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 Ehabe
**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 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).
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.

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.
S
ome

time
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,	oo.
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
got
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.

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
draw
time
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
Cameroonian
in
America
and
in
Cameroon.
We
now
ship
twice
a
year
and
provide
the
service
to
Cameroonian
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?

Tax
deductible
gifts
for
Bread
For
Life
may
be
sent
to:

Commission
to
Every
Nation:
PO
Box
291307,
Kerrville,
TX
78029
•
(830)
896-8326
Online:
cfen.org/breadforlife
or
breadforlife.org/donate
cdacamer.org
•
ernestepb@gmail.com
Please
do
not
reduce
your
level
of
giving
to
your
local
church
in
order
to
support
this
ministry

International Spotlight: Richard Ferim, PhD

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

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
load-
ed
with
ministry
and
school
resources
from
SC
to
Atlanta!