limits. He said to those behind him, "Pay attention to where I put my feet; if you step where I do, you'll be safe." Not long after, their pursuers came after them. But they were afraid to cross the rickety bridge and gave up their pursuit.

In all of these testimonies, we can clearly see the work of the Holy Spirit, whose powerful presence and guidance are evident. The early workers were able to witness for Christ because of the divine power and truth that they received from the Holy Spirit. Their service was effective not only because they had the Spirit within them, but also because they sought the Spirit's strength and power each day. It is easy to forget that receiving the Holy Spirit is only the first step in our spiritual journey. Our work for the Lord is only effective when we seek out and rely on His power to guide us and aid us. When you serve the Lord, how much do you rely on Him? Do you turn first to His Spirit for strength to do His work?

2. God Gives the Increase

The early workers certainly laid down much of the groundwork for our church, but they were nonetheless still human, and served only as vessels for God. Their lives teach us of the mighty deeds that can be done with God's power, but also warn us that even workers who are strong in the truth may fall. Sometimes, we may admire certain workers for their service to God or their insight into the truth, but when we choose to follow God's workers instead of God Himself, we have already lost the truth.

Let's read 1 Corinthians 3:4–7. Paul expressed the danger of forgetting that God's workers are only human who simply serve as vessels for God's power. The same is true of the early church workers, our workers today, and, of course, of ourselves. Have you ever admired or even idolized a member for their church work? How do we remind ourselves that their work is from God, and for God alone? Have you ever felt that you should be praised for your own service in church? How can we keep our hearts humble?

3. Establishing God's Church in a Foreign Land

(Teachers: Due to time constraints, you may want to give this to your students as a homework project over the following two weeks; this activity is also included in Lesson 4. You may need to coordinate with other teachers. If you choose to do this during class and the students do not have their own devices, you will need to provide each group with a laptop or tablet with Internet access for research.)

The goal of this activity is to help students understand the various logistical and spiritual considerations involved when preaching, and to learn the basics of planning in evangelism. Optional: Divide students into groups of three or four. Collaboration may be difficult if you are giving this to your students as homework, although it would be in and of itself a good lesson on one of the difficulties of establishing a church abroad!)

We learned today how believers established churches in brand new places. But the story doesn't end there. There are still many countries in the world today that have not received the gospel. If you were asked to help evangelize in another country, how would you approach such a mission?

The Rules:

- a. Each group has ten years to establish a thirty-person church.

- b. Pick a country that currently does not have a True Jesus Church. Assume that you do **not** have fluent command of the language of that country.
- c. Perform a background check on the country. Answer the following questions:
 - What is the main language?
 - What are the major ethnic groups?
 - What is the main religion?
 - What are three major obstacles in preaching in this country?
 - Pretend that you are about to immigrate to the country to establish a church. What would you need? Make a list of ten things you need to prepare for immigration (for example, savings, language, working skills).
- d. Come up with a plan for establishing a church in this foreign land. Include:
 - How to overcome language difficulties
 - When and where to start family services
 - How to preach to more people
 - When to apply for prayer house status
 - Who to ask for assistance
 - Needed materials or manpower
 - How many people you would have to bring per year to reach your target goal
- e. Allow each group ten minutes to share their plan. Is it feasible? Why or why not?

Check for Understanding

1. **What two key roots can we trace the history of our church back to?** The Pentecostal movement and the Apostolic Faith Church.
2. **What key doctrines did the Spirit reveal to Ling-Sheng Chang and Paul Wei?** The proper way to observe Sabbath and the correct mode of water baptism in accordance with the truth.
3. **How did the Lord pave the way for the gospel in Taiwan?** When Barnabas, Thomas, and Silas preached in Xiamen and Zhangzhou, several Taiwanese Presbyterians were converted.
4. **What major events occurred in 1926?** The first three-month theological training seminar in Nanjing; three organizational changes: forty by-laws were passed, the church headquarters were established in Nanjing, and the “Holy Spirit Times” was created.
5. **Why were the early workers able to serve so effectively?** Because they sought out the Spirit’s strength and power each day. Our work for the Lord is only effective when we seek out and rely on His power to guide us and aid us.

Memory Verse

“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.” (1 Corinthians 3:8–9)

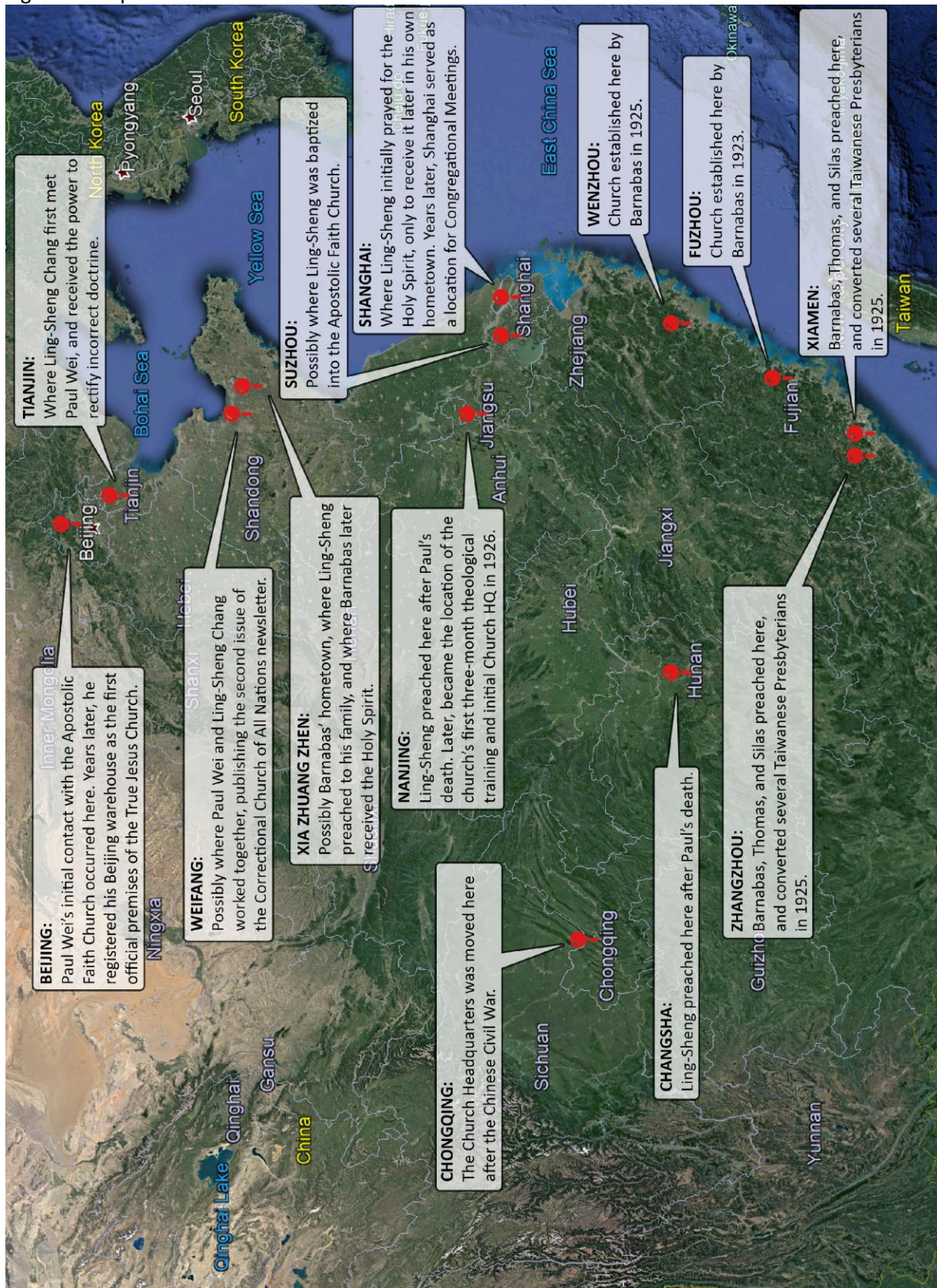
Meaning

It may feel like we cannot do as much, or that we may never be able to match the amazing acts of faith that the early workers performed, but in truth, we are all equal workers, merely vessels for God’s use. Each of us will receive our own reward according to the labor that we have done for God. We simply need to be willing to put forth the effort to do our part in planting and watering God’s church. When we do, God’s work will flourish under His hand through us!

Conclusion

The early workers of our church all had very different strengths, characteristics, and weaknesses. But they were able to serve the Lord effectively because they relied on the power of the Holy Spirit and trusted in the guidance of the Lord. They willingly submitted to the Spirit's revelations and were able to serve His purpose because of the power given to them by the Spirit.

Figure 1: Map of relevant locations in China



Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does this verse teach us about our labor for God?
We are all equal vessels for God's purpose, and will receive our own reward. We simply need to put forth the effort to do our part in planting and watering God's church. When we do, God's work will flourish under His hand through us!
2. What are two key roots that we can trace our church history back to?
The Pentecostal Movement in China, and the Apostolic Faith Church.
3. "To them God _____ to make _____ what are the _____ of the _____ of this _____ among the Gentiles: which is _____ in you, the _____ of _____." (Colossians 1:27)
willed, known, riches, glory, mystery, Christ, hope, glory.
4. What key doctrines did Paul Wei and Ling-Sheng Chang receive from the Holy Spirit?
The proper way to observe Sabbath and the correct mode of water baptism in accordance with the truth.
5. Why were the early workers able to serve God so effectively?
Because they not only had the Spirit within them, but also sought out His strength and power every day. Our work for the Lord is only effective when we seek out and rely on His power to guide us and aid us.
6. Describe a time when you witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit, either in your life or in the life of someone close to you.
Personal answers.