

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO HELP FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

Evangelizing the Nations at Home

By Andy Johnson

Would you be surprised if told you that Americas are increasingly inhospitable to international visitors, and that Christians can thank God for that? One university reports that 80 percent of their international students never see the inside of a local U. S. home. Longer-term immigrants seem to fare little better. So why can Christians thank God? If unbelievers have lost interest in showing hospitality to foreigners, we have all the more opportunity! We can welcome foreigners, show compassion, and so commend the gospel right here in America.

Some numbers will illustrate the scale of this opportunity. Since 1970 more than 35 million individuals have immigrated to the United States. And that's not counting the more than 700,000 college students who come here to study each year, or the millions of illegal immigrants living in the shadows of our cities and towns.

AN EXAMPLE TO ENCOURAGE

The members of my own congregation, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, have embraced this evangelistic opportunity in our community. And I want to share some of what those faithful saints have been doing, not to say others should do exactly what we do, but to encourage similar kinds of faithfulness.

Our outreach to internationals started when one of our missionaries came home and spent a year living in Washington, D.C. During his time with us, the one thing we asked was that he help us survey the population of internationals living near our church. At the end of his time he concluded that students were the only significant resident population of internationals nearby. Most longer-term immigrants lived out in the distant suburbs. So our most significant ministry would be among students.

It so happened that there was a man in our church from Singapore who had himself been converted as an international student in the UK. One of our elders began to meet with him and asked him to think about how he might encourage more outreach from our church to international students. He began to host a Bible study in his home for international students. Later, English language classes were started in our church and on a nearby campus. More members got involved and began to meet one-to-one for practicing English by talking through the gospel. They were open and above-board in telling students this gospel conversation was our aim right from the start. As a result they had more opportunities to meet up with international students.

Eventually the effort grew until so many church members were involved that our elders decided to create the position of Deacon of International Outreach. This deacon would coordinate and give leadership to all the activity already happening: teaching English, hosting international students for meals, spending leisure time with them, picking them up from airports, and, most of all, meeting one-to-one to study through the Gospels with an interested student. In the course of the following years we've had the joy of baptizing and adding to our church body several men and women who came to trust in Christ through these efforts. Others have believed and joined other churches in the area. Many have returned to their home countries where they are now witnesses for the gospel. Praise God!

– ACTION STEP –

To get involved with International Students at LSU,
contact Josh Motta at joshmotta21@gmail.com

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Persevere in Prayer!

by Tim Challies

Prayer Is Difficult. We all know this theoretically and we all know it experientially. . . . I don't think there was one pastor there [at the conference] who believed his church was excelling in prayer and who was really comfortable with his leadership and the church's participation in this area. We should not be surprised. If prayer is the means through which God works, Satan will inevitably make it an area of concentrated attack.

Many Have Given Up. While every church [represented at this conference] has had a weekly or otherwise regular prayer meeting at one time, many have since abandoned it. Usually this is a result of the church losing its enthusiasm for prayer and their belief in its necessity. Many have made prayer supplemental instead of instrumental in the life of the church. Some have replaced the prayer meeting with programs or small groups, and some have not replaced it with anything.

It's Easier To Talk About Prayer. If there are 60 or 90 minutes set aside for a mid-week prayer meeting, often only 20 or 30 minutes are actually used to pray while the rest goes to Bible study and sharing prayer requests. It is often easier to talk about prayer and prayer requests than it actually is to dedicate a sustained period of time to praying.

Persevere. It was a blessing to hear how many churches have persevered in prayer even when attendance at the meetings is far too low and even when enthusiasm has waned. Satan knows he can undermine a church's effectiveness by undermining a church's prayer life. Persevere in the face of his attacks!

Tips

Longer ≠ Better. We need to protect ourselves and our churches from believing there is a necessary correlation between the length of a prayer and the godliness of the person praying, or between the length of a prayer and the likelihood of God answering it. God is no more likely to hear and respond to a long prayer than a short one. Many prayer meetings suffer when the people pray for too long.

Pray Honestly. A pastor needs to remind himself and his church that we do not pray to impress the other people in the room, but to pour out our hearts to God. Public prayer still has that one-to-one dimension of a child before his Father.

Pray Scripture. The pastor can and should use the prayers in Scripture as a means of teaching his people how to pray. He should also model how to pray Scripture. Where our prayers tend toward "give me!" the Bible's prayers are far more focused on God's purposes and Christian character.

Make It God-Centered. It is easy to slip into a pattern of man-centered rather than God-centered prayer. Man-centered prayers tend to ask "how can God help me with my problems?" while God-centered prayers consider "What is God doing in this? How can I join in God's purposes here?" This changes not only what we pray for, but also the way we pray.

Pray in Small Groups. One church has one of their small groups each week dedicate their entire time to prayer. So while the entire church may not pray together that week, one of the small groups is interceding on behalf of others.

Variety Matters. Even something as good as a prayer meeting can grow stale over time. There is value in planning out a few different kinds of prayer meetings and changing it up on a regular basis. For example, one week have the men and women pray separately; another week pray only prayers of thanksgiving or confession; another week pray for only certain kinds of requests.

Prayer is and always will be a constant battle. Do not give up!