

Returning Home to China



An equipping guide for Chinese Christians returning home.

友愛中華 **China Outreach**
MINISTRIES
Giving Christ to China's Future Leaders

God has put you in a very special position in His kingdom.

As you return to your home country of China, you will face both challenges and opportunities. Chinese who have returned have told us stories of how God has used them and their experience overseas to influence their community after returning to China. They have also told us of the challenges which caused them setbacks in their faith.

The world is watching China, and the church around the world has a very keen interest in the growth of our faith in your home country. It is obvious that the future of Christianity in the world will follow the future of Christianity in China. The question is, “How do we best reach China?” Furthermore, “How do we support Chinese Christians who are struggling to continue walking with God?” This material is an attempt to answer those questions.

We do not suppose that everyone’s experience will be the same, however there are some common themes which we have tried to cover. One common experience is underestimating the cultural differences a returnee encounters. After all, you are a Chinese person returning to China, so there should not be any significant culture shock, right? There inevitably is.

We encourage you to use this material for a group or one-on-one discussion. The ideal setting is to have a Chinese Christian who has already returned lead your discussion. If you cannot find one, gather with other Christians who are returning or who may be returning in the near future.

The topics below each make an appropriate hour-long discussion. You will find that each topic has a reading, some discussion questions, and some application points. You may want to have this discussion over dinner, but definitely find a quiet place free of distraction. Begin with prayer, and then silently read the material, which should only take a few minutes. Then proceed with discussion questions for most of the remainder of your time. Be sure that everyone has had a chance to complete any personal application which need to be filled in.

The topics included in this guide are:

- Discerning God’s Call to Return or Remain
- Finding a Church Home
- Planning for Your Personal Ministry
- Workplace Challenges

Please feel free to copy this material for use in your small groups.

We are praying for you and trust that whatever God has in store for your life, it will be an exciting adventure of serving him and reaching out to your fellow countrymen, whether in China or abroad!

Session 1: Discerning God's Call to Return or to Remain

Purpose: To help you make an informed, intentional decision about either returning to China or remaining overseas, as God leads you.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the challenges which Chinese typically face in returning home.
2. Understand the thought process that some Chinese who returned went through.
3. Be able to articulate God's specific calling for your life, whether it is to return or to remain.

Reading

“After becoming a believer, I had to re-adjust my purpose for being in America.” – a returnee

The purpose that you had in going overseas is probably not the same reason that you have right now for remaining here. Even though moving overseas may seem to have been the biggest transition of your life, the transition from unbeliever to being a new creation in Christ is far greater. As a Christian, you have an entirely new view of life, of other people, of career, of everything! So it is important that we apply our new worldview to every decision we make, particularly where we chose to settle.

This article may seem to be written with the purpose of challenging you to return to China, but in fact our desire is to help you discern your calling regardless of whether it is to return to China or remain abroad. Even the decision to remain abroad must be made intentionally; only then can you know why God has put you here and what you are to do for Him.

However, we also believe that the reasons for returning do not receive enough attention. The “default” decision is to remain abroad. This is the decision of the majority of overseas Chinese and so there are obviously very compelling reasons for remaining abroad, but as Christians we have a whole set of values which few people share. We need a time and place to think about these values. Please consider this discussion to be that time and place.

The returnees we interviewed were generally quite involved in their church or campus fellowship before they got to the point of considering returning. For them there was no question that God's will for them was to be involved in outreach and discipleship, wherever they were. The questions they faced were generally more related to 1) where is the best place to do it and 2) how to overcome the challenges of returning. With that as a starting point, let's look at some of the thought processes they went through.

The Need for Returnees

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” Romans 10:14

Reading this verse turned out to be a very significant event for one of our interviewees who returned to Shanghai. While she was spending some time with the Lord, she was impressed with the question, “who should be the ones to go?” She knew several Americans who had gone to China, but it became very clear that the best people to take the gospel to China are Chinese.

Because of the limitations of language and culture, foreigners rarely approach the effectiveness of Chinese people in sharing the gospel. Often there are misunderstood motives, very different life experiences, contrasting values and assumptions, etc. Chinese, even those who have spent much time in the west and feel most comfortable in the west, are able to understand the Chinese mindset and address those needs.

Returnees can also work in partnership with foreigners, who are generally better at gathering people and organizing events. Bi-lingual (and bi-cultural) Chinese are needed to help contextualize the gospel and bridge the gap between the foreigners and the Chinese they are reaching. Foreigners in China value returnees and look for such people to partner with.

Another reason that returnees are important to the church in China is that they often end up in positions of significant influence. The returnees we have talked with include university teachers and professors, business owners, an engineering manager, and a host of other professionals in all industry sectors, including arts, high tech and financial. It is not uncommon for these returnees to be consulted on foreign culture issues, such as the engineer who spoke to a group of Beijing lawyers on religious life in America.

Finally, there is simply the need for laborers in China. The numbers are simply not enough. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37). From this verse we see that God cares about the numbers of laborers. Even optimistic estimates put the number of Christians in China at about 5%, and in the cities where you will likely return, the numbers are even lower.

Think back to your own experience in China. Chances are, you had very little exposure to Christianity before coming overseas. This spiritual darkness is still reality for most of the people you would interact with in China.

How can they hear? Who will go? These can be difficult questions to ask, but since God’s chosen way to reach the world is by using his people, these questions need to be asked.

The Challenges to Returning

“At my current job [in the US] I am able to go home for lunch. One day as I lay on the couch and watched my 2-year old son playing, I realized I would never have this if we go back to China.” - an overseas Chinese considering a return to China.

The quality of family life in American can be quite good. Getting off work in time to be with the family is normal. Churches intentionally provide ministries for all ages. Parent involvement in school is encouraged. Family vacation spots abound. In contrast, working professionals in China typically spend less time with their family.

These challenges to a quality family life *can* be dealt with positively. Family life in China has its advantages, such as being close to grandparents and extended family. We will discuss some solutions for a healthy family in another session.

A second concern that Christians often raise is the sacrifice of religious freedom. Certainly religious freedom is good. The time which Chinese students spend in countries with high degrees of religious freedom is used by God to bring many to faith. However, we must realize that God does not need an environment of political freedom to do his work. Many historical and current examples show the gospel thriving under very oppressive circumstances. Certainly religious freedom makes it easier for us to practice our faith, but does not necessarily result in a deeper faith or a broader reach.

One returnee testified that God had provided all the protection he needed. With a combination of wisdom and tact balanced with boldness, he was able to make significant gains in ministry with no security problems.

Religious freedom is a special concern for those who intend to do considerable evangelism or ministry training. For foreigners, the worst consequence they face is being forced to return to their home country. For Chinese, these high-risk activities might have serious consequences.

Reading Esther 4 was a significant turning point for one interviewee who in the past had to work through the fear of persecution. Esther knew she was called to plead with the king for the lives of the Jewish people; she also knew that she was putting her life on the line (verse 11). Had Esther not obeyed and talked to the king, someone else would have (verse 14). God did not need Esther; it was Esther's *privilege* to speak for God's people. Esther's conclusion: "If I perish, I perish." Armed with this attitude, the returnee had little doubt that she was in God's will.

She said that she wanted to get a US Green Card so that she could go to the US if she ever needed to. During her decision-making process, she came to the conclusion that "*God will be my green card.*" God has been faithful, and she has yet to be denied a visa to travel outside of China on the three occasions she went to attend Christian conferences in the US.

A third challenge is the limitations on one's career. Often science and engineering careers are best developed in countries with more advanced technology and facilities. Other careers face a serious salary gap between China and other countries. You will want to talk with other returnees

and ask how their careers have been influenced and how they have dealt with the adjustments. Some find new, unexpected opportunities in their field. Some simply consider the limitations to be the cost of following God's call.

One thought on career success: God wants us to get our significance from Him, not from our position in a company or in society. While your position in a company can be used of God, he can accomplish his purposes with or without your career success. At the end of your life, what would cause God to say, "well done good and faithful servant"? Certainly honoring him through your work is of value, but how much greater the value of the lives you will touch through your work.

There are a number of other concerns which you may want to raise with your discussion group. Just as you have trusted other areas of your life to God, trusting him with the decision of where to live will ultimately result in experiencing the grace and strength to accept these challenges.

Remember that the best, safest place you can be is in the middle of His will!

Discerning God's Will

Knowing God's will is not a mystery. The majority of God's will for our lives is already revealed in his word. If we are daily being fed by God's word and walking with him, then we are already following his will. As we walk with God in the things he has revealed to us, we will be better able to understand his will in the unknown.

What Scripture does not tell us are answers to specific questions such as "where should I live?" For these questions, God's word does give us principles upon which to make God-pleasing decisions. Some of these principles we have already covered: the laborers are few, God has called us to reach others regardless of where we live, he will protect us when we follow him, etc.

To apply these principles to your life, it may be helpful to make a list. In a notebook, draw a line down the middle of a page. In one column, write "Return" and in the other column write "Remain". Fill in each column with the advantages of each. Do not expect to complete this exercise in one sitting. Pull this list out a few different times over the course of a week and make additions or changes.

Spend time praying about the items on your list. Ask God which obstacles you simply need to trust him with. Then discuss this list with your group leader within a week. Hopefully this exercise will help to make clear where you are called to and how God wants to use you wherever you are.

Discussion

1. How has your purpose in life changed over the past few years? Share any verse, person or event which significantly changed your life.

2. What does Romans 10:14 say about our role in God’s plan for the world?
3. In your view, what are some ways that returnees can have an impact in China which foreigners cannot? How about in contrast to Chinese who have never left China?
4. What is one of your fears about returning to China? What would God need to do in order for you to overcome that fear? Spend a longer time on this question. Listen to the concerns which others have in your group and help each other work through these issues.
5. Begin creating your Return/Remain list. Do not expect to finish it. Share some of the points on your list.

Reasons to Return to China	Reasons to Remain Abroad

Session 2: Finding a Church Home

Purpose: to equip you for finding a church home in China which will meet your spiritual needs and which will be supportive of your particular ministry calling.

Learning Objectives:

1. understand the challenges of finding a church home and getting involved.
2. adopt an attitude and approach which will foster good relationships with the Chinese church.
3. Develop a plan which will integrate the skills of a returnee with the needs of the Chinese churches.

Reading

“I have been to two churches since arriving last month. My first impression of one is that it is very critical of everything and this would be a difficult place to bring my friends. The second church was made up of older people and I did not fit in. I am still looking” – a returnee

You might find yourself in the situation described here, so it is good to be prepared for what you will find and what you will not find. The returnee above showed a determination to find a church home and eventually found one. Getting involved in a local church body is clearly God’s will for you, so please do not give up on this effort.

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25. You need the church, no matter how far short it falls from your expectations. Even more, there are people in the church who need you and the encouragement you can offer.

What is good about Chinese churches?

Our experience is that returnees normally feel that the Chinese church is a poor environment for their growth. However, those who work to find the positive often experience new areas of growth and God’s work in their lives. Here are some positives:

- The Chinese church has been tested by fire (1 Peter 1:7) in ways that the western churches have not. The resulting faith is less tainted by the world.
- The small environment creates a greater sense of community.
- Leadership is more frequently in the hands of lay people.
- Churches multiply instead of just grow larger.

Why is it so Difficult?

It is true that getting involved in a local church in China can be very difficult for returnees. However, the assurance we have received from church leaders in China is that the difficulty has nothing to do with the church leader's unwillingness to welcome them. Church leaders in China realize the wealth of information which returnees bring with them, but the context of the church in China demands that they take precautions which may be misconstrued by the returnee as unwelcoming.

In one case I asked a professor if he could help me introduce a recent returnee who was a university teacher, to a house church. The teacher was looking for fellowship with other academics, but this presented a challenge to the professor. He said that he could make an introduction to a common house church, but that the fellowship with other academics would require a much longer process. First, he would need to get to know the returnee fairly well before he could make the introduction. Then they would want to interview the returnee before allowing her to attend.

Just describing this process to a returnee creates the impression that the church is very standoffish. The returnee expects people to welcome him or her at the door, but the principle which the returnee must remember to remember here is that "the first goal of the church is to survive." It is certainly not unreasonable that the church is concerned for its existence. Certain churches – among academics for example – are particularly susceptible to scrutiny and therefore need extra measures of caution.

Trying Different Churches

Much of the selection of a new church needs to happen even before attending. Church hopping is *strongly* discouraged. If one person visits several churches, then this person becomes highly suspect, or, even if known to be a sincere believer, is viewed as knowing too many people for the church's good. So it is advisable at the outset to plan on only visiting a few.

Because your choices are limited by the people you know and their personal networks, you can understand what your options are by asking questions of some trusted people. Some questions you might want to ask include,

1. What makes your church unique? What are its values?
2. What kind of outreach does your church do in the community?
3. What does the church do to help families?

Finding the "Right" Church

The returnee needs first to lower his or her expectations of finding a good "fit" in a church. Assuming that we are only talking about Biblically sound churches, other priorities need to be rearranged. Preaching style, size, proximity to home, music style, facilities, training methods, etc., all must take a back seat to simply finding a church and committing oneself to it.

I used to consider geographical proximity as a top priority; but in fact, my relationship with the house church pastor is as important as anything; without that, I will not be successful at making an introduction. Returnees will be limited in their selection by the believers whom they know. In some cases, without a strong relationship with someone in a particular church, the returnee will be unable to attend.

The “right” church to attend is the church God calls you to, which is sometimes not so easy to see. God has his reasons for putting you in a church and it may not be your reasons for choosing a church. The church may need your skills or perhaps there is an outreach ministry that you can develop in the context of that church.

Once you have selected a church, it will take time to develop trust with the leaders and to find an outlet for your ministry. Commitment to the church over time will give you a strong, trusted relationship on which to build your ministry.

Plan for Involvement

Fill out the statement below entitled, “My Commitment to the Body of Christ.” You may write it in your own words, but the important thing is that you have a partner who will follow up with you after you return. Do not simply file this away; this will be an important document to refer back to so that you remember the direction God has led you.

Discussion

1. What do you feel are the positives and negatives of being in China for your church involvement and spiritual growth? Why?
2. Do you believe the security precautions which churches in China have are warranted? Why or why not?
3. What do you believe are non-negotiable values of a church you would consider being involved in? Please remember that these assumptions will likely get challenged; so you will need to think seriously about those which are truly non-negotiable.
4. Take some time to begin filling out the below statement of commitment while you are together in your group.

My Commitment to the Body of Christ

“Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

As a member of the Body of Christ, I recognize that God has created the fellowship of believers to be a vital part of my walk with God. It is God’s will that I be actively involved in and contributing to a local body of believers. I need other believers, imperfect though they are, in order to maintain a healthy faith, a fervent love for God, and a compassion for other people. Without close Christian brothers and sisters, I recognize that I am very susceptible to Satan’s attacks such as moral failure, broken family relationships, and complacency toward the unsaved.

With my accountability partner’s help, I commit to finding a church home upon moving to my new home, within two months. I do not expect to find a church which will meet all of my expectations. Rather, I will look for a body of believers with whom I can fellowship, and among whom I can offer my service humbly. What I will look for in a church includes these key values or characteristics: [select values that you feel in important and write a reason and/or Biblical reference for this value. Be careful to write only key values such as regular teaching of scripture, evangelism, discipleship, compassionate, etc.]

Value:	Biblical reference or personal reason why this value is important:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

My Network

[Write a list of people who can help you get started networking and find a church in the city you will be returning to]

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

My Involvement

I recognize that it may take time for me to find a suitable place of service in the church. I will patiently develop the trust of the church leaders and humbly accept small opportunities to serve as they are given to me. Over time, I expect that God will open the door for me to use my unique gifts. I believe that long-term, my ministry will involve: [write what you believe to be your calling, also write what you know from Scripture God expects you to be involved in]

My Gifts:

Ways I expect to use my gifts:

With God’s enabling, I commit myself to the above plan for involvement in the Body of Christ.

Signed:

Witnessed*:

Date:

* The Witness is your accountability partner. He/she will follow up with you until you have found a church home.

Session 3: Planning for Your Ministry

Purpose: to prepare a plan for your ministry in China based on what you understand about your gifts and on what opportunities there are in China.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the importance of planning for your ministry in advance of returning.
2. Articulate what you believe are the abilities God has gifted you with which are part of your calling to return to China.
3. Write a basic plan and some goals which you want to see happen in the first year after returning to China.

Reading

Laura (not her real name) teaches at a major university in China. Having spent 8 years in the United States, most of that as a Christian, she felt called to return to home. Her involvement with campus ministries built in her a strong commitment to having an impact for Christ, which was her main reason for choosing to return. She felt she could have a greater influence in China, which is now proving to be true, a year after she returned.

Well before Laura returned, she knew that God called her to minister through her English and drama teaching profession. Having already decided how she was to serve the Lord, she was able to handle the unexpected complications of her first year back, knowing that she was being positioned to serve where God wanted her. When she arrived in China, promises made to her were not delivered, and she ended up at a different university than she had originally returned to. But her calling and ministry never changed.

She had spent a lot of time thinking about the integration of her faith and work. People in her department are accepting of her faith because she is a serious professional (unlike some of the foreigners teaching English in her department).

Laura is now reaching out to college students through her teaching and using her understanding of western culture as a platform for sharing her Christian values. She is sure that this is what God has called her back to China for.

What is a personal ministry?

A personal ministry is an area of service to which God has called you and which is shaped by your gifts and the opportunities around you.

We can all agree that our goal is to make disciples (Matthew 28:19) but what it looks for you will be unique to you. Romans 12:4-13 teaches that all of us have gifts which shape the way we serve. A ministry might include:

- A university teacher who is known to be Christian and when she speaks about values, she finds open doors to talk about her faith with students.
- A finance consultant who is trusted by everyone around her and gathers people in her office for prayer over the lunch hour.
- An engineer who works diligently even when no one is watching, and regularly brings co-workers to church.
- A manager who attributes his leadership style to the example of Jesus and encourages employees to meet together for Bible study.

These are just a few examples. The important thing is that you are convinced that God has a sphere of influence for you, and that you are intentional about making disciples, whatever that looks like for you.

A Vision for Your Ministry

To know what God specifically has called you to, here are three questions you will want to answer:

1. What are you passionate about?
2. What are you gifted at?
3. What opportunities for ministry are around you?

What are you passionate about? Most people are passionate about the things that had the most influence on them. Reflect on what has been most meaningful to you in your spiritual journey, because that is what you will find yourself doing for others. Perhaps you became a believer when a respected co-worker shared her faith with you and led you to Christ. Perhaps you went to church for a year before you finally trusted Christ as your Savior. Or maybe you got to know Christians by going to their parties and outings.

What are you gifted at? The best way to know what you are gifted at is to ask other Christians who know you well. You can also look at what God has done through you in the past.

What opportunities for ministry are around you? Before you return to China, you may not know exactly what opportunities there are, but don't let that stop you from planning. It will be helpful to talk with other returnees to find out what ministry opportunities they have had.

Based on the answers to these questions, write down a vision for how you see God using you in China. It should be 3 or 4 sentences, and should start with what you are passionate about. Write this down now before you discuss it with your group:

Planning for Your Ministry

As they say, “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.” If you don’t take time to plan for ministry, it will certainly get pushed out of your schedule by all of the other demands on your time. Without a plan, your vision will never be more than a lofty idea.

Your plan needs to be faith-stretching, yet realistic. What will challenge you enough that you must trust God for it? Don’t plan just for what is easy for you to do. However, you also need to consider that your first year back in China will be busy and full of unexpected changes. So your goals also need to be realistic. That is, achievable in the midst of a major life change.

Here are some questions that might help you to plan for specific ministry goals:

What do I want colleagues to know about me? Besides the fact that you are a Christian, what values and practices do you want them to know you have? How and when will I communicate that to them? (not just in words, but actions as well)

How will I share my faith? Be specific about how many people you would like to share with and how you will do it.

In what way will I serve the local church?

Other plans:

Discussion

1. What might happen if a person never takes time to plan for their ministry?
2. Share your personal vision for ministry which you wrote down.
3. If your group members know each other fairly well, talk about what you think each others spiritual gifts are. Open to Romans 12:4-13 and use it as a guide.
4. Share what plans you wrote down.
5. Share what challenges you foresee in your ministry in China. Write down each others challenges as prayer items and pray for each other.

Session 4: Workplace Challenges

Purpose: To anticipate the moral and ethical challenges you will face at work in China and prepare yourself to handle them in a Christ-like way.

Learning Objectives:

1. To identify the most common moral and ethical problems believers face in China.
2. Make a commitment to act consistently with Biblical values in all of your work and personal dealings.
3. Learn a process for handling “gray” areas.

Reading

The ethical challenges of the workplace are both a problem and an opportunity for Christians. Because Christians normally find themselves in the minority, they can be persuaded to acquiesce to the pressures of the workplace. However, a godly response to the pressure can be a very powerful witness.

Let’s take a look at some of the situations which one might encounter in the workplace. Note that these dilemmas are certainly not limited to China, though they are more common in China.

- Purchasers at a manufacturing company were offered a kickback from a vendor to buy from him. If they bought from him, the company would be getting inferior products compared to another vendor’s products, at the same price.
- A university teacher was pressured by his professor to give a high mark to one student on an exam because the student was the son of the professor’s friend.
- A finance manager is told to move some expenses into the following month in order to meet profit targets for the current quarter.
- A company is told they need to pay a special handling fee to an official if they want to be assured of winning a particular government contract.

Ethical dilemmas can take many different shapes and forms, and sometimes are so entangled in technical or financial details that it is hard to identify the wrongdoing. But there are some simple principles which will greatly elucidate ethical dilemmas which we will discuss later.

Biblical Basis for Workplace Ethics

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”
Colossians 3:23. Some Christians have the idea that your work is less important than your ministry. Sometimes unconsciously, Christians separate their activities into “sacred” and

“secular”. Colossians 3:23 teaches us that *everything* you do is sacred. Even your work is an act of worship.

Without this view of work, a Christian may be tempted to cut corners on work so that they have more time for the “sacred”. Or they may view minor ethics violations (taking supplies from the office supply cabinet for personal use, surfing the internet during work hours, etc.) as insignificant. The idea of separating the secular and the sacred is detrimental to a Christian’s witness in the workplace.

We Christians, no matter where we are, represent the Lord. “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” Ephesians 4:1. What type of behavior is worthy of the calling you have received? We are all called, as we discussed in the first session of this guide. To live a life worthy of such a calling is a great responsibility. Reflect on your calling and what it will look like to be worthy of it in the workplace. Write some specific ways that having such an attitude will influence your work:

Romans 12:2 tells us, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The way to ensure that we do not get squeezed into the world’s pattern is by the renewing of our minds through God’s word. Nothing can take the place of regular renewal of our thinking by God’s word.

Write out a statement of commitment that you will be separate from the world’s ways, and how you plan to keep yourself in the right mindset:

Dealing with “Gray” Areas

By “gray” areas we mean those situations where the ethically correct decision is not immediately apparent. It is important to have a process for dealing with these when they arise. Here are four conditions you can examine to help you make wise decisions: Golden Rule, Legality, Advice, Disclosure (GLAD).

Golden Rule. Does the decision or action follow the Golden Rule found in Luke 6:31, “Do to others as you would have them do to you”? Is there anyone who might be hurt by this decision?

Look at the four examples at the beginning of this session. Ask who will be hurt in each situation. In the first case, the company which is doing the purchasing is hurt by getting inferior goods. The purchaser's manager or the owners of the company are the ones being hurt by the gain of the purchaser. Most ethical dilemmas can be solved with this one principle.

Legality. Is the action legal? US companies operating in China are required to follow the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and many other countries have similar regulations. The FCPA prohibits bribes being paid for purpose of gaining new business. Most companies in China are now aware that international companies, at least US companies, will not pay bribes. You will find it much easier if you join a company which has a reputation for not paying bribes because people will be less likely to ask for them.

Local laws and regulations are often inconsistently enforced, leading to a lack of clarity over the correct interpretation. Romans 13 clearly tells we are to submit to governing authorities, who are God's servants. It may be difficult to maintain this perspective toward government leaders who do not believe in God, but we are still called to submit.

You may find that even if you fully intend to obey the law, there is still a lack of clarity because of the inconsistency in law enforcement. In this case we move on to the third step.

Advice. Be sure to have a respected Christian friend whom you can call for advice when you are struggling with an ethical situation. This person should be someone who is able to understand your work situation, but is not involved in the situation. If that persons' conscience says "this is wrong" then do not proceed.

Be sure to tell this person in advance that you may be calling them for advice. Write here the name of the person you are designating as your advice-giver: _____

Disclosure. Is the current situation disclosed to everyone involved? For example, if the purchaser were to tell his manager that the vendor is giving him money, then the manager would know he should investigate whether the buyer's decision is in the best interest of the company. The purchaser also has the responsibility to report the money as income. In this case, if the incentive paid to the buyer is disclosed to everyone before it is paid, then the conflict of interest can be eliminated. In general, if an action is ethical, then there is nothing to hide.

Conclusion

We have not covered all potential ethical dilemmas because it is neither possible nor necessary. You have the tools to deal with whatever arises. Armed with a commitment to maintain your integrity and a process (GLAD) to help in times of uncertainty, you will be able to handle what comes your way. You cannot handle it on your own of course, but empowered by the Holy Spirit, guided by God's word, and with the advice of believers whom you respect, you can.

As one returnee said, "The struggles God has given me are the ones I can handle."

Discussion

1. Discuss the 4 scenarios at the beginning of the reading. Be sure that the dilemma in each case is clear to everyone. If anyone has encountered similar situations, have them share how it was handled.
2. What are some things that Christians do, perhaps unconsciously, which show they view their work as less sacred than ministry?
3. Share what you wrote on the blank lines. If you didn't have time to fill them in completely, pause now to give them more thought.
4. What other challenges do you expect to encounter which have not been covered in this session?
5. Review from memory the four conditions for examining a gray area.
6. Share with the group who you feel you can turn to for advice.
7. Pray for each other to have a lifetime of integrity and wisdom.