

How to Evangelize International Students (2)

By Victor Beshir

5- Expose the Person to Christian Habits

When time comes to eat, tell the student that we say a grace before eating to thank God for the food and to ask for His help to offer food for the needy. **Politely ask him/her if he/she does not mind if we say a grace before eating.** If you feel the person is uncomfortable, then you may say, "You do not have to do this, just give us a few silent moments to pray ourselves." If you have the habit of reading the Bible together at home, then you may **ask the person if he/she likes to sit with you while you have your daily Bible reading.** **Pray before you start driving** your car and let the person know why do you do this and how our beloved God can hear us in any place.

After friendship is established, never be afraid to invite the person to share something with you. For example, you may invite him/her to go to church with you. In such case, you may say something like this, **"We're going to go to church then we will spend the rest of the day in a park, would you like to spend the day with us?"** You will just sit with us in the church and you do not have to do anything except you stand when we stand and you sit when we sit. We will be glad to have you come with us."

6- Talk about Your beloved kind God

The god in other religions is a master and people are slaves who live in fear of him and his punishment. Hindus, on the other hands, have hundreds of gods and goddess who control everything in people's life. People have to satisfy them by giving and visiting certain places. So, people in other religions never experienced the loving and caring God. **It touches them to see a kind God.** If a woman commits adultery in some religions she should be killed, but Christ says, "Go in peace. I will not judge you." A woman was fleeing from her family and saw a Christian preacher, so she started attacking Christianity. The preacher told her of the story of the adulterous woman and how Christ let her go in peace. Then he told the woman that this is Christ of Christianity, asking her to compare this to her religion which kills woman in similar situations. He asked her, **"Which one should you follow—the one who kills or the one who gives life and forgiveness?"** The woman cried bitterly and said, "I am that woman. My family is searching for me to kill me."

Once I was working with an Indian lady who hangs the "Foot Print" story in her office. I asked her, "Do you know that this story is a Christian and about Christ?" Her answer was "Yes." Then she told me that the story touches her heart. Later

on, I used to stop at her office every few days to **briefly tell her a touching story from the gospel.**

There is no God such as our dear beloved Christ. Put aside the propaganda that tries to say that all religions are equal and that all are from heaven. **In reality, nothing comes even closer to Christ. His sweetness, His kind eternal love, His everlasting forgiveness, His humbleness, and His suffering in behalf of us** are just a few examples of the great God we have in Christianity. As mentioned earlier, **other religions have angry gods, envious gods, and gods who ask you to sacrifice yourself and offer your sons and daughters as sacrifices for him.** In Christianity Christ says, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more **abundantly**" ([John 10:9-11](#)). In summary, **God in Christianity sent His Son to die for us to give us life while in other religions god asks for your children to die for him and to give them death!**

When it comes to this life, **there is no prophet, god, or goddess who promised to be with his/her people** to help them **and to give them peace and joy as Christ promised**, but rather these gods and goddess add to the misery of people's life.

Christ of salvation is another unmatched topic in the other religions. Hinduism, for example, a person has to reach the Nirvana. To do that, a person has to go through many cycles of re-incarnations in which the person could come back as an animal in a degrading level. Even with all these, the person is never certain of salvation and forgiveness of sins, which is translated into a life full of unrest. In other religions, you toil all your life but with no guarantee of salvation and forgiveness of sins or eternal life.

Now, you can see clearly how **talking from time to time about our beloved God would carry a real revolution of thoughts inside people of other religions. Christ would appeal to the needs of their inner heart.** Human beings are looking for peace and joy, forgiveness of sins, and a loving kind God. Only Christ can give these. St. John put it simply, "In Him was life, and life was the light of men ... that was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world ... He gives them the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name ...**And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace** ... the grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1: 1-17).

Now you see clearly that **evangelizing others is not as hard as you may think. Simply, evangelism is to talk about the God who you love and experienced in your life**, as St. John says, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands handled ... we declare to you." (1 John 1: 1-3). Also, in a spiritual way, we have touched the Lord, have seen Him,

and have heard Him speaking to the inner rooms of our hearts with an unspoken but powerful language. Like a person who loves his friend and likes to talk to others about his great friend, **we as Christians after having been touched by His love, His kindness, His forgiveness, and His fatherhood, we cannot help but talk about our beloved bridegroom.** Of course, all things we have experienced with God are unlimited—I just mentioned a few here.

So, what to do? Just from time to time, use the events or **make it a habit to talk about your beloved God in an attractive and touching way.** A wonderful resource for that talk is the gospel. Read the gospels again and next to each miracle Jesus did write a reason; for example, because of His kindness, He raised the son of the widow of Nain or because He cares about His disciples, He stopped the storm. Then read about how He dealt with people, such as the Samaritan woman and other sinners. **The more you read the gospel, the more you will discover the characteristics of our Lord which will amaze you.**

This way, you do not just tell stories, but you tell powerful touching stories about our Savior. **People like to listen to stories,** especially if they were told with love. These stories are aimed at showing the characteristic of our Lord. **Do not just tell the story, but give the motive behind it, which is still relevant until today,** because Christ is yesterday, today, and forever, and human spiritual needs still the same.

At this stage, you may **give the international student a gospel to read,** not a whole Bible. If you do not have single gospels, give the student the New Testament and suggest to him/her which gospel to start with.

7- Start the Dialogue

One of the best ways of evangelism, especially with educated people, is to start a dialogue. Here are some guidelines for an effective dialogue:

a- A good way to start any dialogue is to ask the person: **"What do you think of** (something or subject or behavior)? If you pick up an interesting topic, then the person starts to give you his/her opinion.

b- You need to **listen attentively.** Sometimes only listening will attract the person. Some people in other cultures do not find someone to listen to their ideas and thoughts for one reason or another; therefore, **listening to them is a major step in opening their hearts** for deeper talks and makes them enjoy your conversations with them.

c- Based on the person you have, you need to offer your answer using science, philosophy, logic, sociology, psychology, history, or whatever approach you feel it would attract the person. If you do not have a background to speak using the

same approach of this person, then offer your conversation using another approach. You may say something like, "I think sociology offers a good answer, let me explain." Then go on to explain using a language and a method comfortable to the person.

d- Do not interrupt and do not try to impose your opinion.

e- **Respect his/her opinion** no matter how immature the opinion is.

f- **Do not let him/her feel down by speaking from a high level then they are.** Even when you explain things, try to be as close to the person as you can and let the person share in the conversation to reach the conclusion together.

g- Be humble and always give honor and encouragement to the person. Praise his/her opinion in a way to open their heart to you. Do not praise wrong opinions or thoughts; just look for something that deserves praising. I may praise the language, the logical thinking, or the approach, or the starting point, or the enthusiasm of the person, or the feelings. **You can praise so many things without having to praise a wrong opinion.** Our Lord showed us a good example when he praised the Samaritan woman who was a sinner. When Jesus asked her to go and call her husband and she answered saying, "I have no husband," Jesus praised the woman saying, "You have well said, 'I have no husband.'" (John 4:16, 17). Jesus found something to praise the woman, although her life was a shameful one.

h- After this introduction, you are ready to introduce what the Bible says about the topic of discussion. **Do not be shy to say, "The Bible, the book of Christians, says about this topic," and start talking.** Make sure not to mention what the Bible says only, but also **show that why this opinion is superior** using social, psychological, and practical evidences.

8- Introduce Christianity

Depending on the person, use the right approach to introduce him/her to Christianity. For example, the person who is anxious to know more about USA, I usually say, "To understand people and the culture of USA, you need to read this book," and I **give the person a copy of one gospel or the New Testament.** For a person who loves history, I say, "This book is an important book that shaped the history of many nations including this country," and I give him a gospel. For a person who is touched by good manners, I introduce a gospel by saying, "You will love this book; it has many touching stories." If a person admires your ethics, then you may introduce the gospel by saying, "This is my secret book that shaped all my behaviors."

After you introduce the Bible (or part of it first, which I recommend), then **you need to follow up with him/her**. But, do not sound like a teacher asking a student for homework. Do not be pushy. Let the person take his/her time. You may say "This book is interesting, isn't it?" and let the person start talking. You can also tell them that you were reading from this book and found something and then start sharing what you think would touch that person. Say it in a way to open his/her eyes to see things that need deep thoughts.

9- Time for Direct Talk About Christian Faith

After this friendship, dialogue, talking about your beloved God, and introduction to Christianity, it is time to have direct talk about the Christian faith. In a loving caring tone, you need to share the story of creation, Adam's fall, the incarnation of the Son, the salvation on the cross, the resurrection, the inheritance of eternal life, the new life in Jesus Christ, and the rest. You may use the same approach used by St. Cyril of Jerusalem on his great classic, "*Catechetical Lectures*", (See: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3101.htm>)

Although you and the international students have been friends and had many dialogues, you still need to **learn how to walk as the person walks and to stop when the person stops**. What I mean by that is not the physical walking but the speed of acceptance of your talk. Talk up to what the person can take at the time, and be sensitive to the person's body language. Gospel is joyful news, so never say it when a person is not fully listening. People have different timings; some people need more time than others. You met a person who is not ready yet; however, your words may work after years down the road.

10- Acceptance of Christianity

Whenever you feel that the heart of the person has started to be touched by the gospel, it is time for asking about accepting Christianity. Before asking, you need to make sure that the person has already heard, seen, and had a good feeling about Christianity. This question needs to come as the last question in a series of questions. I do not introduce these questions to be all asked at one time. In fact, it is good to have them span over a period of time to allow the person the time needed to be touched by the spirit of God. While you may want to follow this sequence of questions, in way I am suggesting that you should follow these question exactly. At the end your questions will largely depend on the person you are dealing with:

"What do you think of Christianity?"

"Does it offer what the heart needs?"

"Does it offer the spirituality the person need?"

"What do you think of Jesus Christ?"

"Do you think He is God?"

"Is He the loving, forgiven, caring God that people looking for?"

Help the person reach the deepest answers for the above questions. Then continue by asking about:

"Is salvation important?"

"How can a person be saved?"

Then, with the person, read the first chapters of the book of Acts. After that you may ask:

"Have you thought about yourself and your salvation?"

If all the answers are positive, then you may come to say,

"As you have seen, to enjoy salvation, you need to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

If the answer is 'yes,' then you talk about baptism.

Summary

The main core about evangelizing international students is to serve them, make yourself available for them, love them, and then introduce them to Christianity. How long might this take? It varies. You need to **continue to pray for the student.** People are different; there are easy people who really were waiting to hear the good news and they will accept it in no time. Then they are ready to get baptized. Others may take years to accept, while some you will not get to see them accepting the faith, but later on in their life they may accept the faith.

I would like to conclude with a story about a friend of mine, who was a Hindu when she came to USA. Her Christian friend stays for about two years just telling her something very short about Christ every other week. She told me that after two years, I could not bear to feel forbidden from the light of Christianity, so she asked her friend for a Bible. When she got the Bible, she said that she stayed almost sleepless for a whole week reading in the Bible and crying. By the time she finished reading the whole Bible she was ready for baptism. I met her when she was already a Christian person, enjoying inner-peace and Christian spirituality.

In conclusion, you are a sower who sows the seeds of the word of God (Matt 13:3-9). Some of the seeds will fall in the wayside; some will rest in stony places or in thorny places, but eventually some will fall in a good ground that yields a crop. This is what you will experience. However, **our work is to continue to sow.** Even the good ground might not produce a crop immediately; it might need more time. You sow, and then God sends someone else to water, and then others too. Then after years the person accepts the faith. So, **an important lesson in evangelism is not to look for results.** You do your best and God will take care of the rest.

