

## **Challenges for sharing your faith in Christ with internationals**

### **1- The mission field is around you**

The United States receives the largest number of immigrants, refugees, international students, professionals, visitors and trainees. Many of these strangers, to whom churches have been sending missionaries, now live right next door. The "Harvest on Your Doorstep" has been developed as part of a graduate course in communications and practical work with the nations/internationals in United States. It aims at eliminating some miscommunication due to cultural differences. It is designed to help Christians who want to share the message of Christ with the nations around them and to learn about the specific behaviors, cultures and religions of the people who have settled in our area in order to remove the cross cultural barriers.

We know that preaching the gospel is the communication of God=s truth by God=s servants to meet the needs of the people. There is such a thing as God=s truth. We can know this truth, experience it, and share it with others. We must know the people we minister to so that we may better apply the truth to their needs. People can receive this truth, apply it, and be changed by it. Also, we must grow in our love for the gospel and our knowledge of it so that our preaching of the gospel can increase in depth and effectiveness. How can people hear without someone preaching to them? How do we make them even want to hear? Preaching was the order of the day in the early church, and this is what we need today! In our day, we cannot assume our preaching will fall upon willing ears. In some circles preaching is a dirty word. A Don=t preach to me@ is practically the motto of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The two basic principles in missions strategy are found in the book of Acts and are the following: 1) God brings the world to where the church is (Acts 2:5-11,45/ 4:32-36) and 2) God sends the church to where the world is (Acts 13). These two principles are to work in concert and

in coordination, complementing one another. The first basis of missions is that hundreds like to go to the mission field overseas. *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matt. 28:19-20).* The second basis in missions is that God sends the nations into the church.

Tom Philip said; *While it has always been God's plan for the church to go to distant parts of the world, this strategy is only half of God's equation for reaching the people who don't know Christ. Over the centuries the church has missed or nearly missed an equally significant part of God's plan- reaching the world that God brings to the church. Each year over 120,000 new international students and scholars begin a four-year sojourn in American universities and other institutions of higher learning. God is sending the nations to the door of the Christian churches. Douglas says: Every lay person in the pew has the opportunity for outreach.*

The Harvest is ripe and at our doorsteps. This is what happened with the disciples in the early church in Acts 2:5-11 and Acts 13. God brings the nations to where the church is, but Christians need to be ready to go out and harvest them. There are great opportunities among the nations that God brings to us from all over the world. Acts 2:5-11 records many godly Jews and international men and women were gathered together in Jerusalem from around the world to celebrate Passover. These people heard the good news of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit convicted them. There were sixteen nations and languages that accepted the message and returned to their countries as ambassadors for God. Today, hundreds and thousands from the world are entering the United States to study, work or visit and most of them as refugees and immigrants. Today, in the US, 550,000 of the world's best, brightest, and/ or most privileged students from every nation are within minutes of a local church and around 20,000,000 foreign

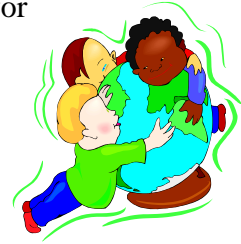
citizens have been entering the USA annually. Those people can be reached with the good news about Jesus through friendship and love. This important opportunity is here within a few minutes.

I believe that today we Christians are neglecting and not being concerned for those internationals. We need to pray for a new awakening in today=s churches, despite all of the materialism and individualism that is present today. We need to see the movement of the Holy Spirit, the holiness, faith, healing, forgiveness, peace and love that were in the first church that started in Acts 2. I believe we need the awakeners to breakdown all the evil bondage of the nations. We need to wake up from our own concerns and individualism and look around us and see the need for preaching the gospel to the nations here. There are great needs around us especially among those strangers. Also, I believe that if these internationals believe in Jesus, are trained and get the vision for their nations, when they go back, they will make more of a difference in their nations than missionaries from the West.

All of these nations come from a different cultural background with a different language, a different set of values and belief systems, and different expectations; they bring unique needs with them to their classrooms. The majority of these nations are struggling and falling behind academically and socially. Regardless of their achievement and level of integration, they all share some very common concerns, characteristics, and unique needs. These are people who have never had a chance to hear about Jesus Christ. When it comes to reaching them multitudes of people have stumbled for cultural, social, and linguistic reasons, before they ever had the opportunity to stumble at the cross.

The nations here are fully exercising the rights and freedoms available to them in the United States. This means a double challenge for all followers of Christ! First, the "mission field" has

entered the Christian countries. Second, we must recognize that religious people and especially Muslims have set the goal to make the whole world, including the USA, Muslim. For these reasons, it is essential for every Christian to consider seriously reaching out for the nations in their own area.



**2- Why we should reach the nations here?** When we as Christians develop friendships with internationals we might wonder, *Why are we helping*

*them?*@ An appropriate response would be, *Because I have experienced God's grace, love and goodness in my life, God has told me to share what I have received.*@

Because of God's mercy you should want to show mercy and testify to them so that they might have the same. When God sent His disciples to preach the Gospel, according to Matthew 10, He gave them a lot of direction and information. He gave them a command, *Freely you have received, freely give* (Matthew 10:8).

There are many important things that Christians must observe in dealing with internationals. You may have many questions, wondering, HOW DO I ATTRACT THEM? HOW CAN WE WIN THEM TO CHRIST? HOW CAN I BE A GOOD EXAMPLE TO THEM? Then we face the negative examples such as: What do we have in common with internationals? Could we win a discussion? What if they can't speak English? How can I communicate with them? What if they don't like me or us or our food? Also, many Christians believe that it is not possible for an international to receive the message of salvation for these reasons and believe the effort to share the Gospel with internationals is futile and a waste of time. AI must be careful since these people are not from our culture and religion and they are so different from us!@ We often become preoccupied with these questions. They weigh us down with unpleasant aspects and they kill our passion. Our

faith, our motives, and our desire to reach these people will decrease until finally we will not do anything at all.

### **3- Three biblical principals for reaching out to internationals**

#### **Principle one- Jesus Himself became an alien/international.**

-Luke 2:7- *AShe gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn.@*

-John 1:10-12- *AYHe came to that which was his own, but His own did not receive HimY@*

-Philippians 2:5-11- *AWho, being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient to death- even on a crossY.@*

-Matthew 8:19-20- *AA teacher of the law came to Jesus and said, >Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.= Jesus replied, >Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head=Y*

We need to be motivated by God and learn from the Bible and Jesus= life on earth. How He touched internationals is our example.

#### **Principle two- When we become Christians we also are strangers and aliens in the world.**

-Peter wrote to believers in 1 Peter 2:11- *ADear friends, I urge you as ALIENS AND STRANGERS in the worldY@* -David said in Ps. 119:19, *AI AM A STRANGER ON EARTHY@* -Abraham blessed the nations because he became an international. When God told Abraham to leave his country, he became an international and a stranger. (Just like us!) According to Gen. 12:1-3 God told Abraham to go to Canaan, which at that time was the crossroads for internationals. What God

had in mind was that Abraham as an international could testify and God would reveal Himself as Yahweh who wanted to save and bless the nations through Abraham.

-Hebrew 11:8 *By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country.*@

-Paul said in Philippians 1:23-24 *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*@

Paul obviously felt like a stranger on earth and he wanted to go back to his home in heaven, but his mission was on earth to bless the nations and build up the church.

**Principle three, God commanded the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and also the believers in the New Testament to befriend internationals.**

Old Testament: Ex. 22:20-22 *Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed. Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.*

Lev. 25:35 *If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you.*@

New Testament: Matt. 25:35 Jesus said... *I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.*

Then the righteous will answer him... *When did we see you a stranger and invite you in? "The King will reply, >I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.."*

God's unchangeable principle is that by preaching the gospel of peace, people will hear, believe and be saved (Roman 10:9-15).