



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO REACH THE NATIONS



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Is there a purpose to history? Is history just a random series of events where various empires rise and fall as they fight each other over land, possessions or pride? Or is God orchestrating events to achieve some mysterious purpose? If you understand what God's ultimate purpose is, and so very few in the church actually do, then the seemingly random events of history begin to make more sense and we can even find our place in God's purpose for history and mankind.

From the time of the Fall, God has been working to reconcile a lost world to Himself according to the promise He made to Abraham when He said, "and through you all peoples on earth will be blessed." Gen. 12:3. We see the ultimate fulfillment of this promise to Abraham in Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 when Jesus is given the worship He deserves from every tribe, tongue, people, and

nation. In the new heavens and new earth that God will one day create, every people group of humanity will be there worshipping God in all of their uniqueness. The kingdoms of this earth will have become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus and the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the seas.

Throughout history God has been working to accomplish this promised vision of the future. He has been working to bring the gospel from where it isn't to where it needs to go to bless all peoples. God's people have most often been unwilling to go to the nations to bring the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to every person, tribe and tongue. As a result, God has had to use involuntary means throughout history to get the gospel to those who have no access to it. We can see this in the invasions of the Roman Empire; the colonization of the North and South America and numerous other examples.

Today, more people are traveling more widely and freely than ever before. Never in history has it been easier to communicate the gospel to those from unreached people groups. Hundreds of

unreached peoples reside in our cities, both large and small, where the church and its people already live. God has brought these peoples here so we can easily reach them. This trend is only accelerating. The mission field is at our doorsteps. The question is whether we will open our doors, welcome them in, and share the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE HISTORY

One of the most strategically important of these human migrations is that of international students. There are currently around 750,000 international students in the U.S. and they come from nearly every country in the world, many of which missionaries cannot enter. These students are the best and brightest the nations of the world have to offer and these countries are choosing to send them to us at their expense. These students will return to their host country to become the future leaders and influencers in their society. This is a God-ordained opportunity for us to reach the peoples of the world through these students.

This historic opportunity can either be a blessing or a curse. If we ignore these people, wish they weren't here or even treat them poorly then these future leaders could go back to become our future adversaries rather than friends.

One international student by the name of Sayyid Qutb came to the U.S. in 1948. Instead of experiencing friendship, hospitality and the love of Christ, he experienced racial prejudice and a culturally insensitive church. He returned to his home country of Egypt more anti-western and radicalized than before. Sayyid Qutb went on to develop the ideological foundation for Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Osama bin Laden was an avid student of Qutb's works and they were the basis for bin Laden's creation of Al Qaeda.

Could well-trained Jesus followers reaching out to Sayyid with love, respect and the gospel of Jesus Christ have made a difference in the direction of Sayyid's life and ours? Maybe not. But we do know what happened to his life when they did not.

Far too many international students come to the United States and return home never having been invited into an American's home. This is truly tragic and a terrible loss for God's kingdom purposes when it happens. The consequences can be very long lasting indeed.

But if instead we welcome them into our homes, show them love, hospitality and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them, then we have the tremendous possibility of building bridges of friendship and understanding between cultures while bringing the gospel to those peoples who currently do not have access. See the article starting on page 10 for a great story of how hospitality

and love can transform lives for eternity. In this issue we have a number of great stories of how ministry to international students is transforming lives and raising up workers to go back to their home country to begin the process of initiating disciple making movements.

We have all been called to live on mission with God. Reaching out to international students with hospitality and the gospel is an easy way that we can have a dramatically significant impact for the kingdom of God around the world. Most of us should be able to invite international students into our home for dinner and show them the love of Christ. We don't need a seminary degree to do that. If you would like to get involved in this kind of ministry, please go to isionline.org and ask them for help in getting started.

RAISING UP MOVEMENT CATALYSTS


In the last issue of *Mission Frontiers*, I stated that completing world evangelization is all about movements now. It is all about initiating and fostering movements of discipleship and church planting within the unreached peoples until there is no place left for the gospel to spread—everyone will have access to the gospel in a way that is culturally and linguistically understandable. But this will require the training and deploying of movement catalysts who are able to go to every people group and corner of the world and start these movements.

Those involved in ministry to international students have begun to realize that international students have the ability to be great movement catalysts since they already have an intimate understanding of the language and culture of the people group they come from. All that needs

to happen is to get them saved, trained and deployed to go back home to start a movement in a language and culture they already know.

International Students Inc. is using its own specialized approach to Disciple-Making Movement (DMM) training. It is adapted from David Watson's Discover Bible Study Method. After a time of trial and error testing they developed an approach they call M:28. They have begun to train their entire staff in this discipleship process.

Derrah Jackson reports on page 17 what they discovered in the process of implementing their M:28 strategy. "When we began working with people of peace, we found that they used their existing social networks, and, unsurprisingly, we saw multiplication. The multiplication was typically just one generation, but in one case to the third and, in another, to the fourth generation. A university graduate from that fourth generation group relocated to a large city because of a job offer, and today she is working to start DMM groups and to reach university students in her new home city."

They are still early in the process of implementing this strategy, but the early results provide hope that international students will be a key factor in fostering movements of discipleship around the world. 

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