The Influence of Christian Churches on

International Students

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Abstract

This paper is about the interview with Ms. Chen, a second year PhD at Purdue University. The interview aims to find out how Chinese students become familiar with church functions and how churches affect Chinese students at Purdue University in social and academic life. After the interview I learned Ms. Chen’s perspective about how churches influenced her socially and academically. In her opinion, going to the Chinese church changes her attitude in social life. She became more helpful and warm-hearted because she felt an abundant love of God and the graceful solicitude of other Christians in the church. Moreover, Ms. Chen believes that the prayer meeting held by the church weekly reduces her stress of study and boosts her concentration. Thus, she thinks the church also has a positive influence on her academic life. I learnt that a Christian church has the power of changing a Chinese student’s life from this interview.

*Keywords:* Churches, Chinese students, social life, academic life

The Influence of Christian Churches on International Students

**Introduction**

As a Chinese student who had limited knowledge of Christian churches, I decided to study on the influence of churches on international students. To be specific, I chose Chinese students to do my research. On March 1st 2015, I conducted a 20minute interview with Ms. Yue Chen at the Greenleaf restaurant. Ms. Chen is a second year PhD studying English at the College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University. She is also an instructor of an English course for international students, ENGL 106i. Her identity of a Christian and her academic excellence make me think that she would help me greatly with my study.

**Interview**

At the beginning of the interview, Ms. Chen talked about her background and her motivation of being a Christian. Initially, she was invited to an American church in Michigan by her Christian roommates during her master degree program. She coincidently found her original thoughts about the God close to the contents of the bible. When she finished her master degree and began her PhD program at Purdue, she was invited to the local Chinese church and then became a Christian. Having been a Christian for two years, Ms. Chen is now a group leader of the Greater Lafayette Chinese alliance church, located inside Purdue University, West Lafayette. She is pretty involved to all kinds of events held by the Purdue Chinese Christian fellowship for college students, going to the church three times a week, on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Ms. Chen was quite determined that she enjoyed going to the church frequently. “Refreshed.” She replied without any hesitation about her feeling after going to the church each time. Ms. Chen believed that the church is helpful spiritually, physically, and intellectually. She stated that “There are so many things I worry in my life: so many things going on, especially this semester. I’m working on so many projects and my exams. Going to the church makes me feel like I can hand over all of my burdens to him (the God). And he will be there helping me and taking care of everything.” In other words, she felt relieved and refreshed after going to the church because she sought help from the God to overcome her heavy burdens.

According to Ms. Chen, meeting friends was another important reason to go to the church. It was interesting to find that people in the church share similar characteristics, faithful and warm-hearted. She admitted that her characters were also changed after believing in God: “I felt the deep love from him (the God) so I think I need to share this deep love to others. So I start to feel that I need to help other not because I want something back from them but because the Christ loves me.”

Ms. Chen laughed when I mentioned the third common characteristic shared by the Purdue students of the Chinese church: academic excellence. In her view, Gpa dose not define anybody, it’s crucial to eliminate worries and nervousness and put efforts on study without destructions. Opposite from the common scene that going to the church reduces students’ study time, Ms. Chen stated: “But if you take the time to spend with the God that you really love, to refresh yourself and to put all of the worries in front of him. You know that God will take care of all the things for you so you will be more focused and more productive than you are not in the church building.” Ms. Chen’s point was that going to the church weekly enhanced her thought that someone was helping her to be calm and be focused, thus she would be more focused and more efficient in her academic life.

Moreover, Ms. Chen admitted that balancing the two identities of a student and an instructor the hardest part of her academic life. She was once overwhelmed to write three thesis papers consistently meanwhile to grade papers for her students in this semester. However, she overcame this difficulty by praying to the God and sharing stress with her Christian friends. Ms. Chen said: “So I felt like fully charged again.” Additionally, she mentioned that the prayer meeting every Wednesday is the most helpful event for her to be powerful again.

**Conclusion**

After the interview with Ms. Chen, I found out the influence of churches to a Chinese student. While her friends from the church changed her attitude of life to be more helpful and generous, the activities held weekly by the church also became a very important part of her social life. In addition, her belief greatly helped her when she faces difficulties in her academic life. She gains better efficiency on study by going to the church weekly. What's more, she gets rid of her burdens and regains her power of study by praying to the God. In my opinion, the church affects both Ms. Chen’s social and academic live significantly. From this interview, I learnt that a Christian church has the power of changing a student’s life and my research plan is to study about the factors that influence individual student: church members, church events and the belief in Christianity.

Reference

The quotations of this paper are from the personal interview with Ms. Yue Chen, took place at Greenleaf restaurant on March 1st 2015.

Appendix

Interview questions:

1. Are you a Christian? / How long have you been a Christian?

2. Which church are you going?

3. What motivated you to go to the church for the first time?

4. How long have you been to this church? How often do you go to the church?

5. How do you like going to the church?

6. Do you think going to the church is helpful? What do you feel after going to the church each time?

7. What's the most attractive part for you to go to the church? / Do you think meeting friends in an important part of going to the church? Why?

8. What are the characteristics your friends in the church share?

9. Do you think being with your friends in the church has changed your characteristics? / Can you give an example?

10. Did they influence your attitude of your life?

11. How long have you been studying at Purdue?

12. How is your study last semester? What do you think is the key of being an excellent student?

13. Do you think your academic life is related to the church?

1) What kind of activities that you join in the church do you think that help you the most?

2) What do you gain from the bible study each week at church?

3) What do you do in bible study?

14. Some people have the concern that going to the church will reduce their study time. What do you think?

15. Will going to the church reduce the time you planed to study?

16. Do you have a study schedule? Do you think it's important to obey your study schedule?

17. As a student and an instructor, what do you think is the hardest part when you study here?

18. Can you share a story of yourself about how you overcome your weaknesses of your study?

19. Do you think laziness is a common enemy for students?

20.  How do you over come laziness?