

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2016



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FOREIGN MISSIONS IN REVERSE

"See then that you walk circumspectly... redeeming the times... be not unwise but understanding..." Eph. 5:15-17

Every year, I visit the USA to share in churches as well as reconnect with our ministry partners. In-between these visits, a lot of my time is spent with Internationals from Africa, especially new ones: mentoring, advising, guiding and helping them find their way in America. I believe these internationals represent a missing link in world evangelization. Numerous obstacles have made world evangelization almost impossible in our time:

The 10/40 Window Obstacle: The 10/40 Window is an area of the world encompassing 62 countries and more than 3 billion people. Ninety-five percent of these people have not heard the good news about Jesus and will not, by traditional methods of evangelism, because missionary activities are prohibited.

A shortage of traditional foreign missionaries: Missiologists estimate we will need at least 10 million traditional missionaries to attain this goal of worldwide evangelism.

A shortage in mission funding: The projection is that we will need over 1.5 trillion dollars per year to do the job!

We are therefore called to think outside the box and find creative ways. Could it be that ministry to Internationals is a missing link in world missions? It eliminates many of the "insurmountable" obstacles.

- Every "restricted access" (10/40) country sends students here
- Ministry to international is performed largely by Volunteers
- It is cost effective.
- Ministry to Internationals requires no visas, etc.
- International students represent the "cream of the crop". They come from a socioeconomic level that is normally not accessible for years for traditional missionaries.

- Many of them will return to positions of influence and authority.

Only two methods of accomplishing God's plan are recorded in scripture for both the Israelites and the church. They are: sending His people to the lost and sending the lost to His people:

The world has always learned about the Lord through the travels of His people. The world is still hearing about God from these "sent-out" ambassadors. The church calls them - "missionary programs".

Another method of God's design is less known. He sends representation from nations to where His people live and work in order that these strangers could hear and receive the truth about God and carry it back to their people. In the Old Testament, this method is highlighted by the instruction to his people regarding their attitude to and relationship with "strangers", "alien" or Internationals. I call this method, "**Foreign Mission in Reverse.**"

We see this pattern in both the Old and New Testaments. The early church was very aware of the strategic nature of this mission work.

More than 500,000 international studies are conducted yearly. Sadly, a very small percent of internationals make contact with a Christian during their stay in America. They end up forming subcultures that are never penetrated by the "church." Many Internationals come here loving this "Christian" nation. Many may and do return to their home countries never knowing about Christianity or Christ! And they associate their bad experience to "Christianity". Can you imagine the impact we could have in the world through internationals witness?

For the Great Commission,



Ernest Ehabé



Ernest with the Ayuk Family in Hagerstown, MD. Family moved to the USA in March 2016.



Ernest with Pearl Fobi, a recently arrived International from Cameroon, attending Salem State U. in Boston. His walk and relationship with God has deepened because of the visit and connection.



Ernest with members of Boston International Chapel in 2015. A Cameroon led church plant in Boston, MA.

THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY



This graph indicates that the critical point in the internationals' experience is when they arrive in the US. The reception they receive at that moment determines, in large part, whether their entire stay in the US is positive or negative.

Unfortunately, a vast majority fall below the line. They study or work constantly and relate only with those of their culture. They may never even be invited into an American home. They return home feeling that all Americans are cold and unwelcoming. And, since nearly all internationals consider Americans Christians, they blame Christianity for their negative experience here.

The internationals who make it above the line have been able to form friendships with Americans and feel accepted by them! Many of these contacts will develop into relationships that endure throughout the internationals' time in the US and after they return to their homelands. A Christian contact is therefore needed at the moment of greatest need: the time of entry into America!

Many of our international visitors have returned home to positions of high visibility and influence. The manner in which they were treated here may have global consequences. Consider the following former world leaders who have been visitors in the United States:

- Benazir Bhutto – (Pakistan), Luis Palau – (Columbia)
- Corazon Aquino – (Philippines), Miguel de la Madrid – (Mexico)
- Ingvar Carlson – (Sweden), Mengistu Mariam – (Ethiopia)
- Nnamdi Azikwe – (Nigeria), Benjamin Netanyahu – (Israel)

And these special cases:

- Ho Chi Minh – (Vietnam - the Vietnam war)
- Isoruku Yamamoto – (Japan - ordered the Pearl Harbor bombing)
- Kwame Nkrumah – (Ghana - promoted Communism in Africa)

CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS OF THE SPIRITUAL KIND

Could one meeting really have spiritual significance? Let us remember the following encounters, involving a meeting with an international visitor:

Philip met a court official from Ethiopia: The result? History records that, this official returned to his native country and witnessed to Queen Candace, who was responsible for proclaiming the gospel throughout Africa.

Peter met Cornelius (Acts 10): Peter witnessed to Cornelius, a Roman soldier stationed at Caesarea. Throughout Paul's travels he met



Picking up Two international students from New Jersey's Penn Station and driving them to SUNNY of Cantonv NY, where they are both students.



Introducing Loic Kamwa, a newly arrived student, to Baskin Robbins Ice Cream!

believers who undoubtedly had come to faith through the ministry of those internationals who were reached while they were temporarily residing in Palestine.

Boaz met Ruth, a foreigner from Moab: The result? The family was created that would produce Jesus of Nazareth.

Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11): The first Christian missionary activity coincided with the birth of the

Church at the day of Pentecost. As Peter made the first presentation of the good news, thousands of foreign visitors were in attendance - representatives from 15 countries heard this proclamation of the good news. Many of these visitors believed and returned home to proclaim this good news to their countrymen.

BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR MINISTRY TO INTERNATIONALS

"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself" (Lev. 19:33-34)

"And if an alien sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he wishes to make an offering...to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do." (Num. 15:14).

"For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Deut 10:17-19).

"Assemble the people, the men and women and children and the alien who is in your town, in order that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God..." (Deut 31:12).

"Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12).

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household." (Eph. 2:19).

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Heb 13:2).

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:9).

REACHING AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA

It was Saturday night when Kofi arrived in America. After a night in his new dorm, he decided to go to a Sunday church service. He found a church, went in, and sat in a pew. After sitting down, he was confused when people got up and moved away across the aisle. There he sat alone as the service started.



With Alex Ngonga of Germantown, MD. Bringing comfort during his mother's funeral in Douala, Cameroon in April 2016.



Recent encouragement visit with Mama Mary Nasibi in the DC metro, a long time supporter and prayer partner. She had just lost her son.

Almost every African in the USA has met some kind of prejudice, perceived or real. One student recounts: *"For the first time in his life an African finds out that the church in this country is divided according to race."*

Africans are sometimes not easily accepted by some African Americans, and, they often don't fit in the Anglo culture, either! Their form of worship, culture,

and way of speaking English are different. The question then is, where does the African fit in the American culture?

African nationals in America tend to identify with their fellow countrymen and choose to spend time away from class or work in that relationship network. They will form an association, elect officers, spend national holidays together, go to dancing parties in their countrymen's homes, and relate socially almost exclusively with each other, rather than trying to penetrate the "foreign" culture of their host country where they feel uncertain. However, when Africans are approached with genuine kindness and care, they are generally responsive and can become the most loyal of friends.

In light of these cultural distinctions, how can North American Christians reach out to them? Here are a few pointers:

Ask the Lord for a love for them and an acceptance of their cultural makeup:

- Remember that when you begin a relationship with them, in their minds friendship is for life.
- In light of this mentality, it is good to limit your number of relationships.

- As you befriend an African, they will introduce you to their relationship network.
- Learn your friend's values and assumptions in the context of their relationships and in your casual times together.
- They may feel "grilled" if you ask too many questions all at once. Be sure you are sharing as much about yourself as you are asking them to share.

Africans are spiritual:

- People who deny the existence of God are oddities in Africa. This has contributed to the dramatic growth of the church in Africa. However, there has often been little follow-up and personal discipleship of new believers, and attendance at mainline denominations has become part of many Africans' heritage, rather than an expression of personal faith.
- Often Africans are unprepared to deal with cults and are especially vulnerable to cult members who show an interest in helping them and who appear to genuinely accept them. This represents a challenge for the church in America.
- Educate others and help them develop an interest for ministry to Africans!

Africa is a continent in crisis:

- Politically, socially and economically, Africa is in distress. Economists project that the economic situation will continue to deteriorate over the foreseeable future. Not surprisingly, many Africans are leaving.
- Most Western nations now have significant populations of economic and political refugees from Africa.
- Many of the Africans you meet and minister to will have no intention of returning to Africa.
- Some who seek to return will be discouraged by their families from doing so.
- Many Africans Christians have left Africa because of the economic conditions, or because survival would involve compromising their Christian principles in a corrupt economic system.
- Most of the Africans you meet will have the added financial burden of supporting family members and friends back in their home country. Responding to the challenges they face requires compassion, wisdom, and understanding.
- The recognition that many will not return to their home countries invalidates the traditional "plug" for ministering to internationals as a means of ministering to their nations or people groups when they return home, but must also be seen as a means of influencing the large and relatively closed communities of Africans that are forming in major cities worldwide.

Watchwords: love, listen, learn, share.

International Spotlight: Richard Ferim, PhD



Richard on the far left, Ernest on the far right. Visiting other internationals at Grambling State University in the early 2000s with Richard.

Sometime in 1999 I was handed a letter from a strange name and person I had never met. The letter began by "you may not know me, but I know you very well and I have followed your ministry and work in Cameroon." This person went on to tell me he was from Cameroon and had recently moved to the USA.

I drove to Arlington, TX to meet this young man and took him for a meal at a nearby Luby's Restaurant. He was very surprised that I would personally pay him a visit. Thus began a relationship that has evolved to become "colleagues" in the Lord's work.

Like most Christians arriving the USA, Richard Ferim came with a passion and a belief God would use him to bring revival to this nation. Richard's main focus was his devotion to God and a commitment to share his faith. He was trusting God for a major door for bigger ministry. For a few years, that "door" seemed illusive. I noticed Richard was extremely good in Mathematics. He had completed a degree in Mathematics and minored in Computer Science at the University of Buea before

moving to the USA. I encouraged Richard to pursue graduate work in Math and encouraged him to look at substitute teaching, too. He enrolled at the University of Texas in Arlington where he completed a Masters in Math with an emphasis in Numerical Analysis. Richard continued with a PhD in Statistics at UT. Upon graduating, he had so many job offers. He went to work for Bank of America and recently joined AT & T.

In 2013, God gave Richard back his dream for ministry and he started a church in Arlington. This church reaches Internationals from Cameroon but has seven other nations represented. Richard is an example of what God can do when we surrender our ambitions to him.

Richard is married to his childhood friend and they are blessed with three children. He enjoys traveling, reading and tennis.

Shipping: A Social & Kingdom Business

They say, "Necessity is the mother of invention", nowhere is this as true as at BFL, where the constant needs and "limited" resources have led us to become innovative and creative every step of the way. In more than two decades of ministry, I have been involved in several "tent-making" efforts to meet personal and ministry needs.

A few years ago, in anticipating donations of ministry items and realizing we didn't have the resources to ship, I turned to prayer. The average cost of shipping a cubic foot was \$40 and above. Shipping a 20-foot container would have meant paying a freight forwarder over \$50,000. We had tried a few times to ship a few donated items and realized it wasn't good stewardship.

Then came the idea to find a cost saving way to send stuff: why not rent a container (average cost to rent a 40-foot container is \$6,500) load it with donated ministry and personal stuff and have others join in sharing the cost. We did the first, the second, the third, fourth...until it has become a yearly event and a major ministry opportunity to Cameroonians in America and in Cameroon. We now ship twice a year and provide the service to Cameroonians in the diaspora and to the missionary community at a fraction of what it will cost them elsewhere, and BFL stuff gets to go for a fraction of what it would usually cost!

Clearing related charges in Cameroon are usually a little over \$4,000 for each container, plus custom duties. We were able to generate

enough to ship two 40 foot containers of donated items out of Dallas and Atlanta last month but are trusting God to touch hearts to give towards the clearing related charges as well as duties. Would you join us in praying for this need?



Part of our Dallas shipping team. It's been possible because of them!



Tons of items were donated or bought and shipped. Some books are displayed here.



Always there for me: My mentor, Rev. Owen drove a truck and a trailer loaded with ministry and school resources from SC to Atlanta!

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