



China

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Over the last month, we've all heard a lot about China. I write this before the Olympics start on 08/08/08. There has been an extended focus on China around the world. If the Olympics are uneventful—as we would pray and China would like—the focus will likely turn elsewhere.

For many reasons however, we shouldn't forget China. First, let us look at a few facts from *Operation World 2001*.¹ China has:

- 1.3 billion people. More than four times the U.S. figure of just under 300 million.
- 9,573,000 sq. km., only 43,000 more than the U.S.
- Some 91 million “Christians” (of all kinds) growing at 7.7% annual growth rate (AGR).² The U.S. has 235 million “Christians” growing at 0.7% AGR.

China is big and diverse enough that these nationwide statistics only hold minimal value. As someone

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once said, “Everything you've ever heard about China is probably true somewhere in China.”

If you only look at these big numbers, you could think that it is the U.S.

that has a greater need. We realize that many of these 235 million Christians in “Christian” America don't really follow Christ very well, if at all. Some say China has more true followers of Christ than 91 million—partly because there usually aren't many “nominal Christians” in a society that has a history of persecuting them. Certainly, we in the U.S. have major needs and problems, as does China. When we look at unreached people groups and major population segments still untouched with the Gospel, China wins.

But I find it interesting that as China “modernizes” through research, planning, and ingenuity, some of their top economic experts point to the fact that they realize that the U.S. has achieved much of its progress because of the positive aspects of Christianity.

A friend who's been in China for about 18 years visited me recently when I was in Asia. He detailed some amazing stories. Where he lives, near a major

city, Chinese believers are very open and forthright in their testimony. Officials in the Communist Party and those who advise top Party officials have come forward and expressed the need for the moral foundation they believe comes from those who follow Christ.

Many of these same believers are being creative and entrepreneurial in their work and witness. I wish I could share more. God is working in ways we would have never dreamed or thought or planned. When they get a ministry idea, they run with it now, often without much knowledge of the real situation or cultural sensitivity. Like us, they make a lot of mistakes and learn along the way to be more effective.

These are not necessarily pastors. It is the businessmen, or other local Christian leaders who establish a “beachhead” from their day-to-day work place. They leverage their circle of influence to impact as broadly as possible.

Some might read into this and wonder if we should still send workers to places like this. That is the wrong question. It is not a question of “whether or not” but “what kind.” The kind of person we need engaged in places all over the world is shifting.

Why not discuss this with those in your fellowship or missions team? What are the additional characteristics needed today?

As we seek the advance of God's name among the nations, praise Him for what He is doing in China. Pray for the Church globally (including the U.S.), that we might all grow into a vision like Paul, who sought “the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of His name.” (Romans 1:5b)

Endnotes

- 1 Using 2010 extrapolations for population figures.
- 2 Annual Growth Rate is more than an interest rate—this is a significant increase.



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