

Becoming a Friend with an International Student

A TRAINING PUBLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, INC.

BECOMING A FRIEND WITH AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT



Becoming a Friend with an International Student

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Introduction

Make a World of Difference

All of us want to have an impact, to make a difference.

Perhaps you're considering becoming a friend with an international student. As this booklet superbly describes, friendship with an international student is an adventure. Your friendship can make a world of difference in the life of a student, in your own life, and for eternity's sake.

You—and your family—have the opportunity to share life experiences with one of the more than 720,000 international students and visiting scholars living right here in the United States.

These men and women are their countries' brightest and will be tomorrow's leaders. Many come from countries that have closed their doors to Christian missionaries and restrict Bible teaching.

Although God has brought these students to our shores, many of them will maintain only surface friendships with Americans. The sad fact is that most international students are never invited inside an American home.

Many of them are lonely—having left family and friends behind to study here. They're not used to our culture, food, and so many other things we easily take for granted. For some, coming here means learning to live in a drastically different climate or finding an apartment or part-time job for the first time—in addition to their studies.

What they experience and learn inside and outside the classroom will leave deep impressions.

When international students return to assume positions of leadership in their homelands, will they carry Christ's love back with them? Will they return with negative feelings about our country and Christ?

The answer lies with us.

The dream and hope of International Students, Inc., is that every international student in this country will have the opportunity to have a Christian friend. This cannot be realized without the partnership of thousands of Christian volunteers nationwide—people like you.

These volunteers live in small and large cities. Some are in college, others are professionals, and some are retired. But all share a common bond. They want to reach out in friendship in the name of Christ to international students.

We mustn't hesitate. We must act now, before these international students return home. Perhaps your friendship will be the highlight of a student's stay in the United States.

This booklet will help your friendship get off to a great start. Being a friend isn't hard, but it does take a commitment of time and should not be entered into lightly.

If you would like more information about international student ministry, please complete the response card at the end of this booklet.

We're here to serve you as you serve international students in Jesus' name.

International Students, Inc.

God's Open Door

Closed? Keep Out? Not Wanted?

Picture a wall surrounding the border of Indonesia, one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. Around the wall is a large iron chain. A sign hanging from the chain reads *Closed! Keep Out! Not Wanted!* Today, Indonesia does not welcome American missionaries and mission organizations. And those who are now there are often not allowed to stay once their current terms are up. Many Christians suffer severe persecution at the hands of radical Muslim groups. Traditional missions approaches are no longer effective here.

In 1989 Issachar Frontier Missions Strategies published a report on the church around the world. Here is how it described the church's present challenge:

One of the most serious problems facing the worldwide Church today is that of restriction. The problem is staggering. Presently, about two-thirds of the population of our planet lives under governments which restrict the Church, including four of the five most populous nations, and this figure is expected to grow—possibly to 85% by the year 2000. Given this situation it would not be inaccurate to say that the Christian Church has been “caught napping” at perhaps the most crucial time in her history.

The sign on the wall around many countries reads, *Missionaries: Keep Out*. But the “welcome mat” to the world's future leaders and scholars has been put out. It is placed by the entrance of nearly every major American university and hundreds of colleges. Our university and college doors are wide open, accepting more than 720,000 of the world's most intelligent young people—who will be tomorrow's world leaders. These students are preparing for critical roles in the development of their countries, representing nearly every major field of study, including health, law, government, sciences, business, computer science and education. These men and women will soon be inheriting leadership around the world.

The World Is Coming to Us

We are not restricted from befriending or sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with them. And they are looking for you, a caring American friend.

The world of missions is changing and you can be a part of making a difference in the life of an international student. You can play a strategic part in fulfilling the Great Commission without ever leaving your own community. Before you lies an unprecedented opportunity. There are more international students in this country now than in all previous years! In March 1989, U.S.

News and World Report stated that “almost a million foreigners get degrees here yearly.” Who knows, God may have the future president or ambassador of a closed country discover Christ through your friendship. Here is the international adventure and missions opportunity of a lifetime! And it is right at your doorstep.

According to *Atlantic Monthly* (April 1989), “There are now tens of thousands of China’s future leaders who are living in the country (United States) today. Thousands are now scattered throughout the United States—living in hamlets and suburbs and slums, studying legal theory and laser physics and mass media, meditating on China and America and themselves.”

The some 60,000 students studying in the United States from China include not only the scholarly elite but also the power elite. Douglas Murry, former president of the China Institute in America, says, “Every Chinese leader seems to have a son or daughter in the United States.”

China is not the only country that has sent its future leaders here to study. Past and present presidents, prime ministers, and princes of the following countries have studied in your own backyard:

- Czech Republic (Vaclar Klaus at Cornell)
- El Salvador (Jose Napoleon Duarte at Notre Dame)
- Greece (Andreas G. Papandreou at Harvard)
- Iceland (Steingrimur Hermannsson at Illinois and California Institute of Technology)
- Jamaica (Edward Philip George Seaga at Harvard)
- Malawi (Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda at University of Chicago and Meharry Medical College, Tennessee)
- Mexico (Carlos Salinas at Harvard)
- Nepal (King Birendra Bir Bikram Shad Dev at Harvard)
- Philippines (Fidel Ramos at West Point)
- Sweden (Ingvar Carlsson at Northwestern)
- Taiwan (Lee Teng-hui at Iowa State, Cornell)
- Zimbabwe (the Rev. Canaan Sodindo Banana at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.)

An Effective Missions Strategy

When Mei Ling enters an American university, she plunges into the shock of a new culture. Swept along by strange new ways, she is lifted out of her comfortable cultural patterns of home that, until now, had surrounded her all her life. She can no longer go through her day without thinking about her basic ways of living. Now, how she travels, the way she studies, what and

where she eats, how she launders her clothes, and the way she speaks and is spoken to may all be completely different.

A whole new world has opened up before Mei Ling, challenging her to consider these new ways in the light of her own culture. This is a time of questioning and learning about new values, beliefs, even religions.

With distance from their home countries, removed from family and friends, international students have an openness to new ideas that they may never have considered back home. God uses this openness, coupled with a dynamic, loving friendship from an American Christian, to bring hundreds of international students to a personal relationship with Himself here in the United States.

Think about this strategic missions opportunity! The brightest, most promising young people from more than 180 countries—from “closed” countries that missionaries can no longer reach through traditional means—are here at our colleges and universities.

Not only is friendship with an international student an effective missions strategy for reaching the future leaders that are here, but it is also an effective strategy for impacting their home countries. According to the Manila Manifesto published by the 1989 Lausanne II Conference, “The most effective messengers to the unreached world will be those believers who already know the culture and the language.” Each year, as graduation approaches, staff members of International Students, Inc., will see new believers returning home to Nepal, Japan, Malaysia, China, the former Soviet Union, Indonesia, as well as many other countries, to impact their own people for Christ.

An Uncertain Future

For the academic year 1979-80, Iran sent the most international students to the United States with 51,310. By 1982, the numbers of Iranian students dropped to 26,760, nearly a 50 percent decrease! Today, Iran no longer remains on the list of top countries sending students to the United States. What accounts for this dramatic shift? Politics.

International education is inextricably meshed with world politics. As political turmoil and instability sweep across our world, international students are directly affected. More recently, the government has pursued a policy of social and political tightening.

The strategic mission of reaching the world’s future leaders silently sits on our doorstep waiting for us to open our hearts and our homes. But these students may wait only briefly; tomorrow the

door of opportunity may quickly be shut by a sudden political change. The opportunity for reaching the future intellectual and power elite of government leaders, university professors, and international business leaders—all critical decision makers for their countries—may slip away before these people have heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. Today the Lord of the Harvest has laid before us an open door. Only He knows how long it will remain open.

The future for hosting even greater numbers of students from China may be in question; however, a new dawning of incoming students from the former Soviet Union is just breaking over the horizon.

Russian students are coming in growing numbers...from under a dozen in the 1985-86 academic year to 6,238 in the 2002-2003 school year.

Many will discover for the first time what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. According to Greg Guroff, the coordinator of former President Bush Senior's U.S.-Soviet Exchange Initiative, "It's an extraordinary opportunity to open up a Soviet society that has long secluded its people from the outside world."

Indeed, it is an incredible opportunity! These students will discover firsthand what democracy is all about, just as Benazir Bhutto, the first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan, did while she was a student at Harvard.

"America. I had experienced democracy for the first time in America," she writes in her autobiography, *Daughter of the East*. As the head of her country, Bhutto sought to bring democracy to Pakistan.

It is staggering to realize the impact that three or four years at an American university could have on international students! They may forever change the future of their countries by what they experience here!

God has opened before us a door of opportunity. International Students, Inc., is committed to boldly seizing this moment in history.

Will you join us and thousands of Christians across the United States by putting out the "welcome mat" of your heart and home to these international students?

The dream and passion of International Students, Inc., is that each of the over 720,000 international students and visiting scholars presently studying here will at least have the opportunity to meet an American Christian friend.

We need your help to reach the thousands yet untouched by a caring friend.

Friendship That Bridges Cultures

What Is an International Student Like?

Imagine yourself bound for a strange country where you will spend several years away from everyone and everything that is familiar. What might your hopes and fears be? Your dreams and desires? What kind of people would you like to meet?

Raj boards the plane bound for the United States full of jumbled emotions. His dream of studying in an American university is about to come true! Adrenaline surges as he thinks of the exciting days ahead. New experiences, new foods, new ways of doing things, and—hopefully—new friends.

As Raj anticipates the long, exhausting international flight, pockets of anxiety surface as his thoughts go to the many questions about his unknown future. *How will I find a place to live? Will I be successful studying in another language? What if I can't understand Americans? Will I please my parents and be the success they want? I've heard about the crime in the United States. Will I be safe? Will Americans want to be my friends? How will I find someone who will help me understand American life?*

As Raj looks at his watch, calculating the travel time, he counts 36 hours so far, leaving about 12 more hours before reaching the American city he will call home for four years. “Home.” The word lingers in his thoughts—drawing feelings of loneliness and sadness to the surface. His new home no longer means close friends and family. The very people who have played an integral part in his daily life will no longer be there to guide, encourage, motivate, and comfort. Will there be others to fill the void?

Or will Raj become like the overwhelming majority of international students who never have an American friend or enter an American home?

When Raj steps off the plane in his new world, he and thousands like him are the most vulnerable and open to friendship they will ever be during their entire time in the United States. They are eagerly looking for you! They long for a warm, caring friend who will take a special interest in helping them adjust to “the way Americans do things.” They need a sensitive guide assisting them along their journey toward an American education, an inviting host who welcomes them in for times of refreshment in the midst of the pressure to succeed and the loneliness of being a “foreigner.”

Raj is just one example of international students coming to the United States. International students represent great diversity. There is no one clear profile of the “typical” international. We do

know, however, that almost every international student is eager to have an American friend.

Here are some examples of the diversity represented by internationals. Some have newly arrived; others have been in the United States for some time. Some are wealthy; others struggle financially. Some are assertive, adventuresome, and outspoken; others are timid, shy, and cautious. Most have high aspirations they could never meet in their countries.

Some international students are easily understood; others struggle to pronounce their “textbook” English. Some are warm and affectionate; others are reserved and aloof. Some handle cultural adjustment smoothly; others have a difficult time with culture shock. Many are young, single, and male. Others are female or older scholars; some are married, with families here or at home.

Most are here for several years, but others are here for short periods of special research, such as visiting scholars. Many are intensely involved in their academic studies; others, like spouses, are alone daily in their apartments with little to do. Some are quick to make social adjustments, while others stay cloistered in the campus world—alienated and alone. Some come with an eagerness to do everything “the American way,” seeing the United States in a positive light; others come cautious, anxious, and critical about the United States.

In the many years that International Students, Inc., has been reaching out in friendship to internationals, our Friendship Partners (ISI volunteers) often repeat that they’ve never met two who are alike. The wonder and beauty of God’s uniqueness flows through the vast array of internationals studying in the United States. This diversity makes for an exciting cross-cultural adventure. As we befriend international students, we continually discover new things about our world and the people in it.

An Adventure’s First Steps

In befriending an international student, your first goal is to allow the international student to get to know you and for you to get to know him or her. A friend, it’s been said, is someone who knows who you are, understands where you’ve been, accepts who you’ve become, and still, gently invites you to grow.

International students are eager to get to know you and your family—typical Americans. They want to be included in your routine. Welcome them into your home as it is. Let them see your normal, day-to-day life. This is the relaxed hospitality they long for.

Genuine hospitality says, “Join us today. Relax, watch television, play with the children, wash your clothes, bring a friend, take a nap, or whatever you would like. We offer you friendship. Come and be with us, just as we are.”

This is hospitality, not entertainment. Entertainment says, “Before I can invite an international student into my home, I must have it neat and clean with everything in order.” Hospitality says, “Come into my home and be with us just as we are. Let me put another plate on the table. And bring a friend if you’d like.”

This is the comfortable, “homey” place every international student longs to find while here in the United States. The great tragedy is that very, very few ever get to experience it. (In fact, most international students return home without ever seeing the inside of an American home—or church.)

- *DO* include the international student in your ordinary way of life.
- *DON’T* focus on formal, special, or costly entertainment.

An important step in getting to know your new international friends is learning their names. Don’t assume that they want you to use the American name they have taken for the time they are here. Rather, discover their real names and ask which name they want you to use. Perhaps this desire to use their native names will bond you to them in a special way.

Next, ask them about themselves and listen carefully to their responses. Focus on drawing them out. Ask specifics—who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. Ask about their families, friends, favorite activities, holidays, foods, religion, and customs. Respond with statements of interest and acceptance, which begin to build trust. Say, for example, “That sounds very interesting, tell me more about...” Building a deep sense of trust will take time, as it does with any new friendship.

Avoid controversial political discussions and projecting an attitude that “America is best.” Instead, take the opportunity to discover their perspectives of the world.

- *DO* listen with understanding, not judgment. Seek to appreciate their different points of view and values.
- *DON’T* argue with or condemn an international’s point of view.

Second, friendship means moving beyond a superficial knowing to a deeper experience of being understood. As a friend, you will want to listen beyond the surface facts of life experiences to the meaning and feelings behind the facts. Find articles and pictures that describe your international friend’s country. A great source is *The Christian Science Monitor*, a newspaper that features world events. Rent movies that focus on the country your friend is from. You can check your local library; even video stores have current movies about various countries (such as the *National*

Geographic films or special documentaries). If your friend is from China, you may want to see *A Great Wall* and *The Last Emperor*. *National Geographic* movies, maps, games, and magazine articles are excellent sources of information about various countries.

- *DO* take the time to read and discover what is taking place in your international friend's home country. Ask informed questions, such as, "I've read about serious environmental problems in your country. Does that directly affect you and your family? How do you think your country will address the problem?"
- *DON'T* assume you know all about a country without some added time spent learning.

Third, real friendship accepts the other person as he or she is. True acceptance says, "I respect who you are. God made you in His image and I will value your thoughts and opinions. I will not try to force you to accept my way of thinking, or base my friendship on how much you agree with me." Only in a sincere atmosphere of acceptance will the international student risk exploring Christianity and its personal message. He or she needs to see a demonstration of unconditional love, which Jesus demonstrated to us. You are His heart, reaching out in love to the international in your midst.

- *DO* lovingly offer unconditional friendship, accepting the international's different views of life, the world, and religion.
- *DON'T* base your time with the student and your offer of friendship on how interested he or she appears to be in Christianity.

Finally, once you have established a deep sense of love, acceptance, and trust, you will discover many opportunities to encourage your friend along the way of personal growth. You will have earned the right to be heard. As he or she feels safe to share problems with you, you are able to advise toward a wise, godly solution.

When your friend comes to you anxious about his or her future or sorrowful about family situations back home, you have a natural opportunity to empathize...and then to share how you handle those same struggles through your relationship with Jesus Christ. This can be a powerful witness to the reality of Jesus living in you. He does make a difference in the way you handle the difficulties of life that everyone faces, regardless of culture. Your friend will be listening and watching to see why you are different from most Americans he or she has met.

In the context of loving, accepting, trusting friendships, God accomplishes His purposes. As He reveals Himself to the world at our doorstep, we are His partners.

- *DO* openly share how you handle the difficulties in life through the presence and power of Jesus Christ. Model how you make decisions based on God's value system.
- *DON'T* judge or condemn them for how they choose to handle a situation.

Practical Friendship Builders

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Attend cultural events in your community: circuses, plays, concerts, and so on.
2. Participate in outdoor activities in your area: for example, fishing, hiking, camping, or visiting local parks.
3. Watch television together: sports, family shows depicting American culture, special reports on your friends' home countries.
4. Involve your friends in household chores, like cutting the grass, painting, or cleaning; they want to learn about American life.
5. Discover and share in their interests.
6. Visit different types of restaurants and introduce them to the American customs of ordering, paying, and tipping.
7. Play conversational, learning games together, like "The Ungame." ISI staff members also highly recommend "Pictionary."
8. Invite them to cook a native meal with you.
9. Introduce them to such American gadgets as the electric can opener, washer and dryer, and microwave oven.
10. If they are new, help them find their way around town: for example, understanding banking and phone services, or obtaining a driver's license.
11. Include them in any normal activity— exercising, shopping, going to church, and so forth.

12. Find out their class schedules and invite them over more often when the dorms are closed between semesters, perhaps even let them stay in your home during school breaks.
13. Find out about their families back home, then send special packages to their families (with pictures) and introduce yourself and your family.
14. Find out when internationals' birthdays are, explain how Americans celebrate birthdays, and plan to celebrate their birthdays.
15. Introduce them to American holidays. Find out about their national holidays—and how they are celebrated—and do something special when those holidays arrive.

Friendship That Makes a Difference

There is no substitute for your genuine, sacrificial friendship in the life of an international student. Let's look at the difference your friendship will make.

First, as disciples of Jesus Christ, when we demonstrate Christ's love to others we enable them to see the reality of who Jesus is. Practical, generous giving of your time, interest, and love for the international student can be a powerful tool of evangelism.

They may even ask, "Why are you different from the other Americans I have met? Why do you take such a special interest in me?" This provides a wonderful opportunity to share sensitively how Jesus Christ has filled your heart with His love.

Your international friend may come to accept Christ's love through you. Often these new Christians share the Gospel with family and friends back home—and bring many to Christ. (The next section discusses how to share your faith with an international student.)

Second, cross-cultural counseling research reveals that when an international feels lonely, lacking close, caring friends, he or she does not perform as well academically. There is tremendous pressure on the international student to perform successfully. Future scholarships or entrance into graduate programs, as well as esteem from family and future colleagues back home, depend on very high grades.

For example, an Indonesian student once explained that a new student from Indonesia seeks to earn the highest academic grade point average reached in that university by an Indonesian student. In order for the new student to be "successful," he or she must exceed the highest academic record of the previous student. What incredible pressure this puts on every new incoming student! Your friendship can make the difference whether or not the international is academically successful!

Third, your relationship will enable the international student to have a trusted friend who can interpret American customs. The international needs this kind of friend who will not ridicule or take advantage in spite of his or her ignorance. An international student may live in this country for many years and still encounter confusing American customs or situations where expectations are unclear.

An international student greatly fears offending an American or being seen as ignorant in the eyes of others. Being humiliated in front of others is one of the deepest fears for many. You can

put the student at ease by your loving acceptance and willing availability to guide him or her through times of confusion.

For example, a student who has lived here for six years was unsure if she should send a gift—as she would in her home country—or a thank-you note after visiting someone’s home. She needed a trusted friend with whom she could quietly talk about the correct thing to do.

Fourth, your friendship will enable the international to have a positive view of the United States. This can have worldwide implications. Many times the international student or scholar studying here will return to high places of influence in his or her country’s government or in business. The international may have direct or indirect opportunities to determine if American missionaries will enter his or her country, or to determine if the country will send students to the United States rather than to a Marxist country. The international’s experience with Americans, democracy, and religious freedom may have an unprecedented impact on the future of Christianity in his or her country.

For example, a Yale professor reported in *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1989) that within the next ten years the future leaders of China will have been educated in the United States. What difference will this make in the future direction of China? What if those future leaders have become Christians while studying here?

Think of the international impact you can have by living out a caring, loving friendship with an international student. Will you be that trusted friend who will guide, encourage, listen to, and care for the stranger in your midst? Will you demonstrate the invisible presence of Jesus Christ through your visible acts of loving hospitality?

A Personal Impact

The difference your friendship will make with an international student can also be seen in your own life—and the lives of your family members.

Here, in your own comfortable environment, is an opportunity to experience cultures from all over the world. Have you ever wondered what someone from the former Soviet Union really thinks and feels about the dramatic changes there? You could discover firsthand their views of their country and ours.

Friendship with international students enables you to know firsthand what life is like in their countries. As you read and pray for your friends’ home countries and government leaders, you become more of a “world Christian.”

For example, when a Filipino friend visits, you may ask if his or her family had been affected by the most recent coup d'etat in the Philippines. "Are you feeling anxious for the future of your country or the safety of your family? What are you learning that is different from the way the American papers are reporting on the situation back home? How could I be praying more specifically?"

Imagine how much more inviting it is to see a country through the eyes of those who live there. When you extend hospitality to international students while they are here, they will want to do the same for you when you visit their countries! Imagine having your own personal tour guide—with an insider's view!

Sharing Christ across Cultures

Christians are called to offer unconditional friendship to international students—to demonstrate Christ’s love for them in actions of kindness, respect, and love, regardless of the students’ level of interest or response to the Gospel. Our hearts’ desire, as is the Lord’s, will be for each one to come to know Christ personally, but it is the Holy Spirit that brings conversion. So relax. You are not responsible for the conversions of your international friends. But through your unconditional, sacrificial friendship, you have the privilege of introducing them to the Living Christ in a powerful way.

Remember, in most countries of the world, religion is a very acceptable topic of conversation. It does not carry with it the stigma that it does here in the United States. Don’t be afraid to bring up the topic. Most internationals will welcome the opportunity to tell you what they believe. This will allow you a chance to share with them what you believe.

Helpful Do’s and Don’ts

- *DO* have realistic expectations.
- *DON’T* expect a quick conversion.

Remember, your international friend is an adult who has spent many years living on the basis of his or her culture, religion, and belief system. To him or her, it’s “true” or what is accepted at home. Your student may also bring a negative experience regarding Christianity to the United States. He or she will first need to feel and see the Christian message before personally considering Christ. The Bible reminds us that in God’s sovereign plan, some plant, others water, and still others reap. You may have only one part in the whole process, but it is a vital part.

- *DO* learn about their religious beliefs and values.
- *DON’T* focus on telling them the Gospel only.

As you are sharing what you believe, discover what your friend believes. Spend time asking thoughtful, open-ended questions. Learn about his or her hopes, dreams, values, fears, and beliefs. Be careful not to judge. Learn to appreciate his or her religious beliefs and values. Gently help your friend see that Christianity is unique in that it is based not on what we do but what God has done for us. As you understand him or her more, you will have wisdom in how to share the truth of Scripture at the place of need in your friend’s heart.

You will want to follow up this conversation in the future. Find out how things are going and if you can further share how God is answering your prayers for your friend and his or her family.

- *DO* clarify the meaning of terms.
- *DON'T* assume you both mean the same thing by the words you use.

Be careful to find out what your friend means by the words he or she uses, such as sin, guilt and God. The definitions may be very different. Don't assume that anyone actually believes exactly what his or her professed religion states. Each person is unique. Below the surface your friend may have uncertainties or questions that will only surface over time in a caring relationship.

- *DO* pray without ceasing.
- *DON'T* assume that knowing the facts about Christianity is enough.

First, pray for yourself. Ask the Lord to enable you to have a special sensitivity from the Holy Spirit to know what to say and when to say it. Pray for your international friend. Ask the Lord to show Himself as the Living God, at work in his or her life. One powerful way to illustrate the existence of God is by praying and seeing God's answers. This is one reason it's important to pray for specific situations in the life of your friend and for him or her to know you are praying. In time, you will be able to gently point out where God has acted on his or her behalf.

Your international friend may not be moved to conversion merely by hearing the facts about Christianity. The student needs to see the Living God at work in your life, the lives of your friends or family, and in his or her life.

- *DO* share your own personal experience with Christ.
- *DON'T* just focus on what your international friend believes.

You will find that your international friend will be more interested in your personal testimony than in any discussion of church doctrine. Tell how Christ has made a difference in your life. How did you come to believe that Jesus is really who He says He is? How do you presently see Christ at work in your life and the lives of your friends or family?

- *DO* focus your conversation on who Jesus is.
- *DON'T* deviate from the person of Jesus Christ. You will want to focus your conversations on who Christ is and what He has done for us.

Guide your conversations away from controversial topics, such as the behavior of Christian leaders in the United States. Keep coming back to Jesus in the Gospels. Invite your friend to discover what Jesus has said about Himself by reading and discussing the Gospels.

- *DO* introduce your international friend to other Christians.
- *DON'T* be possessive and isolate your international friend.

The love of Christians for each other is a powerful witness. Allow the Lord to use the powerful demonstration of the Body of Christ caring for each other as testimony to the Living God.

- *DO* invite your international friend to church and relevant Christian events.
- *DON'T* misrepresent the religious event in any way.

Be completely open about the religious event you plan to attend. Clearly explain what your student will experience. If you are going to church, for example, explain about the offering plate before it is passed so your friend won't feel obligated to contribute (or as one international student once remarked, "Is there an admission fee?") If your church will give an invitation to follow Christ, explain that your friend need not feel constrained to respond. Be careful not to put any pressure to conform to your beliefs.

- *DO* provide appropriate Christian literature.
- *DON'T* pressure your international friend to take or read it.

Be sensitive to your friend's level of interest. At the same time, keep a modern translation of the Bible in his or her native language available to give to your friend when the time is right. You can buy Bibles in many languages inexpensively from Multi-Language Media or International Bible Society (see the reference section).

- *DO* explain the cost of becoming a Christian.
- *DON'T* press for a response or commitment to Christ.

You may misread courtesy for interest in spiritual matters. However, seek to help your friend be clear on how a person becomes a Christian. For many internationals, a commitment to Christ will jeopardize their relationships with family, friends, countries, and employers, and may put their lives in danger in their home countries. Also, at the right time, explain the danger of not becoming a Christian.

Suggested Key Questions

About one's religion:

1. How does your religion describe God? What are His characteristics? How do you relate to this God? How does this God view you?
2. How does your religion define sin? How does it deal with guilt?
3. How does your religion assist you in your daily life?
4. How does your religion define the purpose of life?
5. How does it view death?
6. What is your perspective of Christianity?
7. How do you view Jesus?

About personal values:

1. How does your culture view friendship?
2. What are the responsibilities of the family members to one another in your culture? What are your specific responsibilities? How does being in the United States change your responsibilities?
3. What do you believe would be the most meaningful way you could live your life?
4. How do you view failure?
5. What does it mean to be successful?

Planting Seeds through Conversation

1. If you practice giving thanks before a meal, explain to a new international that it is your custom to give thanks to the Living God, who provides all things for us. Don't turn your prayer into a sermon. After praying, ask your friend how he or she expresses thanks back home.

2. After asking how your friend's day has been, share how God answered prayer or provided for you in some way. "I've been praying for my mother's illness, and today I learned she will not need surgery. I believe God is answering my prayer. It is so comforting to know He really cares about me and my family."
3. Invite your international friend to join you and your home fellowship group as they all go to one member's home to help with the chores. Explain how the family is in need of help and—because of God's love for us—how God has called us to serve one another in love.
4. Suppose your student tells you about family concerns or difficulties back home. Respond by saying that you pray to the Living God, who hears and is concerned about us, regarding such matters. Ask if you could pray for these concerns in your personal times with God. Unless the student asks you questions or shows interest in learning more about God, do not say any more at this time. But be prepared to show in Scripture the verses that describe God as hearing our prayers and being concerned for us (for example, Isaiah 65:24 and 1 Peter 5:7).
5. Introduce your friend to how Americans celebrate birthdays. Then share the added perspective that, because God has created life, each person is special to Him. "We want to celebrate your birthday so you know how special you are to Him, too!"
6. In relating such situations as being mistakenly given extra change at the store, explain how you returned it because God has called us to live as people of integrity and honesty. Use other examples from your personal life that demonstrate godly values.
7. Discuss key American holidays—why and how we celebrate them (Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas). Tell how Christians view these holidays, and how our culture in general celebrates them.
8. Talk about such special events as marriage, death, and the birth of a child.

Taking the Next Step

The dream of International Students, Inc., is that every international student in America will have a Christian friend.

If you believe that God is calling you to befriend an international student in your community, then complete the response card at the end of this publication. Send it to International Students, Inc., P.O. Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80901. You may call ISI at (719) 576-2700, send a message by fax (719) 576-5363, or by email at team@isionline.org

ISI's Friendship Partner Program is designed to match caring American Christians with international students in their communities. ISI staff in your area will help you to connect with the students there. But if you live in an area where there is no staff, that shouldn't hinder your involvement. Contact one of ISI's Volunteer Services Representatives at 1-800-ISI-TEAM. They will offer support, encouragement and materials to help you have an effective ministry to the internationals near you.

To launch a local ministry, you will benefit from the extensive ministry materials ISI offers, including *How to Develop an International Student Ministry in your Church* (the complete "Church Ministry Manual" or the booklet "A Quick Start Guide").

May becoming a friend with an international student be an exciting adventure for you—and your whole family!

For Further Information

Multi-Language Media
P.O. Box 301
Ephrata, PA 17522
(717) 738-0582
www.multilanguage.com

International Bible Society
1820 Jet Stream Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80921
(719) 488-9200
www.ibs.org

“The Ungame” and “Pictionary” are available at local department and game stores.

Materials Available from ISI

Booklets:

Friendship

Becoming a Friend with an International Student

Evangelism

Knowing God Personally tract

How to Share the Good News with Your International Friend

How to Share the Good News with Your Muslim Friend

Reaching Students from the People’s Republic of China

How to Share the Good News with Your African Friend

How to Share the Good News with Your Japanese Friend

Discipleship

How to Study the Bible with Your International Friend

Re-entry/Follow-up

Preparing Your International Friend for Life Back Home

Think Home

Handbooks:

An American Friend Handbook

How to Survive in the U.S.: A Handbook for Internationals

Books:

Healing the Broken Family of Abraham
The World At Your Door
The Compact Guide to World Religions

Bible Studies:

I AM
Jesus the Liberator
Discovering God
Walking with God
Putting God First
Sharing God with Others
Meeting God
Growing Strong to Serve

Country Profiles:

People's Republic of China
Japan
Taiwan
India
South Korea
Malaysia
Hong Kong
Pakistan
Thailand
Indonesia

Religion Profiles:

Buddhism
Animism
Islam
Hinduism
Marxism
Shinto
Judaism and the Jewish People
Secularism
World Religions Overview
How Can I Know the Bible is the Word of God?
Is Jesus the Only Way to God?

Videos:

Getting Started with ISI (15 minutes) tells you how to begin your own ministry to international students.

New Beginnings, (15 minutes per program), a series of seven lessons designed for small-group study with new Christians. Discussion guide also available.

Sharing Your Faith through ISI (44 minutes) provides awareness of and practical help for addressing the variety of issues that arise when sharing your faith with international students.

The Church and ISI (4 minute or 7.5 minute format) is designed for use in churches to share the vision and recruit volunteers for your ministry. It also includes a segment with leaders from ISI and partnering organizations challenging viewers to become personally involved in the task.

Welcome Home (18 minutes) shares the stories of several returnees and the difficulties they experienced when going back home. Practical awareness and advice for returnees.

You Have a Friend in ISI (6.5 minutes) is designed for a student audience, sharing how ISI can help students when they first come to the U.S.

Friendship Partner Training is for the person who wants to train a group to be Friendship Partners. This package Includes a 55 minute video, a complete trainer's manual, and a power-point presentation.

Friendship Partner Individual Training DVD is for the person who can't attend a Friendship Partner Training in a live format. You will receive the training needed to be an effective friend to an international student in your area.

About International Students, Inc.

Founded in 1953, International Students, Inc. (ISI), is a nondenominational, non-profit Christian ministry that exists to serve international students studying here in the United States.

Working in cooperation with local churches and others, ISI seeks to enlist, educate, and coordinate the ministry efforts of evangelical Christians to befriend international students and, through friendship evangelism, share with them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition, ISI promotes Bible study and other discipleship programs for international students, helping to equip them to become effective Christian servants when they return to their home countries.

Headquartered in Colorado Springs, ISI coordinates more than 150 field staff members strategically working in more than 285 campus-based and church-based ministry locations in the United States. Affiliated ministries are located in Canada, Europe, and Asia.

If you would like more information or assistance, please contact:

International Students, Inc.

P.O. Box C

Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Toll Free: 1-800-ISI-TEAM

Phone: (719) 576-2700; *Fax:* (719) 576-5363

Email: team@isionline.org; www.isionline.org

For students: www.internationalstudents.org

ISI's Mission

ISI exists to share Christ's love with international students and to equip them for effective service in cooperation with the local church and others.

Your Response

YES! I'd like more information on international student ministry!

- Please send information on how I can become involved in the ministry of ISI.
- I'd like my church or group to view the ISI video, *Building Bridges with ISI*.
- I'd like to explore the possibility of inviting a special speaker from ISI to challenge my church.
- Please send me a complete list of ministry materials available from ISI.
- Other _____

Name (Rev., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss): _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone (work): (____) _____ (home): (____) _____

Best time to call: _____ Fax (if applicable): _____

Email address (if applicable): _____

Please cut and mail to: International Students, Inc., P.O. Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80901