

CD702 Working with People  
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### An Interview with an Irreligious Person

I interviewed a mother of my younger son's friend. I have known her for many years, but we have maintained a surface-level relationship as our conversations would normally focus only on our kids. I took this assignment as an opportunity to get to know her better.

She and her husband both came from China to study scientific engineering and mathematics when they were in college. Since then, they have been successful in their work. Their children are also motivated to study science and mathematics, following in their parents' footsteps. I met her late afternoon on February 4.

When I asked her, "If I were to speak to you or your family about God, how would you like me to represent Him?" she responded by explaining two reasons why she did not become a Christian. First, she said, family is extremely important in Chinese culture. One's worldview is shaped mainly by the family, and it is often very difficult to argue against the belief and value of the family. Therefore, becoming a Christian is virtually impossible if your family does not approve Christianity. As no one in her family knew about Christianity, she had no connection to the belief. Second, in her opinion, people come to believe in God when they have supernatural experiences, such as getting healed from a serious disease or miraculously surviving from an accident. As she had no such experience, she concluded that she could not become a Christian. In general, believing in God has not resonated with her all her life. Moreover, the scientific engineering background has reinforced her tendency to explain everything scientifically.

Later, I asked her the same question I asked in the beginning. She said that she does not want to feel forced to become a Christian. She mentioned how missionaries forced others to

follow their religion and that she does not want to feel attacked for what she believes. It occurred to me that even though she does not know much about missionaries, she held negative view about them and their work. Based on the books she read, she thinks missionaries oppressed the different cultures and forced others to convert to their religion. She does not understand why someone wants to convert others. Yet, she feels okay if someone talks to her about God while respecting her values. It was surprising when she related the works of missionaries to “thought reform” forced by Communist Party during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Her emphasis that one should choose one’s own belief and it is evil to force others might have been greatly influenced by the tragic history of China.

When I asked her what makes her doubt God’s existence, she answered that the suffering and pain happening to innocent people is what led her to such conclusion. She said there is no actual difference between the life of Christians and non-Christians. She pointed out that the problems in the society does not change whether there are Christians or not. She mentioned that many of the gun violence in the US has been committed by Christians. On the other hand, she thinks the environment and education is more impactful than religion. To her, scientific pursuit is what makes our life better. Good environment and education affect people to be generous to one another. Most of the people she knows are eager to help others even without knowing God. She concludes that sacrificial act to support community is what gives her hope.

While she never responded directly to my question, she expressed her belief that trying to change others is bad. As she thinks evangelism is same as forcing, she avoided answering my question. We still talked honestly about our different beliefs in a respectful way. The interview was meaningful as I truly got to know her better. I hope it gave rise to the most important questions of her life which she will wrestle with. I pray that she finds the answers in God.