



CARING BETTER FOR MEMBERS BY TRAINING THEM TO MULTIPLY

Back in 2000 I planted a bilingual Cantonese/Mandarin church in Los Angeles. I worked hard at caring for our members and poured lots of effort into programs and events, drawing crowds of up to 100, but our regular membership remained around 50 adults.

From the beginning I *urged* our members to be faithful witnesses, then in 2014 I took responsibility to *lead* our church on an intentional journey

- from being recipients of and participants in church ministry
- to being missionaries to our community.

MY OWN TURNING POINT

In August of 2014 I met Sean in Hong Kong and first learned about church-planting movements. After just ninety minutes of training we went into a rough

part of Hong Kong. To my astonishment we found a person there interested in hearing about Jesus.

Back in L.A. I shared this experience with my church, and three months later arranged for Sean to offer training for our members to seek out people prepared for the gospel.

OUR CHURCH TRANSITION

I prepared our members with one-liners in the bulletin like “Don’t bring people to the church, bring the church to them.” And I created and shared short video skits in our Sunday service, explaining why we would be discouraging people from bringing friends to church:

- What happens outside church is more important.
- Church is very simple but we have complicated it.

BY **JIMMY TAM**

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Jimmy Tam pastors Sunrise Christian Community, an evangelical Chinese church in Alhambra. He is originally from Hong Kong. His passion is to love Jesus, continue Jesus’ mission to make disciples, and train others to do the same. He and his wife have three children.

- We want to bring Jesus into families rather than bringing people to church.

Fifty percent of our members attended our first training, and 20% were eager to apply it. We started a “love our neighbor” campaign to meet those around our church. We trained our members to say, “Jesus taught us to love our neighbors, and we want to do that. How can we pray for you?” With neighbors who received prayer we returned and asked, “Can we share a story of love that really encouraged us?” And with neighbors who let us share a story we asked:

- What do you think about Jesus?
- What do you think about this story?
- What is God telling you from this story?
- What does He want you to do?
- Who can we pray with you for?

Our neighborhood is Hispanic, and this led us into cross-cultural evangelism. Whole families participated, including three kids under ten, and it was a great experience. Afterward nearly a dozen of our members began consistently telling their story with Jesus’ story and “Seven Stories of Love.”

OUR NEW NORMAL

In place of my Sunday sermon time we now have training, celebration and testimony from our members’ experiences in sharing over the past week. We also practice “baptism parties.” Sean provided some of the materials we use, and I wrote the rest.

Our four-week training cycle covers:

- Testimony (our personal story with Jesus’ story)
- Storytelling (one of the “stories of love”)
- How to pray for the sick
- How to run a home church.

Every other Sunday we break into groups for communion and practice, with everyone asking someone, “What are you thankful for, and how can we pray for you?”

We now call our building a training center, not a church, and only allow our original members to attend ... *no new believers!* For Chinese New Year, Christmas and Thanksgiving we have only a brief

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time of worship, then encourage everyone to go share Jesus’ love with others.

Now, one year later, 70% of our members are making disciples and planting household churches in ten church-planting teams, each with two or more members:

- Five family teams.
- Two young adult teams.
- One elderly team.
- And two college student teams.

Half a dozen of our families are leading new believers to do church in their homes, while our young adults are mainly going door to door. Our college students have also started three or four seeker groups. We have started a dozen house churches or seeker groups, and our teams are excited about seeking out others who are waiting for the gospel.

Now, instead of me baptizing people at our building we offer a \$100 subsidy from the church for members to host baptism parties in their homes. Our members are spontaneously baptizing people and telling me about it afterward. Since we have equipped and emboldened them with training and experience, at least 50% of our members are now actively sharing in their workplace.

Over the past year, our members have matured dramatically, are experiencing increased warfare, and our church is praying a lot more.

CARING MORE EFFECTIVELY

I have always cared for our members, but I have learned that I care for them more effectively by equipping them to bring Jesus into their contexts than by asking them to bring others to receive my ministry. 