

**A THEOLOGY OF MISSION  
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MINISTRY**

*By*

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International students are a growing group of the American population, with about 450,000 students from over 180 countries in the world at colleges and universities throughout the United States. International student enrollment has increased 950% over the past 28 years.<sup>1</sup> Currently, about 44,000 students are here from the People's Republic of China and almost an equal number from Japan.<sup>2</sup> Besides students and their families there are a large number of short term workers, researchers, and visitors from around the globe. The majority of these students and scholars are studying in the fields of engineering, science, and business.

International student ministry is strategic for world evangelism. The internationals who come here are the cream of the crop--the brightest and most promising students. They return to their countries to become the next generation of leaders. One-quarter to one-half of the world's top positions in politics, business, education, science, and the military will be filled in the next 25 years by internationals educated in American colleges and universities.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, if they return home with the gospel they may have a tremendous impact for the kingdom of God, often among people totally ignorant of the gospel. How do these facts relate to God's mission for his people? What does the Bible say to us about international students?

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<sup>1</sup> "International Student Quick Reference," *International Friends*, 1, No. 1 (Summer 1990), 4.

<sup>2</sup> "Fast Facts: Open Doors 1993/94."

<sup>3</sup> Lawson Lau, *The World at Your Doorstep* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 13.

## MISSION

The ultimate ground of mission rests in the very nature of God. The God of the Bible is an outgoing, living God of history and relationships. The fact that God is light and love shows us that he is a missionary God. The mission of the church is rooted in the Trinity, where the church began from the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit as sent by the Father. God in Christ in the incarnation-cross-resurrection event is the focal point of history and the salvation provided for us.<sup>4</sup> God's provision of salvation from sin and its effects is the basis of the mission he has given us.

Jesus is a missionary. As the word of God, he is the light of the world. In humbling himself to become a man, he brought God to be in our midst as Immanuel. As the good shepherd, he goes out to seek and to save that which was lost. As the one anointed by the Spirit of the Lord, he came to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and preach the coming of the kingdom of God.

Before returning to the Father, he sent the church to continue the mission given him by the Father and empowered her with his Spirit: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn. 20:21)... To continue his mission in time, Christ gave the missionary mandate to his followers to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19), and he sent the Holy Spirit, the promised one of the Father, who impels the church to share the gospel with the world. Like all good news, the gospel of salvation is irrepensible. The spontaneous need to communicate it comes from the quickening presence of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of church life.<sup>5</sup>

By its very nature, the church has a missionary character. She continues the mission of

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<sup>4</sup> George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 57-63.

<sup>5</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the USA, "To the Ends of the Earth: A Pastoral Statement on World Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Vol. 11, No. 2, April 1987), 52.

God as found in his promise to Abraham to bless all nations through Abraham's seed, the mission of Jesus to make disciples of all nations, and the mission of the Holy Spirit to empower the Church to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. For in Christ all of God's promises are fulfilled. The church has been called to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to all nations. Therefore, "...any local church has no choice but to reach out to others with the gospel of Christ's love for all peoples. To say `church' is to say `mission'."<sup>6</sup>

Harvie Conn explains it this way,

One cannot be a missionary church and continue insisting that the world must come to the church on the church's terms. It must become a `go' structure. And it can do that only when its concerns are directed outside itself toward the poor, the abused, and the oppressed. The church must recapture its identity as the only organization in the world that exists for the sake of its nonmembers.<sup>7</sup>

"Nearly twenty centuries of Christian history have elapsed, and Jesus' prayer: 'Your kingdom come!' (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) is still our prayer. The mission he gave his apostles and disciples continues to be the church's mission."<sup>8</sup> As Jesus' first disciples had a personal relationship with Christ, so believers now have a similar relationship by the Holy Spirit that sustains them in their mission.

There is really only one motive to be inspired for missions, and that is God's motive as it is described in the Scriptures, "God so loved the world" (John 3:16); "Go into all the world and

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Harvie M. Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the USA, p. 52.

preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). The great commission flows out of God's love for the world.<sup>9</sup> In proclaiming God's love for the world, we bring glory to his Name.

What is this mission which the church has been given? Many people, following John Stott, define mission as evangelism plus social involvement. David Bosch comments on this view:

Depicting evangelism and social action as two separate segments or components of mission is unsatisfactory, since it may--and often does--lead to a battle for supremacy.... The moment you regard mission as consisting of two separate or separable components--evangelism and social action--you have, in principle, admitted that each of the two components has a life of its own. You are then suggesting that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social action without an evangelistic dimension.

This "separate but equal" position is dangerous because it is too easy "for any one of the two components to make a unilateral declaration of independence, so to speak."<sup>10</sup>

Bosch gives a definition of mission as

the total task that God has set the church for the salvation of the world. In its missionary involvement, the church steps out of itself, into the wider world. It crosses all kinds of frontiers and barriers: geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological. Into all these areas the church-in-mission carries the message of God's salvation. Ultimately, then, mission means being involved in the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus' commission to his disciples was comprehensive in scope. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21); "and teaching them to obey everything I have

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<sup>9</sup> J.H. Bavink, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 277.

<sup>10</sup> David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Vol. 11, No. 3, (July 1987), 100.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

commanded you" (Matt 28:20). When one considers all that Jesus came to do and all that he taught us, there is nothing in life that is left outside of the scope of our missionary task.

## **MISSION TO FOREIGNERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Since we have discussed the comprehensive and extensive nature of the church's mission, how was this found to be realized among those who were not Jews, God's chosen people? Did God have those who were not physical descendants of Abraham in mind to receive the blessings of his salvation? What was God's will for the relationship between the Israelites and the aliens among them? The 'foreigners' or 'aliens' in the Old Testament were all non-Jewish persons who lived among the nation of Israel. The *goy* (nations) were people who did not live in or among Israel, but somewhere outside (Lev 18:24).

God commanded the Israelites not to marry or practice the abominable practices of those from the nations around them. However, this did not mean that God's promises could not extend to them if they worshipped the one true God. Abraham's call in Genesis 12:1-3 was not just for Abraham's benefit, but God had in mind all of humankind. Abraham was assured that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3). This promise is repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14. In the New Testament the promise of blessing is stated to be fulfilled in both the Jews (Acts 3:25) and the Gentiles (Gal 3:8).

Judaism was not a one race religion. Many non-Israelites joined the Israelites in the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:38). The third generation Edomite and Egyptian could enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut 23:7,8). In the renewal of the covenant with God in Moab, aliens

among the Israelites are mentioned as being part of God's people (Deut 29: 10-13). Examples of people who became proselytes were Rahab the prostitute (Josh 6:25) and Ruth (Ruth 4:10-17). They were ancestors of Jesus (Matt 1:5).

Both Israelites and aliens were to keep from defiling the land by keeping God's commandments or the land would vomit them out (Lev 18:24-28). In the Ten Commandments, aliens are included in those who must not work on the Sabbath (Exod 20:10). The Old Testament teaches that aliens could be circumcised, and participate in the passover (Exod 12:48,49; 2 Chr 30:24); participate in the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-30), Feasts of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:19), Weeks (Deut 16:10,11), and Tabernacles (Deut 16:14); share in the post-Babylonian exile division of land (Ezek 47:22-23); flee to cities of refuge (Num 35:15; Josh 20:9); unite with the house of Jacob (Isa 14:1); and have a Hebrew as a slave (Lev 25:47).

King David enlisted aliens as craftsmen and artisans to begin preparations for the work on the Temple (1 Chr 22:2-4). In King Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple he says, "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name -- for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm -- when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name" (1 Kgs 8:41-43). Here we see clearly that God is a God for all peoples. Those from distant lands came to the God of Israel whose dwelling was in the temple. The focus of missions in the Old Testament was centripetal, towards Jerusalem and

God's house of worship.

Isaiah gives this word from the Lord,

Let no foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.' `And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant -- these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations' (Isaiah 56:3,6-7).

God revealed himself to the Israelites as one who loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. Consequently they were to "love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt" (Deut 10:18,19). Again in Leviticus 19:33,34 the Lord says, "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

In 2 Kings 5:1-19a an account is given of a foreign leader who comes to Israel to find healing. Naaman was a great Syrian general who was the closest servant of the king of Syria. He had a major problem though. He had a skin disease for which he had no cure. An Israelite servant of his wife's who had been captured during a raid suggested that Naaman go to Elisha to be cured. Naaman came to the king of Israel bearing gifts and seeking a cure for his disease. Elisha heard of Naaman's visit and sent for him. At first Naaman scoffed at Elisha's suggestion that he bathe seven times in the Jordan River. He was expecting Elisha to call on the Lord and wave his hands over him. However, Naaman's servants convinced Naaman to proceed with Elisha's directions. Upon being healed, Naaman put his faith in the God of Israel and took back to Syria soil from the land of Israel to worship God on.



This account is another demonstration of God giving his blessings to a foreigner. The centripetal direction of mission is seen with the Syrian coming to Israel to know the true God. But it also illustrates what is often found with international students coming to America. Naaman had a single purpose in mind for coming to Israel: to be healed of his disease. In the process he was found by the Lord. International students and scholars come here to get an education. A good education must include knowledge of God. In the process some of them become believers in the Lord, though at first they may find it hard to accept God's grace through simple faith and obedience, as did Naaman.

Approximately 20% of the international students who come to this country stay here.<sup>12</sup> Among those that do, the percentage from a few nationalities is much higher, such as those from Taiwan. Some of those internationals who come here are believers and have much to offer to the church and society in America. Their situation may be seen as analogous in some ways to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as found in Daniel 1. These four young men came from Judah and studied diligently for three years in Babylon. They received the best education available. When their studies were completed they entered king Nebuchadnezzar's service. They were found to be ten times more competent than any of the magicians or enchanters found in the kingdom. Some Christian internationals who stay in America become greatly used by the Lord as his witnesses and servants. They also are often greatly gifted by the Lord in intellect, talent, and gifts. These people must not be neglected by the church, but encouraged in the Lord's service and disciplined. They can be effectively used in reaching their own ethnic group of international students and immigrants here as well as Americans. Daniel

too was used as a witness for God to both the Babylonians and the people of Judah.

## **THE GOSPEL FOR THE WORLD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

God's expression of love for people from all nations is reemphasized in the New Testament. God loves the world (John 3:16). We have been called to be imitators of God.

God's love for the world is expressed in Jesus Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. When baby Jesus was presented at the Temple, Simeon prophesied that he would be "a light of revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32).

The Gospels give us several instances of how God was concerned that the gospel go to the Gentiles. Matthew 12:18-21 is a quote from Isaiah 42:1-4 indicating that Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy of the servant who "will proclaim justice to the nations" and, "In his name the nations will put their hope."

At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry at Nazareth in the synagogue (Luke 4:24-28) he illustrated his point that "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" by pointing to Elijah ministering to "a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon" and Elisha cleansing Naaman, the leper from Syria. "Jesus' point was that when Israel rejected God's messenger of redemption, God sent him to the Gentiles--and so it will be again if they refuse to accept Jesus."<sup>13</sup> This infuriated the Nazarites. Luke's special concern for the Gentiles is seen in this passage.

One day Jesus was met by a Roman centurion, a Gentile, who asked Jesus to heal his

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<sup>12</sup> "International Student Quick Reference," p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Barker, ed., *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1985), p. 1545.

servant. In the context of expressing astonishment at the centurion's faith, Jesus said, "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11). Here Jesus clearly is expressing the universality of the gospel. This Gentile centurion was expressing more faith than anyone Jesus had met in Israel.

## **THE GREAT COMMISSION**

In the New Testament the focus of missions changes from being centripetal to being centrifugal, with the people of God going out to all the world. Instead of God's presence being centered in the temple at Jerusalem, now God dwells by the Holy Spirit within a new temple, the children of God. Each believer has God's presence with him which becomes salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13-14).

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus is at the end of his earthly mission before ascending to the Father. He gives his disciples the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

"All" dominates these verses, tying them together: all authority, all nations, all things, and all the days. This shows the extensiveness and completeness of Jesus' work and commission.

"Authority has been given to me," alludes to the prophecy in Daniel 7:14 of the

universal authority given to one like a son of man. The phrase "in heaven and on earth" adds heavenly authority to the earthly authority which had been offered to Jesus at his temptation by the Devil.<sup>14</sup> The extent of Jesus' authority appears to grow as his ministry advances. Jesus begins by saying he has authority to forgive men's sins. Then he claims to be the final judge of all men, to have power to lay down his life and raise it up again at will, and to have authority over all humankind. The claim of Jesus' authority is climaxed in this verse where nothing is excluded from his power.<sup>15</sup> Jesus is not saying that his authority has now become more absolute than during his days in the flesh, but that the spheres in which he now exercises authority include all heaven and earth. Since this authority is given by the Father, the Son is still under His authority (1 Cor 15:27,28). All God's authority is mediated through King Jesus and has been given to him as a climax to his vindication after his humiliation (Phil 2:5-11).<sup>16</sup>

Since Jesus has been given authority over all things, in verse 19 he now gives his authority to his disciples to minister to all peoples. This is in contrast to his earlier restricted mission to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:5,6). Christ has in mind the formation of a universal Church formed from all peoples. These peoples will be learners who are brought into fellowship with the triune God, which is outwardly signified by baptism into His name.<sup>17</sup>

"Go," *poreuthentes*, is a participle while "make disciples," is imperative. Some have

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<sup>14</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), p. 595.

<sup>15</sup> R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), p. 274.

<sup>16</sup> D.A. Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), p. 594-595.

<sup>17</sup> Tasker, p. 274.

thought that Jesus simply commissioned us to make disciples "as we go," wherever we are, rather than going some special place to serve as a missionary. Although there is some truth to this view, it must be qualified. A participle gains imperatival force when it functions as a circumstantial participle dependent on an imperative. In the context that his "make disciples" is to be to all peoples, it demands that "go" have imperatival force. The Great Commission is also given to us in several complementary forms which also indicate the need to "go" (Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).<sup>18</sup> However, in the context of international student ministry, to "go" may not mean having to go to another country. To "make disciples of all nations" one may simply need to "go" across the street or across town, since the "nations" have come to us.

*Mathateusate* is an active verb meaning "make disciples of". Emphasis is given to "make disciples". Disciples can also be called learners, which puts evangelism in terms of learning the law of Jesus (cf. v. 20).<sup>19</sup> "Disciples are those who hear, understand and obey Jesus' teaching."<sup>20</sup> They are always learning, so that their "school days" are never over.

Orlando Costas describes for us what it means to disciple:

In order for the gospel to transform man and positively affect his situation, it must be effectively taught. It must be interpreted in such a way to make it become incarnated in the life of those to whom it is presented.

To disciple someone is to establish a personal relationship with the view of shaping his entire life. Discipling is not transmission of a body of knowledge; rather it involves introduction of material in such a way that the receiver can retain and incorporate it into his life.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Carson, p. 595.

<sup>19</sup> Gundry, p. 596.

<sup>20</sup> Carson, p. 596.

<sup>21</sup> Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique From the Third World* (Wheaton:

The gospel seeks to bring about transformation in the lives of individuals in their concrete historical situations. This conversion implies repentance, or a change of mind, and faith toward God. "Effective discipling must lead to an about-face from wickedness and unrighteousness and a seeking after God through Jesus Christ our Lord (cf. Is. 55:6,7)."<sup>22</sup> The disciple must commit him/herself to everything that Jesus was committed to. This has not always been the case in the church, where instead of confronting people with the demands of Christ, the gospel has been accommodated to people's way of thinking and living.

Effective discipling leads to incorporation into the church, the community of believers assembled. For those who have been outside of the covenant of grace, this would include baptism, a sign of being made new in Christ. The church becomes for the new Christian a family in which he/she can live out a life of reconciliation with God in fellowship with others. Together believers train and encourage one another to love and good deeds, doing God's mission as he works through them.

Jesus' disciples are to make disciples of all men everywhere, without distinction between Jew or Gentile. Matthew's Gospel returns here to a theme introduced earlier (1:1) that the blessings promised to Abraham (Gen 12:3), and through him to all peoples, are now to be fulfilled through Jesus the Messiah.<sup>23</sup>

The content of the disciple's teaching is to be "obey everything I have commanded you." The focus is on Jesus' commands rather than the Old Testament law. Everything in the Old

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Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Testament Scriptures points to fulfillment in the Messiahship of Jesus, showing their valid continuity. Jesus does not foresee any of his teaching as becoming outmoded, superseded, or untrue. Everything must be taught to the completion of the age.<sup>24</sup> Jesus says, "to keep everything I have commanded you," because learning includes doing.

Costas expounds on the term 'command':

While the term 'command' implies a set of rules to be kept, in Scripture a command is more than a rule. It is a life principle, a revelation of God's will (cf. Deut. 6:1 ff). The emphasis is not on the commandment but on the *commander*. Thus, the law of God is a revelation of his righteousness and perfect will, or even a revelation of God himself. Accordingly, to observe Christ's commandments implies understanding of and commitment to Christ's way of life. Teaching his commandments implies interpretation of the meaning of Christ's self-disclosure. To expound the gospel is to interpret the meaning of Christ in the light of his own teachings.<sup>25</sup>

"I am with you" (v. 20) reminds one of the incarnation where Jesus is "Immanuel ...God with us" (1:23). Jesus' presence with his disciples as they go making disciples is similar to promises of protection in the Old Testament (Gen 28:15; Josh 1:5,9; Isa 41:10).<sup>26</sup> Jesus gives assurance to his disciples as Yahweh assured his people in the Old Testament. Jesus' promise of his presence with us gives us assurance that we are not alone in the commission he has given us, but that by the Holy Spirit he will give us the power to perform it. This promise is experienced by the early church as found in Acts, beginning with Pentecost. Acts gives a history of Christ's presence in his disciples with a new power for bold witness to all nations.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 598-599.

<sup>25</sup> Costas, pp. 77-78.

<sup>26</sup> Gundry, p. 597.

Without Christ's presence with us, we would have no hope of doing anything for the Lord among the nations that have come to us. The Spirit of Christ is the one who makes evangelization possible, convicts us of sin, brings us to repentance, regenerates our hearts, incorporates us into Christ's body, transforms our lifestyle and world view, and leads us to maturity in Christ.

## UNITED NATIONS AT PENTECOST

As a history of the growth of the early church, the book of Acts provides us with numerous principles for international student ministry. Acts 2:5-11 is a passage that often is mentioned in this reference. Both Jewish immigrants and Jewish and proselyte pilgrims were in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival. Note that it was God-fearing Jews from every nation in Jerusalem. Although the Aleph New Testament manuscript omits the word "Jews" (*Ioudaioi*) from verse 5, the word Luke uses for "God-fearing" (*eulabes*) is used in the New Testament only of Jews. It never refers to Gentile worshippers or proselytes. Longenecker writes,

Contrary to many who have assumed that the Jews mentioned here were pilgrims to Jerusalem coming for the Pentecost festival, it is more probable that they were residents of Jerusalem who had returned from Diaspora lands ("from every nation under heaven") at some earlier time to settle down in the homeland. That is how Luke uses *katoikountes* ("staying") here, a participial form of *katoikeo*, which he uses elsewhere in Acts..., in contrast to the verb *epidemeo* used participially in v. 10, in the sense of "being a stranger or visitor in town."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, general ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), Vol. 9, p. 272.



Each area and country named in verses 9-11 had a large Jewish population within its borders. Although verse 5 indicates some of these were immigrants from the Diaspora to the homeland, Jerusalem, one group is mentioned

as being religious pilgrims to the city (cf. the participle *hoi epidemountes*, "visitors," of v. 10). They are identified as being Jews and proselytes to Judaism from Rome. Undoubtedly there were other festival pilgrims in the crowd (just as there must have been other Diaspora Jews in attendance who were residents of Jerusalem), but Luke's interest in Acts is in the gospel reaching out even to Rome, the capital of the empire. So he singles out this pilgrim contingent for special mention. It may be that some of these "visitors" from Rome returned there and formed the nucleus of the church in that city. Ambrosiaster, a fourth-century Latin father, speaks of the church at Rome as having been founded "according to the Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles."<sup>28</sup>

This mention of visitors from Rome is significant for international student ministry because it is people like this who are being targeted to take the gospel to all nations. As Rome was the center of influence for the Roman empire, so international students come from centers of influence in their countries. International students who return to their country with the gospel may have the kind of impact for the expansion of the church as these new believers from Rome had in starting a church with an impact on the Roman world.

For this to become possible, it is necessary that U.S. churches have some drastic changes in the way they think and act towards foreigners and ethnic groups. Churches need to make them feel welcome. When those who come from afar are welcomed and integrated into our church and personal lives, then our faith becomes more credible and our love is seen as sincere.

In this way both the foreigner and the American could learn about cross-cultural

communication and learn to live and love together. These new Kingdom values of reconciliation could then be demonstrated among the unreached peoples of the world.

Not only do American Christians need to have a new vision, but the foreigner too needs to gain a vision for reaching the people from his roots as well as all peoples. If the international student had a vision for reaching his own ethnic group, he/she could convey the gospel in a more sensitive and acceptable way than could the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) North American missionary.<sup>29</sup>

In verses 7-8 we find that the crowd from many nations is amazed to find these Galilean believers speaking the gospel in each one's own language. Longenecker writes,

Galileans had difficulty pronouncing gutturals and had the habit of swallowing syllables when speaking; so they were looked down upon by the people of Jerusalem as being provincial (cf. Mark 14:70). Therefore, since the disciples who were speaking were Galileans, it bewildered those who heard because the disciples could not by themselves have learned so many different languages.<sup>30</sup>

Not only was this ability of the believers to speak in tongues a sign of the power and presence of God by the Holy Spirit among these Galileans, but it is an indication of the importance of proclaiming the gospel message in the native language of the target audience. Communication has the greatest impact on its receivers when it is most clearly understood. Putting this principle into practice with international students may mean that although one cannot speak many languages, it is relatively easy to obtain Bibles, New Testaments, Christian

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<sup>28</sup> Longenecker, p. 273.

<sup>29</sup> Tom Houston, "A New Missionary Scenario for the United States of America," *MARC Newsletter* (October 1987, #3), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Longenecker, p. 272.

literature, and tapes in the languages of the international student. Often it is also possible to introduce them to other believers in this country and in their home country who speak the same language. Matters of the heart communicated in a mother tongue strike a responsive chord.

## **INTERNATIONAL VISION**

Acts 8:26-40 gives us three principles for cross-cultural witness to internationals. First, barriers must be crossed for the gospel to reach all peoples. Second, there is great potential in ministry to one person. Third, God prepares the heart and completes the work in the individual's life.

This account of Philip's ministry to a high-ranking Ethiopian government official represents a further step in the advance of the gospel from being confined to just the Jewish community to a full-fledged Gentile mission. It is difficult to tell from this passage what the Ethiopian's relationship to Judaism may have been. Also, "it is uncertain how first-century Judaism would have viewed a eunuch coming to worship at Jerusalem. While Deuteronomy 23:1 explicitly stipulates that no emasculated male could be included within the Jewish" assembly, Isaiah 56:3-5 speaks of eunuchs being accepted by the Lord and given "an everlasting name that will not be cut off." "Likewise, it is not at all clear as it might appear what was the Ethiopian official's physical condition, for the word eunuch"... "frequently appears in the" Septuagint "and in Greek vernacular writings `for high military and political officials; it does not have to imply emasculation."<sup>31</sup> "Therefore, we are probably justified in taking `eunuch' to

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 361-363.

be a governmental title in an Oriental kingdom and in emphasizing two facts when considering the Ethiopian's relation to Judaism: (1) he had been on a religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem and (2) he was returning with a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah in his possession, which would have been difficult for a non-Jew to get." So this Ethiopian government official was probably a proselyte (convert) or near proselyte to Judaism.<sup>32</sup>

Even if the Ethiopian was a Jewish proselyte, many barriers must have existed between the Ethiopian and Philip that would make communication difficult. First, the Ethiopian was a complete stranger and a foreigner. They had never met before, but God directed Philip to go and speak to the Ethiopian. The Ethiopian probably spoke Greek with an accent as his second language. Maybe his accent made him difficult to understand. His culture would have been different. He may have had a different form of greeting, unusual clothing, and strange food if they stopped for lunch on the way. The fact that the Ethiopian would have been black and Philip white may have been another barrier to establishing a friendship. Also, the Ethiopian being an important minister of finance of a country would have meant a social status barrier between him and Philip. Even if the Ethiopian was a proselyte, often proselytes were not fully accepted by the Jewish community and had a secondary status. In spite of all these barriers, God called Philip to bring the gospel to the Ethiopian treasurer that the gospel might go to all the world.

God has a heart for all peoples, but according to Ralph Winter about 12,000 people groups in the world still do not have a church within their ethnic-cultural and language group with which they can identify. Even among those people groups that have a church, there are

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

still hundreds of millions who have never heard the gospel at all. What is God's strategy for fulfilling his vision for the world that people from all nations be saved? God has used two methods of getting the gospel to the unreached people of the world: a) By sending missionaries cross-culturally to other countries. The apostle Paul did this. In Romans 15:20 he said, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation." You are a Christian due to at least indirect cross-cultural missionary work, possibly to your ancestors. b) The second way in which God reaches all peoples of the world with the Gospel is by bringing people from all nations to where the Christians are. We see this happening in the Old Testament with people from the surrounding nations who come to the Temple to worship with the Jews. In 2 Chronicles 6:32-33 we find this in King Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple. In the New Testament we see that wise men came from a distant land in the east to Jesus as an infant. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 people from all the nations around the Mediterranean came to celebrate and heard the gospel preached to them in their own language. Then in Acts 8 we read about the Ethiopian eunuch. This is a situation somewhat close to what we have here in the U.S.A. with international students.

Many international students come from countries where missionary activity is banned or restricted. They come from Marxist, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or post-Christian countries. Many students represent totally unreached people groups. It is much easier to reach them with the gospel here than to travel to their countries to evangelize them. Here you don't have to learn their language and culture; they learn yours. Here they are much more open to new concepts and ideas, away from the pressures of home. Yes, there are still barriers to reaching

internationals here, but they are not nearly as great as they would be for you to go to their country to minister. International students may look different, dress differently, eat unusual foods, speak with a strong accent, and think differently. Because of these things they find it hard to make close friends with Americans. They are lonely. They are anxious to have an American friend. Philip went right up and talked to the Ethiopian eunuch. Extending ourselves is necessary if we are going to have a ministry that has global impact.

Even though the Ethiopian official had been to Jerusalem to worship, apparently he had not had any contact with the gospel or Christians while he was there. This may be largely due to the narrow focus the Christian community still had on only reaching Jews with the gospel. We have the same problem in our culture. We only think about sharing the gospel with those who are like us, rather than with those who are different. Also, we may assume that because there are so many Christian radio and T.V. programs and churches that everyone has a chance to hear the gospel. This is not true. Most non-Christians do not tune in or even think about attending the local church, much less if the church is of people from a different ethnic, racial and language group. The media has very little impact on people compared to that of personal relationships with Christians. Crossing cultural barriers is necessary if we are going to be obedient to the Lord's command to go to all peoples to make disciples.

**Secondly, there is great potential in ministry to one person.**

Philip was one of the Seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6 who were chosen to wait on tables of the Greek speaking Jewish widows. Their qualification for this office was that they were to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. After the martyrdom of Stephen, intense persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem resulted in the Christians being scattered throughout Judea and

Samaria. Philip was one of those who went to Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. Many turned to the Lord through his ministry. In the midst of this great ministry "an angel of the Lord said to Philip, `Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'"

Gaza was the last settlement of Palestine before the desert waste stretching away to Egypt. The fifty-mile journey from Jerusalem to Gaza trailed off at its southwestern end into patches of desert.<sup>33</sup> Why would God be telling Philip to leave this exciting ministry in Samaria to travel on a lonely road to "Timbuktu"? God knows all things and had prepared Philip to meet the Ethiopian eunuch. God knew the impact this one person could have for the gospel on many others that Philip could never reach.

What was this distant land that the Ethiopian official was returning to? Ethiopia corresponded in this period to Nubia, from the upper Nile region at the first cataract (Aswan) to Khartoum, the capital of present day Sudan. This important official was the minister of finance for Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. "Candace" was the traditional title of the queen mother who ruled on behalf of her son the king, since the king was regarded as the child of the sun and therefore too holy to become involved in the secular functions of the state.<sup>34</sup>

As Philip approaches the chariot in which the Ethiopian eunuch is riding he hears the eunuch reading from Isaiah the prophet. You may wonder, "Why would the eunuch be reading out loud?" It was customary practice in the ancient world to read aloud. It was read aloud to also benefit those around, many of whom may have been illiterate. Philip asks the Ethiopian,

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>34</sup> F.F. Bruce, "The Acts of the Apostles," *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, D. Guthrie, et. al., editors (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 983.

"Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip makes himself available by asking a question. In a one-to-one situation one should not approach someone in a preaching style. By using questions one can find out where a person is in their thinking and is non-threatening. Questions provide a way for the other person to speak his mind first, and earns you the right to then be heard. It also helps you to meet a person's immediate needs and answer the questions that are on their mind. This approach made it possible for Philip to lead the Ethiopian to Christ.

There is no substitute for one-to-one witnessing. In Acts 5:28 it says that the disciples had filled all of Jerusalem with the message of Jesus. If this man had journeyed from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, he didn't go on a weekend visit. He was there for weeks. And even though the "good news" saturated that city, this man still did not know the gospel.<sup>35</sup>

As Mark Hanna, who has worked for years with internationals, says,

In the United States we have six million non-immigrant, non-tourist international visitors, staying for a few months or a few years. Many of them are from so-called closed countries. And even though in the United States we have broadcasts and telecasts and churches and Bibles everywhere, the vast majority of those people from other cultures and other religions do not know the gospel. They don't understand it unless someone goes to them individually and cares and explains.<sup>36</sup>

Do you realize the potential of reaching a whole town, a whole nation, for Christ, through one person? That's the kind of potential there is. Irenaeus, an early church father, writes that the eunuch became a missionary to the Ethiopians. Ethiopian church tradition also says that this eunuch was the one who introduced the gospel to the Ethiopians. Similarly, "the greatest evangelist that China has ever known, John Sung, came to the Lord here in the United

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Hanna, "Nations at the Door," *World Christian* (September/ October 1983), 36-37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.



States as a student and he went back to China and preached literally to millions of people. He is called the father of 10,000 churches."<sup>37</sup>

With the world's leaders being educated in American colleges and universities, how we treat these students today will have lasting global consequences tomorrow. Their attitudes toward Christianity often reflect the type of experience they had as students here. Several leaders of anti-American countries attended college in the U.S. Castro of Cuba, Mariam of Ethiopia, Nkrumah of Ghana and Ortega of Nicaragua led their countries to Marxism after they left the United States. The Iranian ship laying mines in the Persian Gulf which was captured by a U.S. ship included among its crew, men who had been university students in the U.S. Internationals studying here are open to new ideas. If they aren't reached with the gospel first, they may be reached by Marxists, fundamentalist Muslims, cults, or other groups instead which are active on American campuses.

International students are much more open to new concepts and ideas while they are here than at home, where they face many pressures. Internationals are lonely and need friendship, love, and acceptance. Most of them spend all their time in the laboratory or library not only because they work hard, but because they don't know anyone to go places with them. Meeting their needs through love opens their hearts to Christ. Right here in the United States we can reach the world at our doorstep! A majority of the students return to their home countries.<sup>38</sup> Those who return as Christians can have a tremendous impact for Jesus Christ—native evangelists where Western missionaries sometimes cannot go or be as effective.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>38</sup> James N. Baker, and others, "Foreign Students Under Fire," *Newsweek* (October 19, 1987), 73.

Americans have the opportunity to be a blessing to the nations around them without leaving home! You are having an impact on the internationals around you—positive or negative--by how you are responding to them as people with feelings and needs, just like you.

Invite an international student to your home. Most of them never have the opportunity to even see the inside of an American's home, so hospitality is vital to this ministry.

Be a friend. More than one international has said, "Americans are very friendly, but they don't make good friends."<sup>39</sup> Internationals want a friend they can share with and trust and who will be there when needed. This doesn't mean a casual acquaintance, but one about whom you would feel bad if contact were lost. Friendship is the number one felt need of international students.<sup>40</sup>

Give of your time and resources. A ministry requires commitment, but the yields are great, both now and eternally. In the parable of the banquet in Luke 14, Jesus said, "Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Even a small investment of time can be very powerful. It may have an impact on the rest of their lives. We don't know how long Philip and the Ethiopian were together on the road to Gaza, but it may have been most of that one day. But even if it was the whole day, it is still a short amount of time to invest in someone to bring them to the gospel. Even little acts of kindness in the name of Christ can be used by God to transform a life.

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<sup>39</sup> Mark D. Rentz. "Diplomats in Our Backyard," *Newsweek*, (February 16, 1987), 10.

<sup>40</sup> Paul E. Little, *A Guide to International Friendship* (Madison, WI: Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1980), p. 5.

**Thirdly, God prepares the heart and completes the work in the individual's life.**

We are not told just where Philip was when he received his divine directive to go south to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. But Luke is not interested in the specifics of geography here. "What he is interested in is highlighting for his readers the fact that Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch was especially arranged by God and providentially worked out in all its details."<sup>41</sup> It is evident that God had prepared the heart of the Ethiopian minister of finance for the gospel. He had traveled hundreds of miles, a trip of many days, to worship God at the Temple in Jerusalem. He had a hunger for knowing God. Possibly he had known of the God of Judaism through the large Jewish community in Egypt, a neighboring country with close relations to Nubia. At any rate, Philip finds him with an open heart with questions about the Scripture he was reading. Although the eunuch was an intelligent man, he needed someone to instruct him. He was open-minded and humble enough to hear from this stranger.

Philip found the Ethiopian reading Isaiah 53:7-8 concerning the suffering Messiah. He began with this passage to show how it has been fulfilled in Christ and proclaimed to him the "good news" about Jesus. Note that he used the Old Testament Scriptures to explain the gospel, since that is where the Ethiopian was reading and the New Testament was not yet available.

After a while "they came to some water." There are several possibilities of where this water was: a brook in the Valley of Elah (which David crossed to meet Goliath); the Wadi el-Hasi just north of Gaza; water from a spring or one of the many pools in the area.<sup>42</sup> The Ethiopian was probably familiar with baptism as an initiatory rite for Jewish proselytes and/or

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<sup>41</sup> Longenecker, p. 362.

<sup>42</sup> Barker, p. 1659.

Philip may have told him of the need to signify his entrance into God's covenant by baptism, as he had baptized new believers in Samaria. The eunuch responded to Philip by asking for baptism. In baptism the Ethiopian proclaimed his commitment to Jesus. Luke has been building up to this climax throughout the account.<sup>43</sup> Baptism should be encouraged among international students who come to faith. However, one should be sensitive to the context in which it is done since such an action may have serious repercussions for the student upon returning home. It may be best to administer baptism in a context of a few friends rather than before a large congregation, where it may be observed and reported to authorities.

After the eunuch's baptism, "the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing." Joy is associated with salvation throughout Acts. Being filled with joy is the consistent consequence of conversion, regardless of circumstance.

It is evident throughout this account that God was in control of all that was happening to extend his kingdom. God has prepared the hearts of many internationals who are away from home in our country. This is an opportunity that should not be missed by the church. Many come wanting to understand the Bible, as this Ethiopian did. The Word of God, prayer, and demonstrated love are effective means for turning hearts to Christ.

It says in verse 39 that "the eunuch did not see him again." Can we trust the Lord to continue his good work in a convert's life? Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." And later he says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and

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<sup>43</sup> Longenecker, p. 365.

appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last." Yes, God will preserve that fruit which is the result of our witness. This does not minimize the need for follow-up of new believers, but God will bring other believers into that person's life. Sometimes we may feel that we do not have much time with the international we are ministering to because they move to a new school or go back home. But God is able to use even the time you did have with the international. Often times I have heard that someone who was ministered to here did not become a believer, but the seed was planted. However, upon returning to their home country they became believers. One plows, another sows, another waters, and still another reaps, but God gives the increase.

This account ends with Philip in Caesarea. His next appearance is twenty years later in Acts 21, and he is still located in the same place. Here he is mentioned as Philip the evangelist, who has four unmarried daughters who prophesied. Apparently Philip had settled there with his family and carried on a ministry. Philip did not have to travel overseas and learn another language to have an impact for the gospel in a distant land. He simply made himself available to the Spirit's leading in ministry to someone cross-culturally just a few miles from home. He didn't argue with God saying, "Why are you taking me away from this marvelous ministry to a whole Samaritan city?" He devoted himself to ministry to this one person, which God used greatly. Finally, he trusted in the Lord to be preparing the heart of the Ethiopian and complete the saving work in the life of the eunuch. There is no way that Philip could have brought such a joyful response from the eunuch. This was the work of God throughout.

## **HOSPITALITY**

The love of which the law and the gospel alike speak is a very practical attitude: "let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18). The chief of these actions is in doing acts of kindness to those who are destitute, from whom we can expect little or nothing in return. Since those who are in a state of poverty are generally treated with the most contempt and they require the greater and more immediate assistance, the God of mercy has particularly given them to the care of Christians. It is in caring for them that we prove the sincerity of our love, not having any other motivation other than showing kindness.

Hospitality is commonly understood as the occasional entertainment in our houses, and at our tables, of those whom we meet and become friends with in the normal relationships of daily life. This is a very good thing in its own way, but it is not at all the Christian duty which is commanded in Matthew 25:35-36. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,...I needed clothes and you clothed me"--this is sharing "with God's people who are in need." "I was a stranger and you invited me in"--this is Christian hospitality. We need to develop a heart of love for those who are strangers, lonely, lowly, poor, handicapped, and objects of discrimination. Jesus gave this instruction to his host when he was at a banquet:

When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:12-14).

People ought to do those deeds which God will reward. This, however, can easily be misunderstood. On the one hand, Jesus is not making a down-right condemnation of holding a party for one's family and friends; this would have conflicted with his own practice (i.e. marriage at Cana). Rather he is condemning the attitude which does good simply for the sake of a tangible, earthly reward. But, on the other hand, he is not saying that one should do good simply in order to receive a heavenly reward. The point is that people should seek to do good to those who cannot give anything in return, and leave the whole question of recompense to God.

Hospitality is of supreme importance because those to whom you show hospitality are often the most destitute of all, by the fact that they have no relatives or friends nearby. We can see that we ought to watch over every person with greater care, in proportion to how neglected he is by the rest of society. A prime example of this is the international students and foreign visitors in our country. Although most of them are not destitute materially, they often are completely alone, in a strange country, in a different culture, and are using a difficult language. The combination of these things plus academic pressure makes life quite difficult, especially for new arrivals.

Scripture's command is clear: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:2). An example of this happening is Abraham with his three visitors (Gen 18:1-8). The apostle Paul also encouraged hospitality: "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Rom 12:13). In fact Paul includes hospitality as a sign of qualification for spiritual leadership (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2) and enrollment of a widow on the list of widows helped by the church (1 Tim 5:10). Peter speaks to the attitude we should have in this ministry: "Offer hospitality to one another without

grumbling" (1 Pet 4:9).

A majority of the international students who come to study in the U.S. never have the opportunity to be in an American home. That is a big disappointment to them. After studying here for several years, many internationals have not had an American befriend them and show them hospitality. They go to their home country with no one to write back to. To our shame, these same people who are not believers are extremely hospitable to complete strangers. For many it is a part of their culture. Their hospitality is evident upon visiting them here as well as knowing their home countries. Hospitality to international students has been shown many times to be a significant factor in seeing them come to faith in Christ. It meets a need to which they respond.

## **UNITY**

Unity is a universal concern and felt need among peoples from all religions. Christians especially have been taught the need for unity to be a witness to the world of our oneness in Christ. However, some people from the Christian tradition have such a great desire for unity that they obscure the distinctives of our faith that form the basis for our unity. Hector Espinoza said at the Lauzanne Congress on World Evangelism that there are many today who believe that there is,

the possibility of a unique universal message as the solution to the spiritual problem of humanity. Here they endeavor to adapt the message of Christ to the mentalities of the followers of other religions, and find the similar elements and those of a common denominator that could facilitate their coming together to form from all the religious precepts one sole, universal brotherhood. It is obvious that to obtain such an amalgam, the claims



concerning the exclusivity of the ministry and the Gospel made by Christ are obscured, and very specially the notion of sacrifice by him.<sup>44</sup>

In Jesus' high priestly prayer to the Father, he prays for unity among all believers.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20-23).

Two things are evident from this prayer of our Lord regarding unity: the nature of our unity in Christ and the inevitable result of our unity. The Father lives in the Son and is manifested in him. The Son is the object of supreme affection by the Father. As the Father and Son are one in being and live in each other, similarly believers are to live in and for each other, becoming a unity. "That this unity is universal is expressed by the words of Christ:

That they *all* may be one...

There is to be no exception. This unity is not optional, but the universal rule of the divine society and the law of its great Head."<sup>45</sup>

Christ's prayer to the Father tells us the result of the believers' unity in Christ. Our unity will produce such an impression on the world that they will believe that the Father sent his Son. The world will believe in the divine origin of the Church of Jesus Christ. In the fact that believers have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:5-6) we

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<sup>44</sup> Hector Espinoza, "The Biblical Mission of the Church in Worship, Witness, and Service," *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, J.D. Douglas, ed. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 1095.

<sup>45</sup> Nene Ramientos, *Contemporary Christian Issues* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1982), p. 9.

have a basis for unity in the Spirit which is evident to the world.

Unity with other believers who are not a part of your ministry, church, or denomination is very important for effective witness to international students. They generally do not understand the divisions, branches, and denominations found in America and often think each one is a different religion. It is a cause of much confusion. Demonstrated unity based on a common faith and love in Jesus Christ can overcome much of this confusion. Unity does not mean that different ministries or denominations must merge, but it does mean they should cooperate with, pray for, encourage, and assist those from other groups. Unity and brotherhood is something the world desperately wants and is attracted to when it is visible. Such evident unity among the early believers led to fantastic growth of the Church in Jerusalem, beginning with Pentecost.

Jesus, too, in his ministry exemplified unity by worshipping and teaching in the temple and synagogue, even with those who were opposed to him. A couple of Gospel passages give us additional insight to Jesus' spirit of cooperation.

"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:38-40).

Another time Jesus said,

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters" (Luke 11:23).

These sayings of Jesus indicate that he accepted the cooperation of any who did not oppose Him, even if they did not belong to the same group or use the same methods as Jesus'

twelve disciples.

Visible unity is the means to evangelism. Love is the expression of unity. As Jesus said,

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

Jonathan Chao comments on this,

Unity and love in the believers provide the incentives to non-believers for desiring to become disciples of Jesus. Thus unity is the best means to evangelism. Love is a visible expression of unity, which validates the Gospel as authentic.<sup>46</sup>

Unity is not merely outward uniformity, but the effects of unity are to be real and visible. "Mutual love and ministry within the body-life must be sought as the criterion for the development of visible forms of unity for effective evangelism."<sup>47</sup>

## **PRAYER**

Prayer is a privilege that God has given believers in which we can have an intimacy with him. This privilege must never be neglected or taken for granted. It is only through prayer that we can ever hope to see any spiritual results in the lives of international students. It is only the Spirit of God who will move the hearts of people to recognize their sin and need of a Savior, to repent, and to trust only in the work of Christ for their salvation. If it is the work of God,

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<sup>46</sup> Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, "The Nature of the Unity of the Local and Universal Church in Evangelism and Church Growth," *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, J.D. Douglas, ed. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 1111.

then why must I pray? Because it is through our prayers that God acts. God asks us to pray. Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt 9:37-38). In the Gospels we see that Jesus was constantly in prayer. This is to be our lifestyle as well (1 Thess 4:17).

Two attitudes must be kept in mind when we are praying for internationals and ministry to them: boldness and humility. With the presence of the kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus, he prayed with new boldness that had not been previously seen. Our boldness in prayer comes from seeing the power of the kingdom unleashed before people. This power brings forth miracles, healing, justice, and salvation. "The human response to the open display of the kingdom of God's power is faith. Jesus adds boldness in prayer to that human response" (Matt 21:21-22).<sup>48</sup> In prayer we have rights and privileges as children of God to demand that our international friend be saved. "Prayer's asking is not wishing. It is demanding that people come to Christ because Christ has come to us. It is demanding that the world be changed because Christ has come to change it."<sup>49</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum of boldness in our prayers is humility. Jesus prayed and taught us to pray with kingdom humility; "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's will is to be exalted and our willfulness destroyed. This speaks to a constant problem for most Christians of substituting activity for prayer. "Activity is me-centered, prayer is God-

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1113.

<sup>48</sup> Conn, p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

centered."<sup>50</sup> This tendency to be activity centered is clearly illustrated in Luke's account of Mary and Martha with Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). In humility one recognizes the power of the Spirit to enable us to do any spiritual good which brings glory to God.

Prayer needs to be at the beginning, end, and in between of our mission work. Conn says, "Biblical evangelizing is a two-fold commission: to preach and to pray, to talk to people about God and to talk to God about people."<sup>51</sup> Therefore, pray, and do not give up. We may not see results in the same way or at the time that we expected, but if we pray in faith believing, God will answer our prayers.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly the Scriptures teach us that we have a responsibility to evangelize the international students and visitors in our midst. It is an opportunity that must not be missed by the Church. Regretfully most of the American Church has not recognized this. God is holding Christians accountable to the needs that are right by them. What will be the Church's response? Thankfully a few Christians have seen this open door of opportunity to have a global impact on the frontiers of mission. And when the Lord comes again we will rejoice with those who came to believe through their witness from every people as described in Revelation.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

‘Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb’” (Rev 7:9-10).

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