Returning Home: A Chinese Christian’s Dilemma

Abbie’s friend, Wei Liu, is a student at the same college as Abbie. He is set to graduate in three months and had been planning on returning to China to begin a job he accepted earlier in the year. However, since then, Wei accepted Jesus as his savior. Despite his enthusiasm, Abbie knows that Wei’s newly found Christian faith has not been really challenged.

She asks you, a fellow believer, “How should I counsel Wei? He is aware of how his new faith affects his future in China. I just want to be there for him as his friend and fellow believer. His commitment to Jesus Christ is amazing but his biblical understanding is still very limited.”

Since Wei left China, he has been able to widen his horizon and get involved in many different activities. As a Christian, this included regularly attending church services and meeting with church related youth groups. All those around him have marveled at how his outlook on life has changed. However, Wei has told Abbie that his family will likely oppose his going to church when he returns to China. This will create real tension as it may damage his relationship with them which is largely based on obeying parental guidance. Text messages to Abbie from former students who have retained their Christian faith after returning to China confirm that they face continuous family pressure to reject it.

Abbie is also concerned that Wei’s exposure to Christianity is based on his current church environment that is relaxed with an orientation toward youth and contemporary music. The typical Chinese church is more formal and stricter. Abbie has known of several Chinese students who chose not to attend church when they returned to China and have drifted away from their faith at least partially because of this difference.

Beyond these personal considerations is the fact that Wei became a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) before he left China for college. A friend who is in the party back in China sent him the following CPC regulation which was adopted in August 2018. It states, “For those members who have religious beliefs, the party should strengthen political teaching on them. For those who didn’t change after the teaching support of CPC, those members should be advised to withdraw their membership. For those who didn’t withdraw following the party’s advice, the party will forcibly expel them.” As his friend notes, this regulation is not directed solely at Christianity. The premise is that, for historical and cultural reasons, the CPC is the only legal ruling party that can serve the people and yield those benefits which can bring happiness to Chinese people.
Wei recently told Abbie that he realistically has three options. First, remain a Christian but live it secretly so that nobody in China knows. The obvious drawback of this approach is that he will not be able to fully serve the Lord. Further, he risks expulsion from the Party. Second, openly profess his faith but give up the job prospect in China. By emigrating abroad, Wei will give up his Party membership and his career opportunities in China. It also means that he will give up the identity and status he has acquired in China. Finally, reject his Christian faith because of the difficulties this would make for his life. This option is actually very common in today’s Chinese society particularly among those returning from studying abroad.

As Abbie relates to you, “I cannot fully understand how Wei is thinking through his choices. I am sincerely worried that he may elect the third option given the infancy of his faith. I would like to take this opportunity to show that Biblical insight may be helpful in his deliberation. Where should I start?”

You respond, “This is a real challenge for me as well to try to put myself in Wei’s shoes. Let’s both think through what scriptures may be the best foundation to use in counselling Wei. We can then get together next week for coffee to go over our thoughts.”
ASSIGNMENT
What set of bible verses would you recommend that Abbie uses in counseling Wei? Based on these scriptures, how should she structure her advice?

My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: