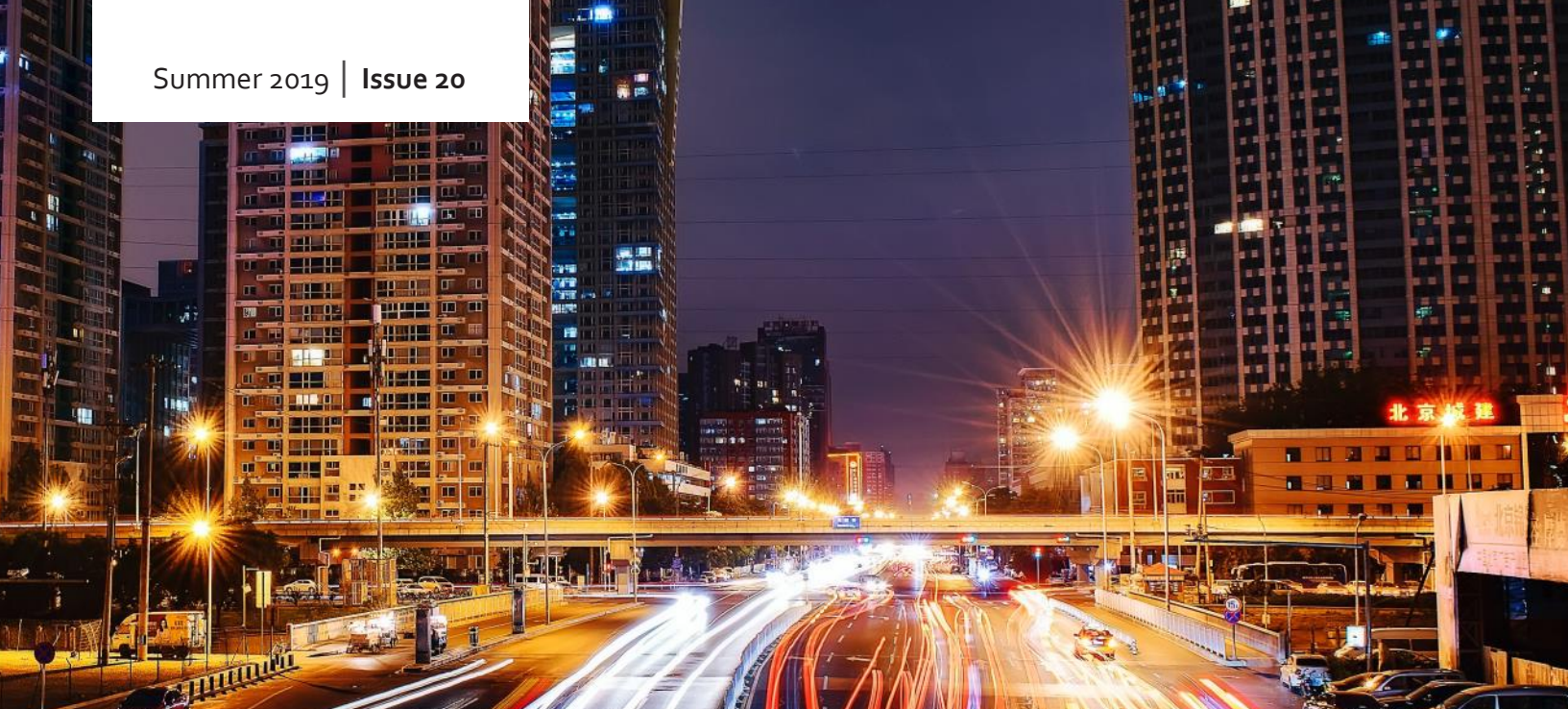
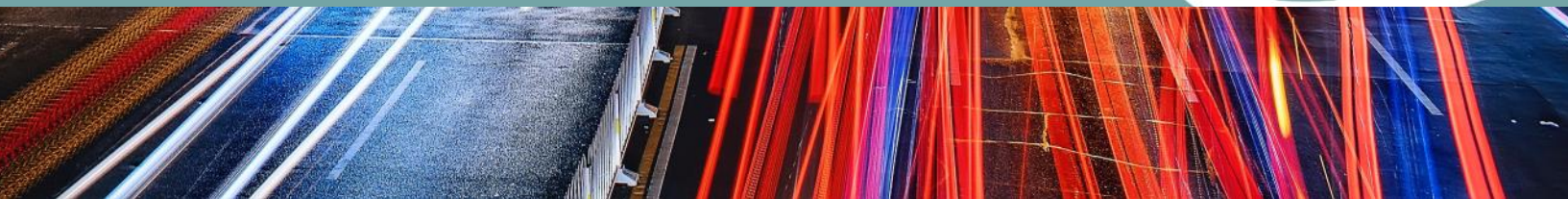


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insight



Clarity in a Transitioning World

Learning from Brexit, Millennials and China

Change in China: Faith Under Pressure
— *Debbie D. Philip*

Millennials, Leadership and Friends International
— *Sarah Dawkins*

European Students in a Brexit World
— *Sofia Demler*

friends
INTERNATIONAL
*transforming students
transforming nations*

A Journal for International Student Ministry in the UK

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A Word From the Editor



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Winds of change are blowing up a worldwide storm: political instability, economic uncertainty, radicalisation of religion, Brexit confusion, mass migration, environmental concerns. There is a sense in which the future has never felt so unknown – yet casualties and opportunities exist side by side. Mental health services are active in rescuing the drowning. Businesses and publishers seize opportunities to sell the building of resilience for navigation on new seas. For Christians, uncertainty should lead to a deeper trust in God's sovereignty as we discern His Kingdom purposes.

In our ministry, we feel these winds acutely as we chat to international students in our cafés, read messages from returnees and observe unexpected trends in the students who come to our Bible studies. Listening to their dreams and fears alongside reports in global news gives a fuller picture of a world tossed and torn. This issue of *Insight* brings us further reflections to enable us to understand, pray and offer Christ-centred hope and purpose. After all, we carry the baton (the oar?!) of those who “turned the world upside-down” with the message of Jesus!

Change by its very nature can be unpredictable. However, we trust that the articles will give new perspectives even amid fluid and fast-moving currents. First, Debbie Philip offers insights into political changes in China introduced by Xi Jinping. Using case studies, she discusses the developing risks as well as opportunities for ministry among Chinese students and returnees. Second,

Sarah Dawkins returns to the topic of our 2019 staff conference on Millennials, that is, those born between 1981 and 1996. Capturing and developing our discussion around this theme, she asks important questions about change in us: how might we adapt our ways and embrace new vision from younger staff, students and volunteers?

Third, Sofia Demler writes about her discussions with European students as they study in the UK amid the prospect of Brexit and face an insecure future. She suggests ways in which we can open up conversations, especially about the emotional impact of these uncertainties. Finally, two book reviews encourage further deliberation on this topic. One explores the changes necessary to encourage Christian growth and maturity in Chinese returnees. The other suggests changes necessary for surviving and thriving in Christian work.

So, whatever our thoughts and feelings as the winds of change rock the boat, surely our prayer must be that alongside the students we seek to serve, we too will trust Jesus who comes to us afresh amid the storm and when the wind dies down. May we learn from Him, remembering that the winds are subject to His authority. And the Spirit, the Breath of God, blows a peace and a power far greater than the splutterings of earthly tempests.

His purposes in all this wind of change are beyond our imagining.





Change in China: Faith Under Pressure



Debbie D. Philip

Debbie has been meeting Chinese students for many years. She left Friends International to do PhD research about returnees and now serves with OMF. She is the author of 'Heading Home with Jesus: Preparing Chinese Students to Follow Christ in China'.

Something is happening in China. Since summer 2018 articles have appeared in the Western press describing the Chinese government's increasing interventions in Chinese citizens' lives, particularly religious life. As many as a million Uyghur people, traditionally Muslim, are believed to be in re-education camps in north-western Xinjiang Province. Three large well-known house churches, Zion in Beijing, Early Rain in Chengdu, and Rongguili in Guangzhou have been closed. Some other churches in other cities have closed or split into small groups, either at the insistence of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) or at their own decision. Even registered churches are affected, for example by enforcement, in some areas, of the ban on teaching the Bible to under 18s.

What's happening is not limited to religion. There is a bigger picture. Education, the media and other aspects of social life are affected too. This is part of a policy to bring the whole country in line with 'Xi Jinping thought'. President Xi aims to make China great again and views national security of this huge territory, with 56 people groups, as central to that aim.

Steve Tsang, professor at SOAS, University of London, wrote: "The goal

of the Chinese president's guiding doctrine is not to launch a new cold war with the West, or to export China's political model. Rather, Xi wants to shore up the authority of the party-state within his country, including by ensuring that Chinese are not exposed to liberal-democratic ideas.¹ The doctrine aims to strengthen the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the source of stability and power under 'a visionary leader on a historic mission'². Xi's ideas include echoes of Mao, Marx and Confucianism.

Foreign ideas which may threaten this goal are viewed as risks to national security. So, Muslims, with perceived links to terrorist behaviour, are subject to stringent control. Christianity has always been seen in China as a foreign, western religion, and so carrying a risk of foreigners using it to destabilise China. Therefore churches, and in some cases individual Christians, especially those in key positions, are targets for control; the perceived risk increases with large churches and greater foreign links.

Exactly how threats are perceived and dealt with varies across the country. Implementation of the February 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs varies. Any implementation of regulations on the use of the internet for religious

1. www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-xi-jinping-thought-reform-by-steve-tsang-2019-02

2. www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/world/asia/xi-jinping-thought-explained-a-new-ideology-for-a-new-era.html

purposes, proposed in September 2018, is also likely to vary.³ These proposals include limiting 'preaching' and 'training' to licensed religious bodies and restricting what other organisations and individuals can convey by text, photo, audio or video.

This article considers three issues which are already affecting Christians in China and which will affect returnees. You might consider using these as case studies with prospective returnees.

1. SIGNING STATEMENTS

My friend's father, Mr Wang⁴, is retired. He's a member of the Chinese Communist Party *and* a committed follower of Jesus Christ. He was already a Party member when he came to faith. Late in 2017 he and his wife were visited by officers of the PSB. They asked him to sign a statement saying he had no religious belief. He politely declined and shared the good news about Jesus. On their third visit the officers said 'look, we respect you, but you need to know that your pension is at risk if you don't sign'. He declined. Since then the family have been waiting and wondering what might happen; yet trusting God with their futures. They later learned that initially there were only a few people who declared their faith, refusing to sign the statement, and they were targeted. But gradually, the PSB decided those who are Christians but didn't declare it posed more of a threat. They then shifted their focus to finding those "hidden" ones, and left people like Mr Wang alone. So far, his pension hasn't been affected, but his passport is being "looked after" by the PSB.

Ling isn't a Party member but she attended Zion church in Beijing, until it was closed because the church refused to install surveillance cameras. Public Security officers visited Ling's flat because she was on a list of church members. They asked her to sign a statement saying she would not go to meetings of the 'illegal' group, Zion. The officers weren't threatening; they just had a job to do. Eventually, Ling wrote and signed her own personally worded statement, articulating her refusal to abide by the official restrictions on involvement with Zion. The officers gave her a list of registered churches to choose from.

Chinese students who have become Christians abroad, and those who were Christians in China but have returned since these changes started, need to be prepared for such situations being increasingly likely, especially for Party members and those in academia: they might be told their pension or job or flat rental is at risk if they refuse to deny Christ or refuse to stop attending a specific church. Daniel 3 and 6, and Peter's denial of Christ (John 18:15-27; 21:15-22), might be places to start in addressing these issues with a returnee, discussing: What is the godly response if asked to sign such statements? What are the principles involved? What are the risks, but also, what opportunities might God be presenting at such times? Without instilling fear we can be quite practical in asking them to think what questions an official or employer might ask about their religious activities and what answers they might give, how to be 'wise as serpents and innocent as doves' (Matthew 10:16).

Mr Wang would not, and did not, deny Christ. He also took the opportunity to share the reason for the hope that he has (1 Peter 3:8ff). Ling was willing to make a stand for Christ. Let's pray for returnees not to primarily avoid such trials, but to stand firm as salt and light in them.

2. SURVEILLANCE

China's development of highly sophisticated technology has been in the news a lot recently, from the planned development of a social credit system to accusations of spying levelled at Huawei, the telecoms giant. We must not forget the positive aspects of such developments, which many Chinese enjoy: the ease of communication, consumption and travel enabled by WeChat; future rewards for being helpful citizens promised by the social credit system; protection from rogue taxi drivers offered by facial recognition and mobile phone listening technology.

With this, the Chinese authorities have the capacity to store and access years' worth of detailed information about citizens' lives – should they want to: who people contact and

3. <http://chinachristiandaily.com/news/society/2018-09-13/china-issues-draft-rule-to-regulate-online-religious-messaging-services-7580>

4. 'Mr Wang', 'Ling' and 'Yang' are all pseudonyms.



where they have been, what they buy and who they know... WeChat communication occurring overseas is also stored and available to them.

CCTV cameras have been installed inside Chinese university classrooms for years, especially those used by foreign teachers. In the current climate, might surveillance start to extend to the influence of foreigners on students and academics outside China? Early in 2019 a Chinese academic in China withdrew from an online WeChat group Bible study led by a Christian based in the UK. The foreigner understood her polite withdrawal to be the result of an 'invitation to tea' with a PSB officer. This academic does live in a province which is of particular security concern, but those who lead such groups, or use WeChat for group communication of a religious nature, need to be sensitive to changes in group members' behaviour, also keeping an eye out for any wider developments arising from increasing implementation of restrictions on religious use of the internet⁵.

Surveillance does not necessarily involve technology. Song attended a house church in southern China before she went abroad to study in 2017. After returning home in early 2019, she told me (by a secure app called Signal): 'I went to church on Sunday. The situation is not positive... a guy from the government comes to church to listen to the preaching every Sunday'.

She could feel the pressure church members were feeling from being watched. It occurs to me also that they are probably praying for this regular visitor to be drawn to Christ. As with Mr Wang, there is a case here for discussion and prayer with Chinese students who are preparing to return: what does the Bible teach both us and them about being wise, while standing firm in Christ and continue to meet with his people, not giving in to fear, and about being the aroma of Christ to those who don't know him... like this PSB officer?

3. SINICIZATION

Of course, the PSB officer is there, partly at least, to see whether what is preached constitutes a threat to national security. Registered churches, especially, are also under pressure to teach the Bible in a way which fits in with Xi Jinping thought. There is a project to *sinicize*⁶ religion. This includes a project to publish a new Chinese edition of the Bible, presumably with interpretation in line with CCP doctrine, with accompanying study guides.

Yang has come up against Sinicization, even if he doesn't call it that. He studied in the UK and went home as a very new believer. With help from other returnees he found a good church. The teaching was good; there were even other people his own age. He's been there a few years now and leads a small group. But late last year things at church changed. The lead pastor started to preach differently. Previously he had always taught very clearly from the Bible, but now he was adding some extra things and diluting others. He seemed to be adding things that were more about being a good Chinese citizen than about following Jesus. What was going on? Yang is wondering what to do.

What can you and your church do to help prepare returnees to identify compromised teaching and to prayerfully decide what to do, when they think they are hearing it? How can they identify where the lordship of Christ and the importance of his salvation are being subordinated to the lordship of the CCP? 2 Peter provides a contrast between true and false teachers. Discussion and prayer about what is due to "Caesar" and what to God could help.

So, how else can we help?

To guard against instilling unhelpful fear when we raise issues with future returnees, we can be pragmatic, helping them think through both the challenges *and* the gospel opportunities they may meet. All too often returnees fall away because

5. The summer 2018 edition of Insight contained an excellent article by Peter Booth, 'You Scan or I Scan?' He explained how WeChat has become integral to daily life in China. Between the writing of that and this article, there has been increasing evidence of the authorities' concern about foreign influence on religious activity in China and their ability to use technology to monitor it. It is worth bearing in mind that they are most likely to be concerned about foreigners holding online group religious gatherings (such as Bible studies) or having regular faith-based conversations with individuals in certain positions (such as academics, teachers, government employees, journalists, Party members). However, Christians outside China using WeChat or other unencrypted communication to keep in touch with returned Chinese friends would do well to be sensitive to any changes in their friend's replies and adjust their own content accordingly.

6. Simply, it means 'to make Chinese' and has positive aspects; but there are other connotations related to government intervention in religious activities. <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/the-sinicization-of-religion>

they had not truly grasped the gospel. They are expecting God, as loving Father, to prosper their own plan for a personally successful life. The situation in China gives us added impetus to address this misunderstanding by sharing a theology or an expectation of suffering as we follow Christ, by assuring them of Christ's presence in suffering, and encouraging them in trust, perseverance and prayer – rather than fear. We can pray for the suffering church (in China and elsewhere) with our Chinese friends. We can introduce them to resources which describe Chinese church history, and how God built the Chinese church during difficult times. We do need to beware of being too critical of the Chinese government ourselves. Referring students to Chinese Christian websites or, better still, to Christians in their own cities can be helpful.

Retreats are available, in Chinese, to help returnees prepare to follow Christ after they go home. There are people willing to help look for Christian contacts in Chinese cities⁷. Finally, and crucially, don't underestimate the importance of staying in touch, one to one, with your returning friend, listening to them, praying with them, being there for when the difficulties arise... walking the extra mile alongside. Please don't let fear for them discourage you from following up our Chinese brothers and sisters at the time they most need help to stand firm.

From a worldly perspective, what the church in China faces is tough, but from a kingdom perspective we can look back to the darker years of the Cultural Revolution, when religious activity was completely banned, and see that, at the same time, God was at work building his church in numbers and in faith. The same Father God is still in charge and he is well able and willing to equip his dearly loved children for whatever they may face on their return home. Like Paul, we can be confident 'that he who began a good work... will carry it on to completion.' (Philippians 1:6).

7. For information about retreats and help finding contacts in China, UK Christians should ask a Friends International or OMF Diaspora worker.





Millennials, Leadership and Friends International



Sarah Dawkins

Sarah is the Friends International Regional Development Director for Southern England and Wales. Previously, she worked with UCCF, equipping millennial student leaders to reach their campuses.

Ancestor worship, honour and shame, varying views on timekeeping: these are just a few of the many areas of cultural difference to which Friends International staff and volunteers, and others involved in international student ministry (ISM), are sensitive. We deal with them well, with the view that cultural difference is just that – different, but not necessarily always wrong or right. We have learnt to recognise our cultural bias and do our best to view other cultures neutrally, working to build healthy cross-cultural friendships.

By now, many of us will have encountered the culture that leads us to say: “Getting young people to commit to helping at our café is impossible. They say they’ll turn up, but then at the last minute change their mind.” Or, “They turn up and just want to change everything we’ve ever done. There’s no respect for the decades of work we’ve put in.”

Does this sound familiar to you? Perhaps you’ve said those very words yourself. Or perhaps you long for some younger staff and volunteers! If your team does include younger people, the issues above may be just the ones that you are regularly encountering.

If so, who are the “they”? The chances are that they are the generation described as ‘Millennials’, a highly discussed and researched group who are now in their early twenties to late thirties. Known often as ‘Generation Snowflake’, they have regularly been portrayed in the media as easily offended and unwilling to commit to anything.

MILLENNIALS: STUDENTS, VOLUNTEERS AND COLLEAGUES

This article isn’t an apologetic for millennials but seeks to offer an insight into what makes them tick. There are plenty of things that millennials do (as all humans do) that are unhelpful and wrong, and there is no intention to excuse that at all. Like all believers, millennials should strive to be like Christ, rather than finding their identity and morality in themselves or the world around them. Whatever our feelings about millennials, the fact is that they are both the future, and the present, of our ministry. They are not just the people to whom we minister, but also those who are our co-workers and the ministry leaders of today and tomorrow.

‘Millennial’ is a generational term describing those born between 1981 and 1996¹. Some researchers use

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins>

slightly different dates, but these generally span the early 80s to mid-90s. Millennials are those who remember life before smart phones and the internet being at the centre of daily life, yet are at home in the digital world. This is unlike Gen Z, the majority of current undergraduates, who have never known life without being able to Google something!

Millennials have also been the target of marketing like no generation before, due to the increased research into them. The marketing industry has managed to tap into the heart of millennials, selling them holidays to crockery, cars to electronics and everything in between, in a way which resonates with who they feel that they are. There is even a colour known as ‘millennial pink’ which seems to guarantee sales!

At the Friends International annual conference in 2019, our plenaries focused on millennials and faith. Although the research presented was from a UK context, globalisation has enabled us to see that those who are the privileged elite from across the globe display similar experiences and traits. Whilst this doesn’t mean that every millennial will be the same no matter where they’re from, it does suggest that we can identify some general trends. But just below the surface, those from non-UK cultures will still retain their own cultural heritage, meaning that some of the traits of millennials will have different outworkings. For example, one characteristic of millennials is that they are tolerant of people and their beliefs. That doesn’t mean that we should expect the same response to same-sex marriage from millennials from, say, the USA and Saudi Arabia. Many other factors also apply, and no two millennials – no matter how similar their backgrounds – will ever be identical.

Yet, millennials aren’t just the students with whom we work. Many of the postgraduate students we meet in our work will be millennials, but so will many of those wanting to volunteer and work with us.

THE NEED FOR REVITALISATION AND INNOVATION

Friends International itself is 34 years old this year, meaning we are an ‘organisational millennial’. We

need to ensure that we adapt, change and grow so that the work will continue to change and grow – by the Lord’s grace – for the next 34 years and beyond. That will include having a diverse staff and volunteer team.

As those used to working with people from all over the world, from what can often seem like every tribe and nation and culture, we are the best placed in many ways to work across the generational culture gap. It's true that feelings of “but we don’t do things like that round here” surface most obviously across a national divide, when we might have different understandings of good etiquette or what counts as a ‘delicacy’. But similar objections emerge in more subtle ways when we are trying to negotiate the age and generational divide, even among those from the same country. Cultural adaptation, therefore, features in all the events we run, how we run them, where we run them and even if we run them!

Even so, many ISMs have run successfully for many years. When young adults come expecting a voice and ability to change things, it can be difficult. We might feel that their suggestions are “just not how things are done”! Whilst I am not advocating that millennials should be allowed to come in and change everything with little or no reference to anyone else, non-millennials in leadership roles do need to be willing to listen. If we’re serious about being cross-cultural, this will involve working well across the generational culture divide as well.

Research into millennials hasn’t been restricted to the secular world. There is also increasing research from the angle of faith. One of the most comprehensive studies on Christian millennials and leadership was conducted by Forge². Their report indicates key aspects which Christian millennials value, including:

- Integrity
- Authenticity
- Relationship
- Developing others
- Having a clear purpose
- Tolerance
- Collaborative participation³

2. Report can be downloaded here for a small fee: <https://millennial-leader.com/product/research-report-download>

3. Taken from the Executive Summary of the Forge report



What is striking is how similar these are to the values we hold in ISM. We want to interact with students as people of integrity, building authentic relationships, with a clear purpose to welcome the foreigner no matter where they have come from, and do it in collaboration with local churches. This model of ministry should attract millennials in their droves. Yet it doesn't always. How can we effectively bridge the gap?

PERSUASION AND PASSION

Part of the answer will be to do with how we talk about the ministry. As with all things, communication is about what we say and how that engages the hearer. We're used to contextualising the gospel message to students from across the globe. If we want to draw millennials into our work, we will need to contextualise our vision and mission in a way that resonates with their values. Such an approach won't be new to any of us, or unique to communication with millennials. We do it in the way we talk about our café with local church leaders, compared with the university chancellor. We don't change what we're about or hide any parts of our work, but we naturally highlight the aspects that we know that they will value.

In terms of recruitment, it's true that being involved in ISM in the UK isn't the exotic cross-cultural mission to which so many millennials are attracted. Holidays that cater to millennials, for example, seem so often to be all about the experience – something that will look good on their Instagram feed, and be different from life in the UK. But millennials are not as shallow as can often be portrayed. As the list produced by Forge shows, they value authenticity as well as having a clear purpose. So, it's not just going to be the experience that convinces them to be committed to something, but also knowing the genuine purpose behind it.

“Would you be willing to spend 3 hours every Monday evening meeting international students?” An invitation to join our café team which leads with the time commitment involved isn't likely to excite and motivate a millennial. Instead, we need to focus on the real opportunity to build meaningful relationships with those from across the globe in order to share the gospel with them, to show the clear purpose and authenticity that we possess. In so many cases, encouraging millennials to join with us won't mean changing what we're doing, but highlighting the heart behind why we do what we

do each week. This doesn't mean that millennials will suddenly be committed to the café as volunteers, but if they are convinced by the vision of reaching international students and the genuine aim, then the hope is that they will join as part of the mission.

Of course, for millennials who then become staff, their job description will often include being part of a café team and may include leading it. However, as increasing number of millennials join Friends International, we may find that if they aren't committed to the vision, then they won't necessarily stay within the ministry long-term. Whilst having an influx of new people can refresh the work, lots of turnover isn't the ideal. Another characteristic of millennials is that they can tend to change job within two years⁴; this isn't linked to money but motive, because they “want to work for a business that improves society”⁵. What better way to do that than welcoming the stranger and working to tell them of the eternal true hope in Christ?

RENEWING OUR OWN VISION

This might be a challenge to those of us already involved in the work – have we forgotten why we do what we do? Has the reality of rotas and things that need to get done blinded us to just what an opportunity we have? If it has, it may make sense as to why we don't portray ISM as “exciting and world-changing” to those looking in.

Hopefully those of us involved in the ministry *are* committed to the vision, including what we're about and what we're seeking to do. Nonetheless, the strong desire of many millennials is to collaborate, which means that they are likely to bring new ideas, be willing to be involved, and want to have a voice, as much as any staff or volunteer. Giving millennials leadership roles within the ministry will help them to know that they have room to make their voice heard and opportunities to develop the ministry, as well as themselves and others. But that also requires a willingness from those who have been around longer to see things change, perhaps drastically.

We might not want everything to change, but we certainly need an openness to consider

4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/millennials-jobs-career-work-salary-quit-young-people-study-a8361936.html>

5. *Ibid.*

change as an option, to see how things may develop, in order to revitalise and grow the ministry. If we're observing consistently low numbers to our cafés, then perhaps there *is* a need to consider a new model, and our millennial staff and volunteers might just be the ones who are able to suggest and implement new ideas. Even where a café model is successful, the current percentage of international students engaged in ISM indicates that there is plenty of opportunity for development of new ideas and models of ministry. Are we open to listening to their suggestions and developing them as leaders – not just for our benefit but for the settings they will one day move on to?

In many ways, millennials are no different from the generations that have gone before them. They want to be involved in things where they can make a difference, where they can change the world – just look at the campaign on plastic and using reusable cups in coffee shops – but they want it to be real and authentic, and to be able to see that from those leading the ministries as well as those involved day to day. Since they are, by nature, keen to learn from older generations, especially in a mentoring setting, this means that there are opportunities for those with decades of experience to pass that on to younger leaders coming in, training and equipping them for future ministry.

One millennial is not the same as another millennial. We can't take these traits and assume every millennial will react in certain ways. Like all humans, they are complex, with multiple needs and motivations. As with all ministry, any success will be down to good, genuine relationships, remembering that their culture may mean that they think and understand things a little differently to us! That applies as much for millennials as for any other generation.

In his mentoring role with Timothy, the apostle Paul famously said, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12). Let's pray that we might encourage and nurture the millennials amongst us as they grow in leadership, bringing their unique blend of passion, authenticity and innovation to international student outreach.





European Students in a Brexit World



Sofia Demler

Sofia is currently a Friends International Reach Trainee in Cambridge. She comes from Germany and is interested in politics and reaching out to Europeans.

“Europe is very different from Britain.

For instance, their windows open inwards rather than outwards, and it is almost impossible to buy Monster Munch in Bulgaria.

No wonder we could not get along.”

I found this quote while strolling through a bookshop in Cambridge. There is some truth in it. Even neighbouring European countries are surprisingly different. Though we consider each other as Westerners, and even more, as young Europeans who have a sense of being a European first before anything else, we do currently face challenges. It is not only Brexit; there seems to be something changing in Europe, but it hasn't yet been decided which direction will prevail – separation or stronger connection. For now, many Europeans are still using their chance to study or work abroad. They come to Britain, to study the language or to make use of the great educational system, with some hoping to stay for good and start a successful career¹.

Brexit seems to be both fascinating and confusing to us non-British-Europeans. As a German, I have

always loved talking about it, but learned very early on not to mention my views on politics here in this country. When I do so, I can never be sure of my communication partner meaning what he says about Brexit, because of the famous British talent of ‘understatement’! As a German I love a straightforward, honest discussion and so instead of talking much to Brits about it, I have found myself exchanging thoughts with other Europeans. They seem to be on the same page.

They often do want to talk about it. They want to understand the reasons behind Brexit; they want to know where it will lead (though I'm afraid, even the British can't tell) and what it means for their lives. For the last few weeks I've been trying to find European students who plan to stay in England for a longer period and are likely to be affected by possible changes in the political system. In so doing I found a variety of feelings and opinions on this topic.

But why would this matter to us? It is exciting to see how many Europeans are currently visiting our international cafés in Cambridge. They are an essential part of our international

1. In 2016-2017, the number of EU students in the UK was 134,835, representing almost 30% of the total number of international students. Of these, more than half were pursuing undergraduate degrees. The largest numbers were from Germany, France and Italy, with more than 13,000 in each group. Source: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/International%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202018_web.pdf

family and a possible Brexit makes them think, affects their future decisions, and may even affect how much they feel involved or a part of the society here. What might be some considerations for our interaction with European students coming to our events? Do we as Christians have a role to play, or is there not much we can do about it?

PERSONAL INSECURITIES AND CONCERNS

When European students are asked to describe their feelings, they range from excitement to intimidation. No one really is very afraid of Brexit, as current events don't yet allow the drawing of concrete conclusions. Nonetheless, our European friends have a strong sense of connection and belonging to Europe. They are used to being able to move within the EU and some of them have plans to establish an economically secure life away from their home country, especially if they are from eastern or southern Europe. For most of them, an English-speaking country is the first choice after studying here. So, the potential of having to change their initial plans drastically is confusing their future hopes.

Every student I asked has some sense of insecurity. Sometimes, life in their home country hasn't always been easy: they are trying to build up a new life in a new place, but now they feel like the doors are closing in front of them once again. It makes some feel like a foreigner and yet they can't imagine going back to their own country, simply because they know they wouldn't find any job related to their degrees. They are not willing to waste their degrees by taking on very hard, time-demanding and poorly-paid jobs, if they even manage to find a job back home at all! Studying hard while here in Britain and yet possibly not having the chance to stay is a challenging prospect. At the same time, they might also be uncertain about the near future, because they don't feel well informed. Reading the newspapers from their home countries gives them a different picture from reading the ones here. Some are not following the news anymore – reports and events all seem slightly chaotic – and so they don't even know when to expect what. Most of them are aged under 25, and yet are facing changes once more, including political and economic uncertainty, while still only young adults. This raises feelings of intimidation, of not having things under control.

Others are simply curious about how this “experiment” will end, and would like to see some movement against the tendency towards more uniformity within the EU, which is large and diverse. However, at the time of writing, there hasn't yet been any clear agreement, most students feel they still have some time to think and prepare.

Nonetheless, some very practical questions remain for non-British-Europeans:

- Will health insurance in the UK still be available?
- Will it still be possible to find a job in the UK?
- Will Brexit lead to increased fees for students?
- Will travel back home become more expensive?
- Will there be an equivalent for Erasmus?

THE WIDER IMPLICATIONS

They not only worry about their own lives, they also think about Europe as a whole and what Brexit may mean for their own countries, along with any corresponding changes in society. When they were growing up, Europe was expanding. It seemed to be a good thing to join the monetary union and establish a European parliament.

In the last few years, what seemed to be unshakable and strong has been shaken, and not only by Brexit. There are two conflicting movements: some leading politicians are aiming for greater uniformity, while others desire more independence, wanting to fight for their own national rights. It has become clear that changes are ahead of us, and no-one can predict what that means for their own country. Will Brexit bring a financial crisis, some ask? Will it affect the economy, both for Britain as well as the other European countries? Will it lead to a more seriously pursued uniformity with joint forces or more cut-back national autonomy? Some worry about growing nationalism and xenophobia in all countries, including Britain.

THE SEARCH FOR HOPE

So there is a component of disillusionment about personal and commonly shared visions. But students continue to have a hope in looking beyond Britain for a secure future, given the



general mobility of young Europeans. This might mean, however, for our international cafés and other events, that in coming years we might have fewer European long-term students visiting.

Asked whether religion, and particularly Christianity, might provide an answer to the changing European world, none of the students I spoke to could see an obvious link. One student, however, appreciated the international café as being a place open to diversity, and as a visible effort to work against possible racist tendencies. Thinking more about it, we indeed can play an active role in creating places like international cafés, where Europeans feel at home. Overt racism doesn't yet seem to be a strong reality and people might not be consciously aware of the changes in anyone's mindset. Yet, my conversations with some European friends showed the actual existence of feelings of insecurity and intimidation beyond the normal challenges of living abroad.

More importantly, this is the point at which we can meet European students at their point of need. We can listen, understand and unify people again, enabling a sense of belonging and stability. Besides providing information for what Brexit means for them, there seems to be another great opportunity: this may be just the right moment for us to challenge our European friends with the gospel and the security God wants to give us. Perhaps this is precisely the place where they can begin to relate to the hope that the Bible gives us through Christ. Perhaps Brexit has created a season in which we can openly share our fears, and discover how God meets us in the midst of our insecurities. A person who is perfectly happy might not understand their need for a redeemer and a Lord, but someone whose visions and hopes for the future have been shaken, will.

SOME WAYS TO BEGIN THE CONVERSATION

We don't have to wait for things to become reality. We already have a start by asking the very questions that we ourselves might not want to think about anymore. We can do this in a bigger discussion group or privately, and it is almost certain that some of our friends from more direct cultures will start naming the issues which concern them.

Here are some ideas which might help us engage more deeply with our European friends on the current situation:

- We could initiate Bible discussions that talk about fear and hope (e.g. Psalm 23; Matthew 11: 28-30; Luke 12: 22-34).
- A good way to open up about feelings, at least for people who prefer a more 'visual' approach, might be to use pictures and ask them how they feel about the future in general. This could be done in a Bible discussion or as one of the conversation topics around the café tables. The Cru resource, Soularium², which provides a range of attractive pictures as a focus for sharing is great for that. The pictures also come with a few suggested questions to initiate a conversation:

1. Which three images would you choose to describe your life right now?
2. Which three images represent what you WISH were a part of your life right now?
3. Which image would you choose to describe God? (If they say "I'm an atheist" ask: Which image describes that?)
4. Think about your life so far. Which image best describes what you've experienced spiritually?
5. When you think about your spiritual life or journey, which image best represents what you wish were true?

Questions 1) and 2) could be adjusted for European students by asking: Which images represent the situation in Europe? Which describe your feelings and your dreams?

- Another approach is a position line drawn across the room, giving people a chance to move physically into a position on the line that expresses their feelings about this topic or about the future. This method allows people to express their feelings without a sense of being pressurised or forced to give very concrete opinions. At the same time, there is the chance for those who are more open to explain why they chose their position.

None of us wants to start unhelpful political debates or polarising arguments, especially in our

2. <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/outreach-strategies/soularium/how-to-use-soularium.html>.

international student events! But perhaps we shouldn't be afraid of talking about the whole issue of Brexit and its implications more openly, as Europeans often are very happy to share their opinions on this matter and to express possible worries. Communication is, after all, the safest way to overcome differences. Then our different ways of opening windows and the lack of Monster Munch in Bulgaria might not matter so much anymore.





BOOK REVIEW: Heading Home with Jesus by Debbie D. Philip



Kate Pearce

Kate (MTh World Christianity, Edinburgh) formerly worked with World Vision China, is now a part-time Friends International staff worker, and studies in Glasgow.

This book is ideal for those interested in cross-cultural Christian conversion in the Chinese context, and most particularly in Chinese international students' encounters with Christianity while studying abroad and how this encounter continues to make a difference (or not) on their return home.

The book begins with a discussion of conversion as a change in core values, authority and commitments as well as the 'master story' in a person's life, and describes different possible bridges to conversion: a new account of life, a crisis, a searching for purpose, a longing for love and security, with God actively involved in this crossing.

The book then gives a fairly brief, helpful overview of the mainland Chinese (PRC) context: Chinese history since the 1950s, including the Cultural Revolution and the current 'China Dream' of President Xi Jinping; the impact of politics in China and the religious (including Christian) environment in the PRC; Chinese values such as filial piety and the concept of 'face'; and the current fast pace and changeability of Chinese life, which students studying abroad leave and to which they return. This may be very helpful for those looking for a succinct overview of the China context to help them better

understand their mainland Chinese friends.

At the core of the book are life stories of seven Chinese former international students. This includes their lives in China before going overseas, their encounters with Christianity while abroad and their stories, including their faith stories, when they returned to China.

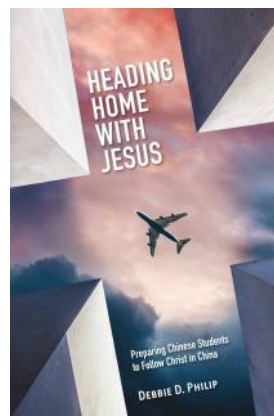
These life stories vary considerably and are full of personal twists. Changlan went abroad immediately after his undergraduate studies out of a sense of adventure and came to Christian faith there easily, trusting in his heavenly Father; he became both a manager in an international multinational and an active member of a registered church on his return home, with a strong personal faith. Fuyin went abroad to study after eleven years working in insurance in China; she faced a crisis while overseas which led towards Christian faith. This faith became real for her and grew after her return to China through struggles with unemployment, and even with her husband in prison for a spell. Ling came to Christian faith during her year in the UK and was baptised. On her return, although her friends said she had grown in generosity, she didn't find a Chinese church she could settle in or Christian fellowship, and so acknowledged that in China she had

changed ‘a bit back’ to the person she was before.

In some of these stories there is radical change in core values, authority, commitment and ‘master story’. Previous values such as achievement and seeking love and respect, as well as a sense of belonging, were superseded by new ones. These were often specifically Christian, such as knowing salvation in Christ, closeness to and honouring of God and caring for others (rather than seeking care for themselves). In other accounts, this change was less apparent; in Jinjing’s story, for example, Christianity seemed to be more for her life in Britain and not for her Chinese life, despite a continuing love for the Bible.

The book closes with advice for any Christians outside China who are involved with helping Chinese international students investigate and then grow in Christian faith, with an emphasis on preparing them to go home. Suggestions include encouraging new believers to be involved with Chinese Christians or a Chinese fellowship before their return home, equipping them to serve and helping them to read and understand the Bible for themselves.

As a whole, this book is rich in information and wisdom. Apart from all that it imparts, it may also be encouraging us to listen carefully to our Chinese international student friends. Not to jump to conclusions about ‘the Chinese’, but to take the time to hear what an individual is telling us about his or her life in the past and the present, about what God is doing and saying to him or her and how he or she is being drawn towards a particular bridge to faith. The stories which Debbie D. Philip shares are rich in detail and can teach us much, but they can also encourage us to speak less and observe more as we walk alongside our mainland Chinese friends in their faith journeys.



Heading Home with Jesus: Preparing Chinese Students to Follow Christ in China

Philip, Debbie D. 2018. Pasadena, CA: William Carey.

Available from Amazon UK





BOOK REVIEW: Take Care of Yourself by Pablo Martinez



**Elspeth
Wood**

Elspeth has a heart for supporting mission personnel. She is Head of Member Care at Friends International, and has over 30 years' experience in cross-cultural mission.

Pablo Martinez, a leading Christian psychiatrist, draws upon his extensive professional knowledge of the human condition, as well as many years of observations of Christians in ministry, to produce this succinct but insightful booklet entitled 'Take Care of Yourself: Survive and Thrive in Christian Ministry'. His aim is to help Christians in ministry consider how to maintain and sustain their love and service for God for the long haul.

Martinez begins by reminding us of the biblical basis of self-care. Rather than viewing self-care as a waste of time he states that "...the practice of rest and care of yourself, far from being a selfish act, is an exercise in godliness and an expression of holiness." (p.4). It is essential if we are to thrive in ministry.

Using the metaphor of life as a mountain pool and our energy as the flow of water in and out, Martinez describes how Christians often suffer from 'The Empty Pool Syndrome'. This condition is when output exceeds input. When this happens it is inevitable that the pool dries up.

Martinez describes four 'mistakes' which empty the pool: Perfectionism, Activism, Self-Ambition and Haste. Perfectionism is the mistake of trying to be flawless, of being obsessed with results and constantly striving to do

better. Martinez suggests that the best remedy for perfectionism is a realisation that God's grace is sufficient. This takes the pressure off our own abilities and focuses our dependency on God. Activism is the mistake of trying to do too much. It is the inability to plan well, prioritise tasks or to say 'no', resulting in unnecessary busyness. The 'mistake' of self-ambition is often unconscious. Christians are influenced by secular culture where success is measured by action, visible results and appearance. For God, however, success lies in attitudes and inner values and Martinez encourages us to ask of our ministry 'how am I building?' rather than 'what am I achieving?' Haste, the final mistake of never slowing down, is the outcome of the previous mistakes. Working constantly under pressure to achieve or being overcommitted or seeking identity through affirmation of others is exhausting and leads to living in a hurried way. Martinez challenges the reader to examine their patterns of working and to be aware of the potential mistakes of wrong concepts, attitudes or practices that lead to emptying their pool.

How then can the empty pool syndrome be prevented? Using another metaphor of a vineyard and gardener, Martinez suggests three ways of guarding our emotional and spiritual well-being, enabling a balance of input and output. These are Pruning,

learning to renounce; Watering, learning to renew yourself; and Waiting, learning to be patient.

Pruning involves learning, choosing and changing. It is necessary at times to prioritise activities. Discipline is needed to say 'no' to activities which distract from fulfilling the ministry. Times of change are also needed. Small changes, particularly in the areas of time management and administration, which improve order and efficiency, can have very positive effects on overall wellbeing. Our renewal comes through Watering and Martinez focuses on our relationships with family, close friends and church. Healthy relationships are a great source of support and emotional wellbeing. Strong relationships counteract loneliness and Martinez encourages those in ministry to have a small support group for sharing, accountability and support. Other sources of renewal come from a connection with nature and through enjoyment of reading books.

Waiting and learning to be patient is also vital for renewal. Biblical waiting conveys two attitudes: that of trusting and not being anxious, and that of searching, looking out for what God is saying. Waiting is not easy, but patience is linked to our hope in the future. "True rest and renewal ultimately come from our future hope" (p.64).

Martinez concludes that "Our fundamental rest and renewal come from our fellowship

with the living God through Jesus Christ" (p.63). He devotes the last chapter of the booklet to our relationship with God. Our connection to God is vital for our inner renewal and acts as an antidote to the symptoms of the empty pool syndrome. Martinez encourages us to be still before God so that we can receive deep rest, new strength, fresh guidance, renewed joy and hope. We are to look to Jesus as our model. In spite of a busy public ministry He took time to withdraw and be with His Father. Martinez says this was 'spiritual survival' for Jesus and enabled Him to continue in His ministry with power.

If this was essential for Jesus, then how much more do we need this vital connection to enable us to maintain our effectiveness in ministry?



**Take Care of Yourself:
Survive and Thrive in
Christian Ministry**

**Pablo Martinez, 2018.
Lausanne Library**

*Available from Amazon UK
and 10 of Those.*

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