

## Resources for working with mainland Chinese students

Designed as a 'tool-kit' to dip into, to help you:

- learn more about contexts and cultures mainland Chinese students come from and return to, so you can more fruitfully share the Gospel with them and help them prepare to flourish in a context which is very different from the UK;
- find resources to use with them and offer them.

Recent additions are highlighted in yellow.

This was written for the UK but has much of use to people meeting Chinese students elsewhere.

### 1. FOR YOU

#### Culture and the full gospel

In any cross-cultural ministry it helps to understand the dominant cultures that colour thinking and lifestyle, including our own. The Gospel speaks to *all* cultures, but sometimes our own cultural background limits our view of the whole Gospel. The following books can help:

- *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures*; Jayson Georges, 2014. Short, clear, with plenty of examples, helps us grasp the full implications of the gospel in three main cultures: guilt-innocence; shame-honour; fear-power.
- *Crossing Cultures with Jesus: Sharing Good News with Sensitivity and Grace*; Katie Rawson, 2015. Katie has years of experience in ISM, especially with East Asians. Using Jesus as her model for crossing cultures she offers stories, examples, passages for discussion and more.
- *Honor and Shame: unlocking the door*; Roland Muller, 2001. A quick read, giving the basics of 3 major cultural world views.

#### On Chinese students in general, and returning

- [BBC documentary on Chinese education](#). Note the significance of the *gaokao* (university entrance exam) for family as well as student and the military training at university. For more on the *gaokao* see two CCTV documentaries, starting [here](#).
- [ChinaSource | Journey Back to China](#) recent articles by those who have been preparing and receiving returnees for years and also from returnees themselves.
- [Thriving Turtles](#) website has had a major revamp and lots about the life of returnees to China, including testimonies, and resources to help people return. There are separate sections for you and for Chinese students themselves.
- *Heading Home with Jesus: Preparing Chinese Students to Follow Christ in China*; Debbie D Philip; William Carey Library, 2018. Tells the life stories of some who studied in the UK and what happened after their return. It describes the China context and 'offers a new perspective for understanding what happens when Chinese students encounter Christians abroad and what needs to happen if they are to continue following Christ after returning home.'

#### Social and political context

- [ZG Briefs](#) news summary by China Source: current Chinese politics, religion, society, culture.
- *Private Revolutions: Coming of Age in a New China*; Yuan Yang, Bloomsbury Circus, 2024. Book about four women born in the late 80s and 90s. Beautifully written, revealing, moving. As John Simpson says on the cover 'Yang shows us the real China in all its complexity'. The author is interviewed on the Chinese Whispers podcast. See below:
- [Life in a changing China | The Spectator](#) Other Chinese Whispers episodes cover a range of issues, from current affairs to more cultural-historical aspects of life in China,

e.g. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/podcast/young-and-jobless-is-the-government-letting-down-chinas-generation-z/> or [Healing the 'cancer' of the Cultural Revolution | The Spectator](#)

- *Other Rivers: a Chinese Education*; Peter Hessler, Atlantic Books, 2024. Journalist Hessler returned to work in a Chinese university for a second time, experiencing life on campus during Covid. He compares students and university life in 2019 with his time on another campus in the late 90s. The students of his second book are of an age to be our current postgraduates.
- *Wish Lanterns: Young Lives in New China*; Alec Ash, Picador, 2016. The stories of six young people living in a China which is very different from that their parents grew up in.
- *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One Child Policy*, Vanessa Fong, Stanford University Press, 2004. Implications of being an only child for individual Chinese and their parents. NB the one child policy was stopped in 2016 but it still has huge repercussions.

Films and novels can be enjoyable. Lulu Wang's 2019 film *'The Farewell'* shines light on differences between cultures in how family love is expressed. The film *'So Long My Son'* (Wang Xiaoshuai, 2019) illustrates the massive changes in Chinese society, giving an insight into aspects of life under the one child policy and some lasting effects of the policy. It is a long and heart-rending film.

I like the Inspector Chen novels by Qiu Xiaolong. The first, *Death of a Red Heroine*, is set in the 1990s; the latest is *Love and Murder in the Time of Covid*. They follow the career of a fictional top Shanghai detective through changing China. Alternatively, you may like to read one of the Chinese classics, which your Chinese friends will almost certainly know: *Dream of a Red Chamber*, *Journey to The West*, *the Water Margin* or *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Watching series and films that young people are watching in China is interesting. For example, I am currently trying *Nothing but Thirty*, a series about three 30 year old women in Shanghai [Watch K-Dramas, Korean Shows & Chinese Dramas | Rakuten Viki](#)

## History

It helps to know something about: the Opium Wars (1840s: what Britain did and the way we acquired Hong Kong); the founding of the People's Republic (1949); the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976); Deng Xiaoping opening up China; the 'June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident', 1989; Hong Kong's return to China in 1997; that China entered the WTO in 2001 and held the Olympics in 2008; changes since Xi Jinping came to power. Although some happened before today's students were born, they are affected by it as their parents or grandparents experienced it, particularly the Cultural Revolution. Also, past foreign aggression in China is mentioned in Chinese media.

- [China's Century of Humiliation](#): a 75-minute video covering all the above, a great intro. The term 'century of humiliation' is important; it is used in Chinese state media.
- A basic history timeline to 2018: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877>
- *The Story of China: A portrait of a civilisation and its people*, Michael Wood, Simon and Schuster, 2020. A very readable and warm overview of Chinese history.
- There are many autobiographical books about life in China during the Mao period. The best known is *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang. Others include:
  1. *A Chinese Life* by Li Kunwu and P Ôtié, Self Made Hero, 2012. Autobiography in graphic novel form. The story of the PRC to 2010, through the eyes of an artist born just after it started.
  2. *Son of the Revolution* by Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, Fontana Collins, 1984.
- Video series by PBS [China A Century of Revolution 1949 - 1976 - YouTube](#)
- *Moving the Mountain* by Li Lu, MacMillan, 1990, includes Li's experience of the 1989 events. Be conscious that these events will not be known to most of today's students.

## Church

- I recommend [ChinaSource](#), who respond to 'a growing need within the faith-based community for accurate information on China and its church'. You can sign up for a regular e-letter. [ChinaSource | Journey Back to China](#) has excellent articles and interviews with returnees
- The House Church in China Podcast - season 2. Five episodes, around 30min each. A friend said 'Season 2 is about a young man from a Chinese city who becomes a Christian in China, spends 4 years in the US at Bible college and then returns to plant a church in a large city in China. There is much that is helpful for understanding returnee issues and the church situation in Chinese cities... it could be shared with Chinese Christians who have good enough English. However, I'd be more careful about sharing it with young believers.' <https://housechurchinchinapodcast.com/season-2/>
- China Soul for Christ have three bilingual Chinese/English videos which tell the story of Christianity in China. Excerpts are on Youtube. It is called [Missionary](#)
- These books give an overview of church history up to 2006:
  1. *Jesus in Beijing*, David Aikman (2006 updated edition)
  2. *China's Christian Millions*, Tony Lambert, (2006 updated edition)
- *Shanghai Faithful: Betrayal and Forgiveness in a Chinese Christian Family*, Jennifer Lin, 2017. 150 years of church in China through this humbling and moving story of the author's family. Her grandfather and great-uncle (Watchman Nee) were leaders of very different parts of the Chinese church. Much about Chinese history, church history, international student history, the impact of Western powers on China; but particularly about the faithfulness to Christ of Chinese who suffered terribly.
- *Surviving the State, Remaking the Church: A Sociological Portrait of Christians in Mainland China*; Li Ma and Jin Li, Pickwick, 2017. Covered the period 1949 to 2017, with glimpses into the lives of individual Christians.
- *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China* by Liao Yiwu, HarperOne, 2012. Interviews & comment; very moving.
- [Insight](#), Friends International online journal, Issue 20, Summer 2019, has an article with case studies about three challenges Christian returnees may face.
- [China's Urban House Churches Moving Forward](#). Zion, a big house church in Beijing was 'closed down' in early 2018; here one of their pastors describes how God has grown them since. The sound is on/off for the first 6 minutes but after that fine. He gave the talk in early 2021 at an Asian congress of church leaders. Things may have changed since but the church is still active.

## Thought, philosophy and other religions

- A book: *Jesus: The Path to Human Flourishing: The Gospel for the Cultural Chinese*; I'Ching Thomas, Graceworks, 2018. Also a talk given by the author: [Human Flourishing in Confucian Thought: A Christian Response](#)
- *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners think Differently – and why*, Richard E. Nisbett, 2005. N Brealey Publishing. Helpful comparison of East Asian and Western thinking.
- *One World – Two Minds: Eastern and Western Outlooks in a Changing World*, Denis Lane, 1995, OMF. Booklet. Explores how differences in background and thinking play out in political, educational, social, and particularly religious contexts. Each section looks at: Western Approach; Eastern Approach; when East meets West; Christian Viewpoint.
- Google *Yang Liu* and *ost trifft west* (east meets west) to see Berlin-based artist Yang Liu's thought-provoking red and blue illustrations comparing east and west (or Chinese and European) thinking. Great to discuss with Chinese friends. More of her work can be seen on her website: <http://www.yangliudesign.com/>

- Confucian influence runs deep. Concepts to understand include: face; filial piety, hierarchy in relationships; reciprocity in relationships; *guanxi*. These originated long ago but are ingrained in behaviour and communication. Google provides some definitions and examples as does..
- 'A Christian's Pocket Guide to Buddhism'; Alex Smith, OMF, 2009 (also from Friends Intl.) Some Chinese students say they are Buddhists but mean various things, from being a knowledgeable adherent of one of the main schools to having beliefs which are a mix of Buddhism, Daoism and folk religion.
- Daoism: few students will claim to be Daoist but some Daoist concepts are deeply ingrained. See books by David Burnett e.g. 'The Spirit of China: The Roots of Faith in 21st Century China' or Chapter 7 of 'Clash of Worlds'.
- 'A Biblical Approach to Chinese Traditions and Beliefs'; Daniel Tong; Genesis Books, 2003. One Christian response to certain Chinese festivals and beliefs (e.g. ancestor veneration). Relevant to Taiwanese, South East Asian and Hong Kong contexts but also to some mainland Chinese.
- *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao*; Ian Johnson; Vintage, 2018. Portraits of individuals and families (Daoist, Buddhist, Christian) and the state's approach to them. One of the groups looked at is the Early Rain Church in Chengdu. Great observation and empathy.
- *The Funeral of Mr Wang: Life, Death and Hosts in Urbanizing China*, by Andrew B Kipnis, U of California Press, 2021. the first chapter alone says much about family and also attitudes to death. It may surprise some people. The author is an anthropologist specialising in China

### Training for you

Thriving Turtles, Australia, do training for people serving Chinese students, e.g. 'Discipling People with a Chinese Worldview'. You don't need to be in the same time zone because it's online and in your own time. They also have many other relevant resources.  
<https://www.thrivingturtles.org/>

## **2. TO USE WITH MAINLAND CHINESE FRIENDS**

Gospel films and a new TV series, all available in Chinese or with subtitles:

- [The Hope Project](#) - 'an 80-minute dramatic motion picture presentation of God's epic story of redemption as revealed in the Bible from creation through the promised return of Christ.'
- [Seasons 1-3 | The Chosen](#) app-based TV series about Jesus, now has Chinese subtitles
- [The Jesus Film](#) from the Jesus Project, is the oldest and is based on Luke's Gospel.
- [The short Bible Project videos](#) are now available in Chinese.
- LUMO Dramatized scripture in many languages:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@TheLumoProject/videos> I watched the True Easter Story..excerpts from the 4 gospels. Excellent. 30 minutes [\(330\) MANDARIN - Easter A True Story - YouTube](#)

### Evangelistic Bible study courses

- <https://www.theword121.com/> has John's gospel in Chinese. A Chinese friend says: 'I found it very useful in doing 1-1 with both non-Christians and Christians. You simply download the app on your phones and read it together.'
- St Helen's Bishopsgate's Mandarin ministry have a video-based, bilingual introduction, using John's Gospel: [the Life Course](#).
- For a series of bilingual Chinese English studies in Mark go to [www.seaturtles.org.uk](http://www.seaturtles.org.uk) These have questions and comments which help students start relating Christianity to the Chinese context from day one. There are studies in other Bible books too.
- Before a New Testament-based course, it can help to look at *Genesis chapters 1 to 3* which introduces God as creator, with a purpose for, and deep interest in, human beings. The Fall is important to discuss, as traditional Chinese thinking holds that humans are born good and

perfectible, becoming damaged by their environment. Evidence that Jesus existed and is not legendary, is important early, as is explanation that science and religion are not incompatible. The Second Coming and the new heaven and earth need discussing; many Western courses do not mention them. *The World We All Want* by Timmis and Chester is a notable exception.

- [www.honorshame.com](http://www.honorshame.com) has resources for contextualising for those from honour/shame backgrounds.

#### Discipleship

- *Heading Home with Jesus* (see above) has much to say on this.
- **The Returnee Handbook for Chinese Christians, reviewed here by Lisa Espineli Chinn [ChinaSource](#) | [Preparing Returnees to Go Home Well](#) .. coming soon**
- help Chinese friends know how to read the Bible without recourse to courses or booklets.
- help them get an overview of the Bible so they can picture themselves and the church as part of the kingdom God is building, with a past and a future. The Philip Project does that. Vaughan Roberts' *God's Big Picture*, is available in Chinese. Bible Project videos are available in Chinese.
- help students explore Biblical responses to issues they will face on return, especially in **relationships** (in the **family** and at **work**) and settling in a **church**. They need a **basic theology of suffering**. It is important that they meet Chinese-speaking Christians who know the mainland Chinese context. Thriving Turtles website (see above) can help with all this.
- **Thrive:** online meetings and a weekend away, for those who will return to certain E Asian countries, focussing on issues and opportunities being Christ's ambassador there. Speakers are from the country or have lived there and speak the language. Ask your staff worker or the Head of Returnee Ministries if you need more info.
- Chinese churches and Chinese Christians: please try to ensure your friend experiences worshipping, praying and sharing with other mainland Chinese. It is important not just that they assent intellectually that Christianity can be Chinese but that they *see and feel* it. Attending a COCM camp is a great way for them to do this (see below).
- *The I.D. course* by Sue Burt, Friends International

#### CONTACTS in China. FOR YOUR USE ONLY: NOT TO BE PASSED TO RETURNEES

Contact LINC Ministries (ask FI staff for contact details) with your friend's name, city they are returning to, contact details, approx. date of return and brief details of their spiritual status. If they have Christian contacts in that city, LINC will ask them to contact your friend. This is easier to do for Christians returning than for those who are just curious.

Messaging, emailing, phoning, Zooming China: assume communication is monitored. This applies to Wechat/Weixin, whether in China or the UK. Be wise about what you say BUT DO TRY TO STAY IN TOUCH UNTIL YOUR FRIEND IS SETTLED IN A CHURCH.

#### Where to get Chinese Christian books in the UK:

- **COCM** <http://bookroom.cocm.org.uk/> for Bibles, books and music. Also some translated from English to Chinese eg *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller; *Mere Christianity* by CS Lewis

### 3. FOR CHINESE STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

- Overseas Campus, outreach magazine from US publisher of the same name; [《海外校园》168期 - 有盏灯](#) also their magazine for Christians overseas: [OC举目网站 - 举目望天](#)  
[举目望田](#)

[COCM活水文字 – Living Water Ministry](#) articles and podcasts on various subjects

- *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* ([www.bdcconline.net](http://www.bdcconline.net)): mini biographies of influential Christians in China up to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Great for helping mainland Chinese see that they have a Christian heritage.
- *Breakthrough: The Story of James O. Fraser and the Lisu People*, a 35 minute video about the pioneer missionary. Very moving. In English and Chinese.
- *Missionary*, by China Soul for Christ: history of Christianity in China (see 'Church' above)
- [A 20 minute intro to the Chinese Church and its history](#), from 635 to 2016, is available in English and Chinese on the Thriving Turtles website
- Edwin Su, former editor of Overseas Campus Magazine, has a lecture series in Chinese on (a) [the history of the Christian Church](#) and (b) [the history of the Church in China](#).

#### Apologetics

- *Youzi yin (Song of a Wanderer, 1996)* by Li Cheng; available from COCM: testimony and apologetics from a Mainland Chinese scholar. English translation available.
- *Above all Things: The Romance and War between Christianity and Science* by Jidian and Xiao Zao. Song of a Wanderer (above) has helped many on the road to Christ. Recently a new book has been published, reviewed here: [ChinaSource | A New Song of the Wanderer for Today](#) The e-book is available from [《万有之上》基甸 小灶 著](#)
- One of the authors of *Above all Things* is a leading Chinese Christian apologist with his own website, and his own story in English at [Audios, Videos, and Writings of Jidian Jidan's Links 基甸音像与文字 基甸连线](#)
- [The Faraday papers from Cambridge](#) written by eminent Christian academics about the relationship between religion and science; online, translated into Chinese.

#### Apps and Websites

- [WeDevote Chinese Bible app](#) available for Android and iPhone
- [Bible Resources in Mandarin Translation | BibleProject™](#) The Bible Project short videos introduce the whole Bible and individual Bible books; with Chinese voice-over or subtitles.
- [www.seaturtles.org.uk](http://www.seaturtles.org.uk) – bilingual website for returnees: Interviews on their experiences of church, work; Bible studies; lists of Christian books in Chinese; seminar on singleness.
- Gospel Home is the mandarin-speaking congregation of St Helen's, Bishopsgate. <http://www.gospelhome.org.uk/> has sermons in Chinese.
- [www.biblegateway.com/versions/](http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/) The Bible online, various Chinese versions at the end, under Z; includes the new Contemporary Chinese Bible
- [Digital Bible Society](#) for Chinese Bible downloads

#### Conferences and retreats

1. COCM [www.cocm.org.uk](http://www.cocm.org.uk) has events all year round for mandarin-speakers. Many Chinese students (and their parents!) have found COCM camps to be turning points:
2. Returnee Retreats, (see Thrive above).

Debbie, March 2025