

Five tips for building relationships

The British National (Overseas) visa has been available for around two and half years. Many Hong Kongers went into Chinese churches and local churches in Britain. In both, we found much tension (about political or theological opinions) because of cultural differences or history. In facing the tension or culture differences, we are aware that sometimes these become arguments or conflicts. However, the differences only are differences in culture, not issues of 'right or wrong'.

Being aware of this situation, we want to give our Baptist family some suggestions which we hope helps soften the situation. Here we have 5 tips for when you are talking with a Hong Konger:

1. Understanding the stories of Hong Kongers

Every migrant has a reason to move out of their home country. For Hong Kongers, the reason would be the sense of insecurity of Hong Kong's future. Understanding the stories can enable you to have more empathy, more culture awareness and help you to connect on a deeper level with them.

You can watch the news or stories with the following links:

[Hong Kong - BBC News](#)

[Hong Kong conversation powered by Pecha Kucha - Baptist Assembly 2022](#)

[British National \(Overseas\) visa: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Surveys — UKHK](#)

2. Using the word 'story', not 'opinion'

The difference between 'stories' and 'opinions' is that story states an objective fact of the person and presents events or experiences which have no right or wrong, while opinions are from a subjective perspective and feelings about them can lead to argument and disagreement. In some sensitive topics, or at the beginning of a relationship, it's better to listen to people's stories rather than opinions to avoid argument.

Despite the stories of a person's politics and faith being linked, it is important to listen and understand a person by finding out more about the thinking behind their beliefs. Their experiences are affecting how they are building relationships and being adopted into church.

3. Encouraging the congregation to be aware of migrants' feelings

It's not easy for a person or a family to leave their hometown; it's hard to realise how complex their inner feelings are. Being aware of their emotions fosters better interactions and contributes to a positive and supportive environment, where individuals feel valued and understood. It's good to resolve conflicts by beginning with listening and being aware of the complex emotions inside a person.

4. Encouraging congregation to listen with prayer

It's easy to give comments when listening to people sharing their story. Sometimes, commenting is good, but too much can make things worse. A suitable response leads to connection and deeper conversation, prevents misunderstanding and misinterpretations. Active listening and prayer are important to enhance the engagement with others. Some training in active listening is also a way to help a congregation develop their skills.

5. Giving space for being silent

Sometimes people are too tired in their life and not able to talk more. Just give them space and treat this as normal - they will talk when the time comes. Treat them with prayer, with mercy and with love!