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Peter Lucinsky

The Family in China

Jim King

Today, more than half way through 2008 and close to the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, even the most casual China watcher is challenged by the seismic waves of change taking place. While mentally we still hold onto outdated picture postcards of bicycles, walled cities and blue-suited workers, one can only stare in disbelief at the skyscraper silhouetted Shanghai.

One works to get a mental grip of the staggering implications of thirty million people's annual rural to urban migration. The past ten years' movement approximates the entire United States population. How, then, has China sustained eight to ten percent annual economic growth over the past twenty-five years, something never before done in history?

It is no surprise that the family is also changing when it seems that so little else remains the same. Just what are some of the areas in which the family is changing? Why have they occurred? What has been the church's response to these family changes considered to be so central to China's past and evolving life story?

All of Life Tells a Story

In its simplest form, a story involves three major subplots or story lines. In the main plot, the characters are often portrayed to be living a wonderfully idyllic life, so wonderful that one wishes it could go on forever. Inevitably, something occurs that disrupts and unsettles the story such that life unlikely will ever again be the same for the main characters. The remaining story revolves around the ongoing struggles to get rid of the dissonance and thereby return life back to its "normally idyllic" setting.

The biblical family's story begins in Gen-

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The Changing Chinese Family

Brent Fulton, Editor

The last three decades have seen an irreversible transformation in the size and shape of one of the world's longest surviving institutions, the traditional Chinese family.

For millennia, large families in China's predominantly agrarian society ensured that there would be enough hands to manage the family farm or, in the case of families in the villages and towns, the family business. Sons were generally preferred, for, unlike daughters, they would remain within the family and carry on the family line. The extended family network provided the means by which members navigated the maze of an otherwise indifferent and often hostile society, whether this involved finding a mate, getting a job, gaining entrance into the right school or making a significant purchase.

Large families also ensured that the social structure would remain pyramid-shaped, with a larger proportion of young, able-bodied members at the bottom in comparison to the shrinking older population at the top. Thus the family was the social safety net for those who, having passed working age, could count on the support of multiple offspring in their later years.

China's one-child policy has turned the traditional family on its head. Instead of multiple offspring caring for a proportionally smaller set of older relatives, young families comprised of only children are faced with having to support multiple sets of parents and grandparents. By the year 2020 it is estimated that 30 percent of Chinese women aged 60 and above will have no born sons and, hence, no traditional means of support.

Children of the "one and only's" will grow up with no aunts, uncles or cousins, meaning the end of the extended family network as it has traditionally been known. Meanwhile the traditional propensity for male children has resulted in a gross imbalance in the ratio of male to female children—currently averaging 119 to 100 for the whole population, but reaching 130 to 100 or higher in some provinces.

The demise of much of the family's traditional economic functions, along with mass migration to the cities and rapidly changing social mores, has resulted in a radically different outlook on family life. Young people are waiting longer to marry, yet may have had several partners by the time they do. Divorces are commonplace. The spread of HIV/AIDS, a "disease of broken relationships," is hastened by increasingly permissive attitudes toward extramarital affairs, a growing sex industry that preys on China's migrant population and a general lack of awareness.

Any one of the anomalies resulting from the one-child policy or the effects of rapid social change upon families is pregnant with opportunity for significant Christian involvement. Together they constitute a major challenge to a church and to outside entities that have been largely fixated on ministering to individuals—whether college students or church leaders in need of training and resources. Those seeking a meaningful role in today's China must grasp the realities of today's families, for, although the family has seen much change, relationships are still paramount in China. If God's grace can be seen working in and through families, the effect upon society at large will be profound.

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The Family in China
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esis 1-3. God creates man and places us within a family in the Garden of Eden. In doing so, God's intention is that the family will enjoy life and one another in this perfectly pristine setting. Following the garden story, Eve's eating the Tree of Life's forbidden fruit becomes the disruptive event, and Adam and Eve are banished from the garden. For them and all following them, life becomes an ongoing struggle to re-create this Garden of Eden setting in our lives. We want pleasant, conflict free relationships; healthy, emotionally sound children; and stimulating, well compensated vocations. In essence, we want heaven on earth.

The Chinese family story can be told in the context of the biblical family. As with Adam and Eve, the Chinese story has been a struggle to provide for the family as well as to preserve the family's economic well being. The hope is that the family's place and relative status in the community will be sustained and even improved for the family generations that follow. For most Chinese, this is seldom easy. Change is always part of the picture.

Changes in China's Recent Past and the Family

According to Yan Yunciang, studies of the Chinese family have usually taken one of three approaches: the economic, political or cultural family. The economic family looks at the ways in which the family, acting corporately, lives a shared life of budgets, property and combined income. The political family is studied from the dynamic of relational struggles fueled by somewhat traditional inequalities and concomitant power struggles. The cultural family approach entails the study of family behavior as influenced by traditional, primarily Confucian, values.[1] While studies may consider the family from any of these three, all dynamics exist and operate simultaneously. These are corporate approaches which look at the family unit rather than through the individual family member lens.

We seek to see how the corporate family and the individual interact, especially in the past fifty years. China is no longer the "old China": Changes will often show up in how the family responds to its environment, retaining characteristics of the old while becoming something new.

Family has always been an important part of Chinese history. Traditionally, one's identity meant little apart from the family. One was not simply a cousin, but "father's second brother's first son." Decisions of all kinds centered on what they might mean for the family, individual desires aside. This began to change in 1949 as the modern Chinese state formed.

Family has always been an important part of Chinese history. Traditionally, one's identity meant little apart from the family.

Seeking to create a new socialist family, the Chinese Communist Party desired to disrupt family loyalty and redirect individual allegiance to Mao and the state.[2] Prior to this time, loyalty to the family over self-interest was emphasized. Personal sacrifice for the common good and preservation demonstrated the greatest love for one's family. Western observers often think the Chinese worker's common practice to live and work for long periods of time apart from the family as unloving and selfish. Conversely, the Chinese see this as necessary and loving sacrifice for the family.

Although not achieving desired outcomes, the new laws did enable individual family members to begin forming different attitudes, only not towards the state but more towards one's personal interests and a developing private life. Unintended effects were changes in parental power, the status of women within the family and self-interest placed above family interest. With increasing individual versus family centered development, pursuit of romantic love, intimacy and sexual interests, privacy and private space would increase over the coming fifty years.[3] These shifts are huge in tradition-based China.

Prior to 1949, women were viewed by men as personal property with no individual rights. Although not affordable by most men, the Chinese ideal was one man with many wives and many more children.[4] Concubines and prostitution were legal. Men were dominant in society. When women were given equal legal status in 1949, prostitution and maintaining concubines were outlawed. Women began exercising more power within family decision making. They had freedom to pursue their own choice for a spouse and were even encouraged to delay marriage and childbirth.


Ken Benintendi

The concept of traditional family was further broken during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The "touch your soul movement" encouraged young people, even spouses, to inform on family members and challenge authority both in family and work relationships. The individual family members learned that no one can be trusted: not government, not family, no one. One must only trust oneself. Consequently, any trust in family relationships was undermined and even destroyed.[5] This underscored the break-up of the family cohesion and exacerbated self-interest.

Beginning in the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping's famous "to get rich is glorious" statement signaled the government's switch to marketplace economics. The state-run enterprises controlled much of the worker's life, giving them permission to marry and even when to have children. Individually, family members began to exercise some independence in their private lives; however, there remained a dependence upon the state in public life. State-run enterprises began to leave the marketplace, unable to compete favorably in commercial markets. Already under communism, religion was taboo and atheism the official view. Workers were left in a moral vacuum which would be filled by consumerism and materialistic gain values.[6] In the late 1990s reform movements, state-owned enterprises retreated more and more as a presence in the private life, and individual Chinese were left to pursue their own interests, economically as well as in formerly private and seldom discussed areas such romance, intimacy and sex.

China's economic miracle has resulted in steady growth and undreamed of opportunity for some yet left others with fear and uncertainty. The structural and cultural changes that have been forced upon the Chinese in the past thirty years took over two hundred years to develop in the West. However, business is vital to China's need for fast development and drive to regain its past prominence. Furthermore, business is viewed as an opportunity for young people to have success early, to live life free from bureaucratic controls and to enjoy the money one earns. In essence, each person is free to establish his own little empire, in the imperial sense.[7] The thread through all of this is increasing self-reliance, economic self-interest and disregard for parental and family pressure.

China's rural population, like elsewhere around the world, has flooded the cities seeking its part in the growing economy. It is a difficult life with long hours and substandard living. Still, the migrants can earn more money, and send it home, than is possible by remaining in their home villages. The opportunity is in the city. Some migrants leave their families behind, and others choose to bring them. Unless the family has a legal residence card for the working area, they are denied most or all social benefits, such as access to health care and schools for children.[8] Despite government efforts to relieve the situation, migrant children, if at all, often attend illegal or substandard schools staffed with nonqualified teachers. They develop self esteem problems recognizing that they are different from other kids living in the city.[9]

China's economic miracle has resulted in steady growth and undreamed of opportunity for some yet left others with fear and uncertainty.

Birth planning has been part of the governmental programs since the 1950s, but the stricter measures (One-Child Policy) began in the 80s. Enacted by the government as a means of controlling the growth of China's population, enormous focus and pressures are placed on a family's one child.[10] Parents and grandparents look to the child to provide for them in old age as they live longer, and the resources of government and companies are increasingly inadequate.

The decline in birth fertility rates combined with decreased mortality rates has reversed the relational structure of the larger family. In the past, one grandparent had scores of grandchildren seeking his or her attention; today, there is one child who is receiving all the attention and being spoiled by parents and two sets of grandparents. No one knows just where this will lead in the next fifty years. China is one of a few countries in which many children will grow up as an only child.[11] The next generation, that will not have aunts and uncles, will experience a different family life as well.[12]

The Chinese Family and the Church

Among Chinese Christians, there can be a dichotomy between the secular and the spiritual with little integration of one's faith and family relationships. Rather, one observes husbands and wives, single adults, and even the pastor seeking successful involvement outside the home, in church or business, without giving the same attention to the family. Since the house churches are often made up of families, this disconnect between God's story and our personal story can leave the impression that God matters elsewhere while seemingly not being important to the home and family.[13]

Generally, the response to the changing Chinese family has come from the larger church body and not any one church. Input from key local leaders as well as from my own experience shows that much of the current church emphasis is limited to evangelism and associated pastoral responsibility. There is little energy given to strengthening the family. While changing, the majority of family teaching comes from trained specialists or groups that conduct family seminars and conferences in different churches or communities across China. Especially in urban centers, there is a growing awareness of the need for premarital training, sex education and purity before marriage, marriage strengthening and communication skill building. Many pastors feel inadequate to train in these areas.

Reflecting upon China over the past fifty years, there have been many enormously important yet often seemingly unrelated changes within the country, the economy and the family. How does one make sense of it all? Looking at a tapestry's back side with a hodgepodge of loosely hanging multicolored strings may offer insight. Reversing the tapestry and seeing the design created by all the threads and colors gives us

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Peter Lucinsky

Maybe It Doesn't Take a Village

Globalization's Challenge to the Traditional Chinese Family

Patrick Nachtigall

Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in China knows what it is like to take a train trip and see what was once hours of rice patties turn into a commute through sprawling suburbs. Just a few years ago, traveling a few miles past the Hong Kong border felt like being deposited right in the heart of the Middle Kingdom. The villages, the rice patties, the water buffalo and the muddy rivers conjured up a picture of China as it had looked for centuries.

Yet, today, the same journey on a high speed train yields very few traditional Chinese images. Instead, billboards advertising cell phones compete for space with condominiums, foreign-owned factories and brand new cars. As the rice patties get replaced by housing developments, the traditional Chinese landscape is changing both literally and figuratively. China's shift from socialism to capitalism, from rural to urban, and from inward-looking to globally-engaged is challenging many of the linchpins that held Chinese society together for thousands of years. Of all the changes occurring in China, globalization's effect on the traditional Chinese family may be the most significant and alarming.

The Rise of Individualism in China

For most of human history, the submission of individualism in favor of being part of a clan or tribe was a matter of survival. To quote the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, life for most people was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Tribal warfare, raiding marauders, harsh weather, famine and many other challenges forced people to live very communal lives. In China's case, because of its sheer size, lack of arable land and large population, Chinese civilization was built around the role of families. These families and extended families produced children, who then became workers, who then produced food. Even the emperor and the state were part of each Chinese person's extended family. These family ties were crucial and remained untouched for thousands of years. Today, however, globalization and the resulting economic boom in China are atomizing society. The clearly established set of Confucian social obligations toward relatives and the community at large are giving way to a Western-style sense of individualism led by China's increasingly wealthy and small disconnected nuclear families. The changes that occurred gradually in the West as agrarian-based societies gave way to industrial and manufacturing-based societies are occurring in China within one genera-

tion. The Chinese family, as it has existed for thousands of years, is breaking up as quickly as the rice fields are being paved.

Perhaps nothing is challenging the Chinese family more than the evolving role of women. Traditionally, Chinese families have been very distinct from Western families. In the large families of agrarian China, the men were viewed as indisputably more valuable than women and sexuality was connected to childbirth for women. Women were not expected to stray far from the house, and daughters were far less valued than men. Quite often women were not even given proper names. The Communists' affirmation of women was a highly significant moment. Chairman Mao famously said that "women hold up half the sky." It was a significant breakthrough for women, but it was only the beginning. China's current era of hypercapitalism and connectivity with the rest of the world is a game-changer for women. Mao would be stunned at how emancipated women in China feel today. Increasingly, women want to do more than hold up half the sky—they want to own it, create an IPO out of it and make it a global franchise.

Today, women play a greater part in the role of the family. Both men and women want to have a regular income. Women, in general, have high expectations for their lives compared to the past, and their plans may or may not include a husband and child—something inconceivable 20 years ago. Women of all ages in China are inspired by figures such as Cheung Yan, who in 2006 was listed as China's wealthiest person having amassed a $3.4 billion fortune as the chairwoman of Nine Dragons Paper. Females in China no longer see their fortunes tied to men (or the approval of their notoriously finicky in-laws). There is a power shift toward the nuclear family and the individual. The world is theirs for the taking, and the images beamed around China of new wealth and freedoms for men and women alike promote the idea that in today's globalizing China "anything is possible." For the Confucian order which was borne out of a time of Hobessian limitations, this newfound optimism and liberty is revolutionary in its magnitude.

The Middle Class Family Emerges

The newfound freedoms and possibilities that globalization brings has created a middle-class of 300 million and made many Chinese families upwardly mobile, but it comes at a steep price. Throughout the country, radio talk shows are being flooded with women wanting to hear about how to improve their sex lives and complaining about husbands who do not make enough money. Divorce and extramarital affairs are exceedingly common now, and urban life creates the kind of anonymity that makes this possible. For the younger generation of Chinese youth, the pursuit of money takes precedence over marriage and children. The family no longer marks one's place in society; individual financial success is the measure of a man (or woman).

The increasing lack of interest in marriage by young Chinese women is not good news for a country that already suffers from an extremely imbalanced ratio of men to women. These "bare branches" as the men are called, are the result of China's one-child policy. With 119 men for every 100 women, there is a shortage of brides in China, and this has increased prostitution and abductions and led to the widespread expansion of sexual slavery throughout the country. This also leads to an increase in AIDS as well as a burgeoning gay scene in a country where it was once the man's indisputable duty to marry and produce sons. Addiction to internet pornography further fuels the Chinese sexual revolution and breaks taboos at the speed of light.

Globalization and the computer go hand in hand, and this greater connectivity with the world is leading to more disconnection within the family as people find that their time is spent alone in isolation on their cell phones or laptops. Obesity, eating disorders and video game addiction have deeply affected the latest generation growing up under the one-child policy. Known as the "little emperors," there is a generation of young boys growing up in middle-class China who increasingly have no sense of China's painful history of poverty and suffering and live self-absorbed lives with the blessing of their parents.

A positive effect of the one-child policy is that female children are now more valued by the urban middle class. Many modern-day Chinese parents place the kind of expectations on their daughters that were once reserved for sons. In one generation, many families have broken the cycle of poverty and already have hopes that their daughter will be admitted to the best university and become the next Bill Gates. However, as with the "little emperors," the most immediate result on the family is that the entire household is completely orientated around the perceived academic needs of the child. Family life is no longer about the village, or community, or traditions, but rather about academic excellence and material gain. This will no doubt create a generation of highly motivated and intelligent Chinese people (if they have the opportunity to attend decent schools), but it also means a shocking role reversal: the children will know much more than the parents—and most likely at an early age. For a civilization that has always emphatically placed the father above the son and daughter, it is disconcerting for daddy

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Family life is no longer about the village, or community, or traditions, but rather about academic excellence and material gain.

Peter Lucinsky

Family Therapy for Grief

Grace Lau

Grief is inevitable in life. The recent earthquake in Wenchuan has brought much loss and suffering to many families. How to respond with proper family therapy is a critical issue after such a disaster. Compared with the Western world, Chinese traditional culture contains models of psychotherapy for grief which are formed from the values of Chinese culture.

The national response to the earthquake demonstrates this unique contribution to grief therapy. However, I would like to look at the religious approach of therapy which provides an integrated caring, because in considering this earthquake, the traditional Chinese therapy model seems to fall short.

Collaborating Therapy

During the extensive period of feudal society, the governors developed a hierarchy to maintain the stability of the state. The order of this hierarchy was: family, state and the world. Looking at it, the family is the basic unit of the society; however, the family's fate is directly related to the state, even to the world. Therefore, accepting a weak family is not only a traditional virtue in Chinese culture but also the basis for the solution of grief and loss within the Chinese context. This type of family grief therapy is one of collaboration instead of individual effort. By using a collaborative effort, the family's grief is resolved within a social shelter, and the community reaches stability in a new modality. Hence, grief is not an individual issue, but an issue of the entire community.

Look at the picture below:

Immediately after the earthquake's occurrence, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited the disaster area. Facing broken families, orphans and mass grief, he represented the nation's promise to care for the sufferers. The state's shouldering of the responsibility to care for the victims puts it in a position of a "bigger family" and provides effective relief for every individual family at a critical moment. This action on the part of the government confirms the traditional collaborating therapy which is designed to maintain a stable society. Although political action is not equal to family therapy, it indeed provides strong psychological support and healing of grief as the grief of individual families finally becomes the grief of the entire nation. In response, almost every Chinese family

member exhibits a desire to share in the suffering.

Religious Therapy

It is notable that there was a meaningful phenomenon after the earthquake. When the earthquake took place, the students in Sichuan University rushed out of their classrooms and gathered on the playground, full of panic, without speaking. Then, a voice broke the silence: "Let's pray!" This was a feeble voice, but it sounded like a command at that moment. Without question, almost all the people began to pray until another voice was heard after quite a while: "To whom do we address our prayer?" This was indeed a good question; were they just borrowing a term from Christianity or were they beginning to think about God?

In fact, during the relief efforts, many people, including the media, frequently mentioned words such as "prayer" and "heaven" even though most families in the area affected are nonbelievers. Facing a crisis, prayer seems to become the only pillar of strength to people even though they might not know to whom their prayer is addressed.

However, from the point of view of religious therapy, we have to recognize the effect of restoration through "prayer"—whoever it is addressed to. The question becomes: Why do people choose religious means to deal with trauma? One answer is that from the realm of ideology, collaborating therapy does not seem to be enough to ease the family's grief and loss. In other words, people need comfort from above—whether this be a conscious or unconscious need.

Another popular term used after this earthquake was "heaven," which is always used for lost relatives: "They are in the heaven, in a better place." One impressive scene was that of a TV reporter who could not help but tear up when he was reciting the poem, "The road towards heaven." This poem imagines the dialogue between a dead child and his living mother.

Mom, I'm afraid
the road towards heaven is too dark
the road is crowded
I couldn't find your hands…

This poem shows a muddled concept of "heaven." On the one hand, people know that it is a good word and that "heaven" should be a good place for the lost. On the other hand, they are nescient about the basic knowledge of "heaven"—is the road towards heaven too dark? If so, where is the individual going? From this poem, we can tell that an erroneous religious concept will mislead people's imaginations which will then re-traumatize the grieving family leaving deeper sorrow.

We also heard some Christian voices deriding non-Christians who used Christian terms because they did not know the real meaning of the terms. Nevertheless, here, "prayer" or "heaven" or other such terms are no longer the privilege only of Christians. A "sub-gospel" does not like to see unbelievers misuse specific religious words; nevertheless, that is not an issue for religious therapy. Only if we encourage sufferers to "pray" during family therapy, are we able to find the opportunity to let "prayer" become true and introduce true, willing hope and comfort to broken families.

Look at another picture:

Since this picture was downloaded from the internet, we do not know if this family is a Christian family or not; nevertheless, it seems that the cross is their hope, and the cross is the best therapy for all family members. The cross on the tent is like Moses' bronze snake that healed the Israelites when they were in the desert. The title of this picture is: "The Tent, the Cross and Salvation." Whether or not this is a Christian family, we can see that religious therapy is playing an important role in the family's therapy of grief following the earthquake. To a certain degree, religious therapy is not an issue of healing skill but an issue of relationship and meaning. If we can build a relationship with non-Christian grieving families, then we can provide them with a new trustworthy relationship, not based on human beings, but based on a merciful God.

Church Response

The Chinese church is changing; it is coming out from behind closed doors and entering society. In holistic relief, Chinese churches (using data from house churches) were involved with huge human, financial and psychological resources. For example, one house church in Beijing donated about $30,000, sent out two relief teams (one was a counseling team led by a psychology professor) and collected countless clothes and materials. This church is merely representative of Beijing house churches; it is estimated that the total amount of money donated by these churches has been about $300,000. They are providing holistic help to the needy while at the same time providing a good witness to society.

Look at the photo below.

This shows church responses that are from overseas, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the official church and the house church. One of the effective contributions is from the Sichuan house church which is in the front row. In this picture, the young brothers and sisters went to the disaster area, put up the green (hope) tents and took good care of the children

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A Call to True Worship

Paul Lee

He lies in the hospital bed, bloody and bruised, his face beaten beyond recognition. Jian Hua is HIV positive, and his wife, Yu Qiong, has an advanced case of AIDS. Last year she gave birth to their first baby who quickly died from AIDS. Last week they went back to the wife's home village to seek help from her family.

While the family looked on, some of the villagers, knowing they had HIV, badly beat up the husband with sticks and hammers, breaking his right forearm and left lower leg, battering his head. They dragged them out of the village and told them never to come back. The family did not come to help. Now Jian Hua cannot work to support them (even if someone was willing to hire him), and they are going to be turned out of their one-room apartment if they cannot pay their rent. The hospital says they will not even treat his present problems if he cannot pay. The fractures and wounds are painful. They have nowhere to turn for help.

Zhu Fang Fang plays alone most days, inside their tiny mud brick home, because the neighbors no longer allow her to play with their children. She is lonely, and does not understand. She has never known her father and misses her mother who is too sick to even acknowledge her. Fang Fang is five years old but has little chance of reaching fifteen, because she is HIV positive. Her father was a drug addict who died before she was born. Her mother lies dying in severe agony, without medical care, on a woven mat in the corner of the one-room home. Her body is now skeleton-like and is covered with large, painful, oozing sores. Nausea, loose stools and cramping bowels keep her in constant distress. She will not live through the week.

Grandmother Zhu is doing the best she can to care for her daughter-in-law as she dies—but mostly she is frustrated that the local hospital will not help them, and that the government's "free treatment" for her daughter-in-law's sickness only includes medications (not hospitalization or lab tests) and was only available at the county hospital, several hours away by bus. The costs of keeping Hong Mei in the hospital and treating her complicating illnesses was far more than the old woman could afford on a meager retirement income. All of the family's savings were spent years ago when her son was dying. She watched him perish slowly, not knowing what was killing him. Most of his friends, also IV drug addicts, died in similar ways. She weeps most deeply when she thinks of the same fate to come for little Zhu, who received the virus from her mother at birth, before they knew the diagnosis.

Fang Fang is five years old but has little chance of reaching fifteen, because **she is HIV positive**.

The family lives rejected by all who know them, without hope, with no one to care for or comfort them. The neighbors no longer offer friendship or bring food. In fact, they never come into the home or even into the yard. They turn away when they see Grandma Zhu out in the garden working. Other family members escaped to the city years ago and have not been seen or heard from. The shame was too much to bear. The black cloud of poverty and death casts a deep and vicious shadow over the home.

Peter Lucinsky

Guang Nan lives in a world of fantasy these days—it is the only way he can escape the realities of what his life has become. He dreams of food and health, of physical well-being, of having a family that cares about him as they used to.

Just two years before he was the vice-governor of the county, his days filled with official meetings, important trips and banquets many evenings every week. He often drank until heavily intoxicated, visiting local brothels with his colleagues afterwards. He enjoyed the women provided for him by those who sought the help of his powerful position.

Eight months ago he became suddenly ill and nearly died of pneumonia. When they eventually diagnosed him with AIDS, he was forced out of the hospital abruptly and quietly informed that his position as vice-governor had been terminated. His wife immediately filed for divorce and refused to allow him to return home. She put his clothes in a box by the gate. He was destitute, homeless and very much alone almost overnight.

Few of his old friends will now answer the phone when he calls. He lives day-to-day in a shack on the edge of town, stealing food wherever he can,

creating fantasies to pass the time, sleeping in the dirt with a ragged blanket to cover his dirty clothes. He can receive free antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) at the local hospital, but he cannot afford to pay for all the incidental costs which are many. He often thinks of suicide.

Ping is in her junior year at a university. For two years she has studied hard during the week and partied hard on weekends. Her parents are government officials. Since entering college, Ping has become increasingly sexually active. Her roommates had all done the same, and it seemed so harmless and made her popular. The list of who she had slept with had grown longer every month.

Last week she attended her first HIV prevention seminar at the university. What she learned there scared her. She had never before thought so much about the possibility of getting AIDS. Deciding to go in for voluntary testing at the free clinic on campus, she was sure she would be okay. But when the result came back positive, she was shocked and devastated.

Two days later, the counselor from the school informed Ping that she was being expelled from the school, effective immediately. She was given three hours to clear her things out of the dorm. She wept bitterly while she packed. Her roommate did not speak to her or help her carry her bags out of the building.

She has nowhere to go. She knows that if her parents find out, they will be too ashamed to have her return home. She wonders if there is any hope to be found, fearful of what the future holds.

China has come a long way since the early days of AIDS when new patients were simply isolated to die alone. Many good things have happened with government policy and medical practice.

In the last five years we have seen immense improvements with hospitals now beginning to allow patients to receive care, government blacklists of all who are diagnosed slowly ceasing to exist, and ARVs (the drugs used to combat the disease) just now beginning to be available to a few. Jobs for those infected are still hard to come by. The organizational and infrastructural hurdles within government departments are slowly being recognized and overcome, and prevention education is beginning to happen more broadly (though it continues, in general, to be merely a rote passing out of information rather than any attempt to transform behavior) in the school system and factories. The villages remain significantly uninformed, though a process has begun of establishing a general knowledge of HIV. In the end, the realities of stigma and a system which does not yet meet the needs of those affected are still quite harsh.

As the prevalance of HIV increases regularly, **families are being devastated and crying out for various forms of help.**

In many parts of China, as the prevalence of HIV increases regularly, families are being devastated and crying out for various forms of help. Most are suffering alone, as in the examples described above. What direction will all of this take?

Surely, the government will continue their trend to improve services, educate the public and attempt to reduce stigma. However, to what extent will this improve the severity of the need if Chinese society is not significantly transformed in its attitudes toward those affected by HIV and AIDS?

Last year I was speaking to a house church pastor, encouraging him to involve his church in responding to some of the needs. He expressed some interest and asked what that would look like. I described many aspects of the need, and at the end of a long list (counseling, taking orphans into homes, hospice care, stigma reduction, prevention education and so on), I included the idea that his church would become a place which welcomed recovering IV drug addicts, prostitutes and the HIV infected. This took him by surprise.

"But we are Christians!" was his initial reply.

"Exactly! That's the point!" I returned. "What kind of people did Jesus choose to love and minister to?" I asked. "Did he focus on the hurting or the healthy?"

"I see your point," he replied after thinking about it for awhile.

A year later, this pastor's church is actively involved in welcoming those who are affected in the many ways that HIV destroys lives. They are taking in the orphans, ministering to prostitutes and addicts and providing hospice to the dying. They are providing jobs to those who, because of stigma, are unemployable.

The church in China must begin asking a very important question: "What entity in China is able and willing to respond to the needs being created by AIDS?" A few of the needs are being responded to by the government. Their response is growing. However, will it ever even begin to effectively impact the pain and suffering rapidly overwhelming hundreds of thousands? I don't believe so.

I believe that only the church is able and (potentially) willing to respond to the need. AIDS is, in fact, probably the greatest opportunity the Chinese church has ever had to offer the tangible and very real love of Jesus to this hurting nation. Will she respond? Will China's church respond to Jesus' cry from within the hurting bodies and souls of her people? Will they worship in spirit and in truth—presenting themselves to be spent sacrificially for Jesus' name and glory? I believe she is ready, at last, to stand up and become willing to be Jesus to her nation. Jesus and the world are waiting for her answer.

Paul Lee *is a long-time worker in China.* ∎

China's Modern Family Problems

Huo Shui

Right now in China there are over one billion people that make up the country's numerous family units. Family is the primary building block for social structures and for human interaction. To a certain degree, a person's quality of life and life expectancy are determined by the condition of his or her family. The collective quality of the families reflects the state of a nation and its people. The Chinese people traditionally have held family in high regard. A family is where an individual's life begins and ends as well as where an individual takes shelter and receives nurturing. Throughout China's history, spanning several thousand years, the Chinese have firmly believed in "building a family and achieving a career" as one's goal in life and as a measure of success. China is probably the most family-oriented country in the world. "Country," in Chinese, is *guo-jia*, which is not a cold and harsh political term but literally means the "collection of family units." The key concept is that regardless of the size of the country, family units are its basic building block.

However, this social building block is in serious crisis amid the unprecedented economic growth and dramatic social change that China has experienced in recent decades. The time-honored model of three generations living under one roof has been radically impacted. It was common and natural, particularly in the countryside, to see three or even four generations sharing a house together, providing care and security for the elderly and built-in childcare for working young parents all at once. This reciprocal arrangement works well for serving the needs of an agricultural society in which each family toils for its own survival. A larger family and a bigger labor force to work the land translate into more wealth for the whole clan. With the eldest person as the "family head," this long-established Chinese family structure epitomizes order, authority and harmony.

Family is the primary building block for social structures and for human interaction.

As China enters the twenty-first century and the Information Age, this traditional family structure is very much at odds with a globalized and modernized culture. One essential requirement for rapid economic growth is the free flow of cheap labor. Agricultural reform relieved farmers from farm labor and supplied an abundant, cheap labor force for China's economic expansion. Millions of farmers left their land and villages and flowed into cities, setting up homes wherever jobs led them. This transient lifestyle can only sustain a compact family, excluding the less mobile elderly. As countless young farmers leave their parents and their parents' farms and bring only their children to towns and cities, China's age-old family makeup quickly disintegrates.

There are also a large number of farm families where women and children continue to live on the farm and only the men go into the cities. It is common to find an entire village with only women, children and the elderly. Family stability is further threatened when men fail to return and women and children must go out to work, often leaving grandparents at home enduring loneliness and illnesses. This, perhaps, is one of the heavy prices of urbanization.

At the same time, more complex challenges await families in the cities. Educating children of migrant workers has immediately become a huge national issue. The Chinese government has long considered education to be a for-profit business. The reason is because Chinese families place so much value on education that they are willing to pour all possible resources into meeting the high cost of tuition. In addition, competing for placement in elite schools begins even before kindergarten. To keep their children competitive, parents force arts, music, sports and foreign languages into their curriculum. Parents who do not enroll their children in weekend study sessions are considered irresponsible; playtime or free time is a foreign concept to city children. Sadly, for many children home or family is just another dreadful battlefield outside of school.

Kay Danielson

As a result, the moment they pass their college entrance exam, students are quick to exercise freedom from their parents' control. For students, maintaining independence after attaining their degree

Peter Lucinsky

Parents who do not enroll their children in weekend study sessions are considered irresponsible.

is of highest importance. Hence, the traditional big family is even more difficult to maintain since no one wants to live with their parents. Today, one may still see a few young adults returning to live in their parents' homes; however, the action is not motivated by preservation of tradition but purely by the desire to ease their own financial burden.

Another major factor that has impacted China's family structure is China's family planning policy which restricts the number of children in each family to one. Forty years after the policy's implementation, China's urban family structure has been drastically altered; hence, the so-called "4-2-1" phenomenon. This phenomenon describes the situation where an only child marries another only child and they themselves have one child only. This child then becomes the sole object of attention for his parents and two sets of grandparents, as well as the only hope for their future. Growing up in these overprotected and overindulged homes, these children tend to have no manners and have difficulty getting along with others. Although they are not lacking in love and attention, they tend to be selfish, stubborn and isolated from the outside world.

Birth control policies are man's attempt to interfere with the natural propagation of families. Such policies do slow population growth, but societies pay a heavy price down the road. How will these spoiled "little emperors" face life's challenges? With ever-rising social security and health insurance costs, even more daunting will be the load these children must carry in caring for their parents and grandparents while starting their own families. According to a 2006 statistic, eleven and a half percent of the Chinese population is over 60. It is projected that by the year 2030 China will face a grave aging crisis with a small minority of young adults tending to the needs of a large majority of elderly and children. It will not be possible for individual nuclear families to provide security for the old, and that ball will inevitably drop in the lap of the government. China's economic advancement very likely will stall as a result. The Chinese government now sees the long-term ramifications of its policy, but it is probably already too late to prevent its consequences. In 20 years the entire county will feel the weight its urban families are feeling today.

Related to these family concerns, other issues such as marriage and sexual relationships are evolving as well. Cohabitation, singleness, infidelity, extramarital affairs and single-parent households have become more and more common. In 2005 alone, 1.78 million marriages filed for divorce. People's lives are deeply impacted by their chaotic sexual relationships and instability in their marriages and families. With the degradation of the traditional family structures and functions, the values they represented have also decayed. There are many victims in this course of social evolution with the vulnerable elderly and the self-sacrificing women paying the highest price.

As grave as this crisis that Chinese families are facing is, what is even more mortifying is the fact that most Chinese are still blinded by the glitter of economic gain, oblivious to the impending disaster. This is the reason why resources and education on marriage and family are vitally needed in China today.

Huo Shui *is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Alice Loh.* ▮

The Family in China
continued from page 4.

a hint that God is present in all the chaos, change and uncertainty. He sees the big picture and the way that the Chinese family story is all a part of the biblical family story. This is also part of his grand plan and purpose which has never once changed—to bring all things everywhere under his authority and control.

Endnotes

1. Yunciang Yan, *Private Life Under Socialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), xii.
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13. Author, private conversation with local Chinese pastor. ▮

Leader Development

I was challenged by Dr. Webber's lead article, "Leader Development: What is our Role?" in the spring issue of the *ChinaSource Journal*. As I was reading his article I couldn't help but think, "This is exactly what we are wrestling with." As the leader of a small China ministry that has ministered to pastors and lay pastors in China for 26 years, I believe that the "Build the Designer" leadership training approach that Dr. Webber considers the best for Western organizations that minister in China is the most effective. Even though we have not yet adopted this specific approach, we are always desirous and willing to change and learn. Webber's article has challenged me to continue improving how we can best serve the church in China. Our desire is to develop indigenous Chinese church leaders who create their own ministries, own them and then pass them on to other leaders as they stay true to God's leading in their lives.

—Erik Burklin

Family Therapy for Grief
Continued from page 8

who lost relatives, their school or their family by bringing new hope and true love to their trembling hearts. When you see the smiles on the children's faces, you cannot imagine that they just experienced a nightmare.

This is the good example of religious involvement, of integrated family therapy, that not only deals with grief and loss, but also arouses a new hope which leads to a new relationship.

Conclusion

In Chinese, the word "crisis" is described as the combination of danger and opportunity. The earthquake in Wenchuan has brought a crisis to many Chinese families. As Christians, help for the helpless families comes not only from material supplies and physical healing but also from spiritual restoration. This integrated therapy will bring a new relationship, true hope and lasting love.

When people in an atheistic country spontaneously choose religious therapy, the challenge to Christians becomes how to lead those grieving families into true belief and bring the true love to them. Of course, to have them acknowledge the ultimate care from above is beyond the role of family therapy.

***Grace Lau**'s area of service is family counseling.* ∎

Maybe It Doesn't Take A Village
Continued from page 6

to have to ask the eight-year-old daughter how to build a My-Space page. Call it the Cultural Revolution 2.0.

Chinese families are not alone in feeling as though everything is upheaval—globalization upends everything it touches. The same kinds of scenes are currently being played out from India to South Africa. What to make of a 29-year-old Bengali from a low caste that drives a BMW and works for Infosys? As Homer Simpson might say, "D'oh!" For better and for worse, even the act of watching television educates and inspires. Global interconnectivity constantly challenges the assumptions of traditional societies and creates new realities unimaginable before the connection occurred. And once the genie is out of the bottle, it is hard to put back in.

Some might argue that China has seen previous eras of openness before she built her great walls to shut the world out again. This is certainly true, and periods of hyper-globalization often end up forming counteractions and periods of withdrawal and conflict. But ultimately, the structure is changed forever. Mao's "Great Leap Forward" may have been a giant leap back into the Stone Age, and the Cultural Revolution may have created a hermit kingdom, but platforms were built in twentieth century China that ultimately continued the journey into modernity—such as the emancipation of women which set the platform for the Chinese female factory worker turned Global CEO.

We should expect that the atomization of a more prosperous Chinese society will continue to lead to a spiritual quest for meaning and community. As China abandons its rural heritage and turns into an urban manufacturing, services, tech-oriented society, the distance from its past will ultimately lead toward a desire to connect with it. China's rulers are re-emphasizing the importance of Confucianism and becoming increasingly open in their acceptance that religion, including Christianity, is important to establishing a healthy, civil society. China is currently under the spell of a radical individualism that will eventually be viewed as irresponsible and shallow. The family may no longer be connected to a village, but it will seek to connect to communities that promote civil society and tradition. Both nationalism and religious fundamentalism may also rear their ugly heads, but China knows well the cost of chaos and anarchy and after the tumultuous twentieth century, they suffer from revolution fatigue.

In the transitional period when farming life gives way to industry and the villages lose their people to cities, the large family becomes an economic burden instead of a benefit. However, in time, it should not surprise us if the Chinese family makes a comeback. All families may be headaches at times, but five thousand years of sitting around arguing at family dinners may be too much for the Chinese to give up in the long run.

***Patrick Nachtigall** is the author of* Passport of Faith: A Christian's Encounter with World Religions *and* Faith in the Future: Christianity's Interface with Globalization. *He is a writer and speaker based in Hong Kong.* ∎

The China beyond Bicycles and *Baozi**

***China Vignettes: An Inside Look at China** by Dominic Barton with Mei Ye. Talisman Publishing Pte Ltd (Singapore) 2007. 336 pages, ISBN-10: 9810580916; ISBN-13: 978-9810580919. List price: $25.00; $16.50 at Amazon.com*

Reviewed by Andrew T. Kaiser

As I prepared for my first visit to China in 1990, I had a clear vision of what China would be like. I expected to see crowds of elderly Chinese men in matching Mao suits performing unison Tai Chi exercises through the morning mist of a lush, green Chinese park. Needless to say, it did not take long for me to realize China was more complex than I had imagined.

When I began my one-year teaching stint in southern China two years later, I was grateful for my previous experiences. I expected that on campus I would find large numbers of bright students from the countryside. Politically informed post-1989, their poverty and idealism would propel them into the future. A few months into the semester, I felt the scales fall from my eyes as I realized my classroom environment was more complex than I had expected.

Another few years passed, and it was time to return to the Middle Kingdom once again. Now I was looking to relate more to China's local church. This time I was wise: I knew China was vast and varied. I expected a wide range of people within the church, though I was certain of one thing. From the few believers I had met previously and all the reading I had done, I was excited to get to know a church that was holy and pure, having been cleansed by the fires of persecution. While it took a little bit more time, the process was the same. After a few years of interaction I realized things were not so simple, and that the true nature of this congregation was far more complex than I had originally thought.

In hindsight, my experiences seem obvious. Of course a country as large and as old as China should be every bit as diverse and complex as our home countries. Yet, for many expatriate workers in China, it is often difficult to divest ourselves of convenient simplifications. Without intending any harm, we often reduce the vastness by applying simplistic labels that enable us to create patterns, thus making the bigness of China somehow manageable. Unfortunately, this natural bent towards reduction causes problems when we use those same simplifications to analyze and strategize.

Rather than statistics or abstract types, these are fellow human beings that we meet, their stories complete with the kinds of emotions and details that resonate with the reader.

A Helpful Aid

As a corrective to this tendency, Dominic Barton and Mei Ye's *China Vignettes* does a tremendous service to China workers. Barton, in his capacity as director of McKinsey & Company's Asia practice, has taken his consulting skills and applied them well in an effort to capture a snapshot of China circa 2007. The result is a fascinating and informative collection of 30 interviews and 13 essays all focused on illuminating where China's people are today.

The literary essays by prominent Chinese authors are informative though not especially unique attempts to illuminate various aspects of life in China today. Each story has a different flavor and a different focus, using one imaginary individual's experience to highlight some of the pressures and tensions affecting people in contemporary Chinese society. Often emotional, in some cases reflective, these short stories never seem to draw the reader in as much as the snapshots of real people that make up the bulk of the book.

The interviews themselves produce a reasonable sample of Chinese society. Though most seem to have been pulled from only three or four geographical locations, the age, economic status, profession and family position of the various interviewees yield a great deal of variety. With reasonable statistical documentation included in the back, it is in these individual tableaus and their startling diversity that the strength of this book is found.

For each interviewee, Barton and Ye provide a handful of basic statistics—age, marital status, profession, income, basic living expenses, even a photo—before reproducing a "day-in-the-life-of" diary page in the subject's own handwriting, complete with transla-

tion. This human touch highlights one of the great strengths of this work. Rather than statistics or abstract types, these are fellow human beings that we meet, their stories complete with the kinds of emotions and details that resonate with the reader. They are real.

Following the diary page, the authors supply us with a three or four page transcript of the interview proper. Barton and Ye obviously made an effort to allow their interviewees room to wander while still maintaining a focus on a few key themes. The results are typically fascinating, with the uniqueness of the individuals holding its own in the face of some clear commonalities. In selecting and editing down the no doubt lengthy interviews, change, and the challenges of dealing with change, are common points for inclusion. It is striking to see how all the factors that make these people so different yield surprisingly similar responses to change. One unasked question that lingers as the book progresses: to what degree are these people simply unaware of the massive scope of the changes still yet to come?

Future dreams and expectations also receive much attention in the interviews. One standout section focuses on a young Shanghai middle-school student. Her daily struggles, when viewed in light of her hopes and dreams, provide essential background knowledge for any outsider hoping to "understand China." While the scope of the work necessitates that each interviewee only receives five or six pages worth of attention, one hopes that the desire to know more about a given subject will drive readers to seek further understanding from local Chinese friends and neighbors.

Families in Crisis

For any outsider who has spent a year or more as part of a local Chinese community, few needs seem more pressing than those that center on relationships within the family. Scratch beneath the surface, and almost any Chinese family will begin to unravel. Most Chinese will readily admit the difficulty of pointing out even one positive example in their community that they themselves would recognize as a healthy family. Many expatriate workers see this need and are eager to reach out and bring healing into all of these broken relationships.

For those expatriates who have spent a significantly longer period of time living in Chinese communities, the situation is acknowledged to be even more dire than originally understood. However, with time has come knowledge, and the result of most of this knowledge is a hesitancy on the part of the more experienced overseas workers to give wisdom and counsel across cultural boundaries. With an increasing number of overseas Chinese included, this population of longer-term outsiders has come to realize the many, many, many kinds of pressures bearing down upon Chinese families, pressures that do not necessarily have equivalents in the West.

This is precisely where a book like *China Vignettes* can prove so useful. To the degree that it is read and digested by newly arrived expatriate workers, the themes it emphasizes, along with the tremendous social variety to which it testifies, can serve as a vital warning to the outside interloper. "Be patient. Observe: this is not what you think. There are things happening here that you have not fully understood."

To those who heed the warning, the book also offers a fantastic foundation upon which to build a far more complex and potentially more accurate understanding of this fascinating country and the people who live in it. Whether you are a novice China worker or an old hand who feels out of touch with the new China, *China Vignettes* offers a valuable opportunity to broaden all your definitions of China.

* A round steamed bun with meat or vegetable filling.

Andrew T. Kaiser *lives in China with his family. He has been working in China's non-profit sector since 1997.* ∎

INTERCESSORY notes

please pray

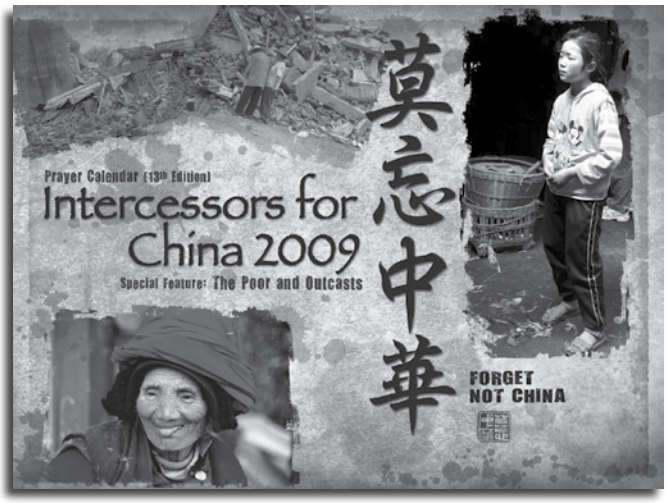
1. **That as Chinese families cope with overwhelming change** they will hear the gospel and respond to it.

2. **That Christian Chinese families will remain firm in their faith** as they face societal changes that often go against biblical teaching.

3. **For families affected by the earthquake** last May as they continue to deal with grief and economic realities.

4. **For churches that have taken the challenge of helping families** where HIV/AIDS is present and for the individuals they serve.

5. **For Chinese pastors as they serve the families** in their congregations and also give time to their own families.



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