

Expanding the Biblical Worldview of Christians in Myanmar

Don Closson, who has taught Christian worldview on several continents, recently returned from Myanmar, which has in recent years been oppressed heavily by an atheistic regime. Representing his church Christ Fellowship in McKinney (TX), he shared with pastors and students a biblical perspective on world missions and how the Church there is both historically blessed and currently in a good position to reach their own nation (formerly known as Burma) with the gospel.

Details of a trip can begin to fade even as the effects of jet lag seem to grow stronger. Fortunately, I do remember many wonderful aspects of my whirlwind eleven-day trip with friend and pastor Ken Stoneking to Myanmar (the U.S. still insists on calling it Burma), one of the poorest and most oppressed countries in Asia.

Praise God for a Fruitful Trip

This was my most successful cross-cultural teaching experience to date. I say that for several reasons. First, the topic was timely and relevant to my audience of pastors and students at the Mandalay Bible Seminary. I spoke on God's Kingdom as it relates to world missions by breaking the topic down into four parts: the theological, historical, cultural and strategic perspectives. After I finished teaching the 20 hour class over five days, my host told me that he had been struggling with this very topic, particularly how to motivate the church leaders in Myanmar to play a greater role in missions. He expressed that many churches in Myanmar have an inward perspective and needed help seeing that believers have an obligation to be a blessing to those around us. He told me

that my talks gave him a number of ideas to develop further after our visit.

Myanmar's Uniqueness

My preparation for this class increased both my own understanding and appreciation for the task of world missions. As I put the lessons together, I got more and more excited about my opportunity to share with the pastors and students. I realized that they live in a strategic place to reach a part of the world limited to Americans. Myanmar is in the global *10/40 window* that defines the least evangelized segment of the globe. In fact, its capital city Yangon is listed as one of the 100 gateway cities to this 10/40 region, the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitudes, according to The Joshua Project. The population of the world is growing more Asian every year and Myanmar is centrally located to impact China, Thailand, and India!

Connecting the Dots...

A serendipity was “connecting the dots” as I researched the relationship between the Church in Myanmar and the early Reformation—going all the way back to John Wycliffe in the 1300s. Wycliffe challenged the authority of the Pope and the refusal of the Church to put the Bible in of the language of the common people. His followers were known as Lollards, and they preached anti-clerical and biblically-centered reforms.

Jon Huss read the teachings of Wycliffe in the 15th century and attempted to reform the church in Bohemia and the adjacent area called Moravia. Gaining a wide following, the Hussites influenced the region around Prague, Czech Republic, including a group which became known as the Moravian church. Huss was eventually burned at the stake in the center of Old Town Square in Prague for challenging the official doctrines of the Catholic Church. However, the Moravian Brethren continued on and became a powerful force for evangelism in the 18th and

19th centuries.

Evangelist and church leader Count Zinzendorf was at the center of this movement during the late 1700s. He traveled to America and England meeting with Jonathan Edwards and other leaders of the Great Awakening that brought revival to both England and the Colonies in the 1730s and 40s.

In 1806 a group of college students at Williams College prayed that God would again bring revival to the country, sparking a movement among college students known as the Haystack Prayer Revival. These five students would help influence a young man named Adoniram Judson to commit his life to missions. Judson set sail for India with his wife in 1812, but the East India Company would not allow them to enter because they feared that missionaries would stir up the Hindus. Taking the first boat East, Judson arrived in Rangoon (now Yangon) in 1813. After six years he had his first convert and when he died at age 62, after spending 38 years in Myanmar, it was estimated that there were over 200,000 Christians in the country. Judson was the first to translate the Bible into the Burmese language, a translation that was so good that it is still used today and preferred over recent translations because it is more theologically conservative.

More Dots

The day after I left, an earthquake hit Myanmar. Thankfully, God spared the Mandalay Bible Seminary. Then our president visited for the first time in recognition of the political changes occurring there. Please pray for the Christians in this strategic country. They are standing boldly and are ready to be used of the Lord for the Great Commission.

The Clash of Civilizations

Introduction

In the summer of 1993, Samuel Huntington published an article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. The article generated more controversy than any other article in the journal since the 1940s. And Huntington says it stirred up more debate than anything else he wrote during that time.

Three years later Samuel Huntington published a book using a similar title. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* came on the market in 1996 and became a bestseller, once again stirring controversy. Given the events of the last year, it seems worthy to revisit his comments and predictions, since in many ways he seems as accurate as an Old Testament prophet.

His thesis is fairly simple. In the future, world history will be marked by conflicts between three principal groups: western universalism, Muslim militancy, and Chinese assertion.

Huntington says that in the post-Cold War world, "global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational."[\[1\]](#) During most of human history, major civilizations were separated from one another and contact was intermittent or nonexistent. That pattern changed in the modern era (around 1500 A.D.). For over 400 years, the nation states of the West (Britain, France, Spain, Austria, Prussia, Germany, and the United States) constituted a multipolar international system that interacted, competed, and fought wars with each other. During that same period of time, these nations also expanded, conquered, and colonized nearly every other civilization.

During the Cold War, global politics became bipolar, and the world was divided into three parts. Western democracies led by

the United States engaged in ideological, political, economic, and even military competition with communist countries led by the Soviet Union. Much of this conflict occurred in the Third World outside these two camps and was composed mostly of nonaligned nations.

Huntington argues that in the post-Cold War world, the principal actors are still the nation states, but they are influenced by more than just power and wealth. Other factors like cultural preferences, commonalities, and differences are also influential. The most important groupings are not the three blocs of the Cold War, but rather the major world civilizations.

To put it simply, the line has moved. For 45 years, the Iron Curtain was the central dividing line in Europe. "That line has moved several hundred miles east. It is now the line separating the peoples of western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslims and Orthodox peoples on the other."[\[2\]](#)

So in this article we are going to describe and analyze Samuel Huntington's worldview of global politics in order to understand better the profound changes taking place in the 21st century.

Worldviews of Global Politics

In essence, Huntington is proposing a new worldview in the area of foreign policy. He argues that "worldviews and causal theories are indispensable guides to international politics."[\[3\]](#)

Huntington says that the post-Cold war world is a different world with a different set of issues and conflicts. "In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between people belonging to different cultural entities."[\[4\]](#) World history,

he believes, will be marked by conflicts between three principal groups already mentioned: western universalism, Muslim militancy, and Chinese assertion.

Huntington's worldview stands in contrast to four other prominent perspectives that have been proposed to understand global politics. The view of Francis Fukuyama sees world events culminating in what he calls "the end of history." He believes that we may be witnessing the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the acceptance of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. Although first proposed at the end of the Cold War when a harmonious globalism seemed likely, there is little evidence that the war of ideas and ideologies is coming to an end as the events of the last year clearly demonstrate.

A second view is one of *us versus them*. "People are always tempted to divide people into us and them, the in-group and the other, our civilization and those barbarians. Scholars have analyzed the world in terms of the Orient and the Occident, North and South, center and periphery. Muslims have traditionally divided the world into *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar a-Harb*, the abode of peace and the abode of war." [\[5\]](#)

A third perspective could be called "184 states, more or less." According to this view, nation states are the primary (even the sole) actors on the world stage. Each state seeks power and wealth in the midst of anarchy. And while this is a somewhat accurate view of the world, it does not provide any model for understanding global politics.

A fourth and final view is one of chaos. This perspective is illustrated by the book titles "Out of Control" by Zbigniew Brzezinski and "Pandaemonium" by Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Recent history is replete with examples of the breakup of states, the loss of governmental authority, and numerous regional conflicts. But, as a model, this view provides little predictive value and also does not completely match reality.

The world stage may be full of chaos but its not totally without order and direction.

Samuel Huntington's worldview, I believe, provides a better perspective on the world of the 21st century.

Major Contemporary Civilizations

Let's dedicate our attention to what separates these civilizations. The first is the Chinese civilization which dates back to at least 1500 B.C. He describes this as a Sinic civilization in order to describe not only China and Chinese civilization, but also the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and related cultures of Vietnam and Korea.

The second is Japanese to separate it from the Chinese culture. Most scholars recognize it as a separate entity that was an offspring of China, emerging between 100 and 400 A.D.

The third civilization is Hindu, which has existed on the Subcontinent since at least 1500 B.C. This is also referred to as Indian, Indic, or Hindu. One scholar says that Hindu is "more than a religion or a social system; it is the core of Indian civilization."[\[6\]](#)

The fourth is a distinct Islamic civilization which originated in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century A.D. Islam rapidly spread across North Africa and the Iberian peninsula and also eastward into central Asia, the Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia.

A fifth civilization is a separate Orthodox civilization, centered in Russia and separate from western Christendom as a result of its Byzantine parentage. It also has limited exposure to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and other central western experiences.

Western civilization would be a sixth entity dated as emerging about 700-800 A.D. Scholars generally view it as having three

major components (Europe, North America, and Latin America).

A seventh civilization would be Latin America, which has a distinct identity even though it emanates from the West. It has had a corporatist, authoritarian culture and has been primarily Catholic.

Two other civilizations could be added to this list. These would be an African civilization in the south of the continent. The north and east coasts belong to Islamic civilization, but some scholars recognize a distinct African culture on the rest of the continent.

Also, a Buddhist culture could be defined. Although it did not survive in the country of its birth, it has been exported to other countries and regions in the East.

Samuel Huntington argues that in this post-Cold War world, people will identify themselves in terms of their ancestry and heritage. Ultimately they define themselves according to their civilization.

Culture and Civilizations

Samuel Huntington argues that in this new era as people identify themselves in terms of their ancestry and heritage, it will create a clash of civilizations. He says, "In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. Peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face, who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and at the broadest level, civilizations." [\[7\]](#)

This is not surprising. We all tend to identify ourselves according to our culture, which includes our political, cultural, and religious heritage. In previous centuries, the major world civilizations were separated from each other. Contact was either non-existent or intermittent. Our global society has put us in contact with each other in ways never before experienced in our history. Cultural differences, therefore, should have a profound effect on how we interact.

Samuel Huntington says, "In the post-Cold War world, culture is both a divisive and unifying force. People separated by ideology but united by culture come together, as the two Germanys did and as the two Koreas and the several Chinas are beginning to. Societies united by ideology or historical circumstance but divided by civilization either come apart, as did the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Bosnia, or are subjected to intense strain, as is the case with Ukraine, Nigeria, Sudan, India, Sri Lanka, and many others."[\[8\]](#)

We should note that cultures and civilizations are not static but do change and evolve. And nations rise and fall. Most go through somewhat predictable stages and respond to challenges and opportunities.

Nation states will still remain important actors in global politics, but their interests and conflicts will become increasingly shaped by cultural forces and interactions between the major contemporary civilizations.

Samuel Huntington provides a compelling worldview for understanding the future of global politics as well as understanding the philosophical and spiritual interaction and conflict between Christianity and Islam. I believe that Christians need to begin to understand the implications of this major shift in countries and civilizations as we move into the 21st century.

Implications for Christians

The implications of this perspective on missions is profound. In the past, countries that were closed to the gospel tended to be communist countries. Even so, there was still a significant amount of Christian growth in countries behind the Iron Curtain and Bamboo Curtain. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of these countries are more open to the gospel than ever before. Meanwhile, persecution of Christians remains in China.

But a new phenomenon has emerged. Muslim countries are now the most resistant to the message of Christianity. Mission work is limited or even non-existent in many of these Muslim countries. This, I believe, represents the greatest challenge for missions in the 21st century: reaching the Muslim world for Christ. Already there are a billion Muslims in the world, making Islam the second largest religion in the world and one of the fastest growing.

A second implication is related to the first. Samuel Huntington predicts a growing conflict between western universalism and Muslim militancy. In other words, the conflict is between liberal western democracies and their cultures and Muslim countries.

This presents a major challenge for Christians trying to reach Muslims. When they see the West with its immorality and decadence, they reject it and Christianity. After all, they reason, these are Christian countries and this is what they produce.

As Christians, I believe it is crucial that we make a distinction between Christianity and western society. The political conflict may be between western democracies and Muslim militancy, but the spiritual battle is between Christianity and Islam. The two are not the same.

I have found it helpful to agree with Muslims about many of these criticisms of western culture. It is disarming, and also provides an opportunity to explain that many western countries (especially in Europe) are anything but Christian countries. Instead, I choose to focus the discussion on the Bible and Jesus Christ as a contrast to the Koran and Muhammed.

Whether we are missionaries overseas or missionaries in our backyard, we need to begin to understand the nature of Islam and bring the message of the gospel to the Muslims we meet. I believe Samuel Huntington is correct in his analysis, and we should begin to understand the changing world around us so that we can be more effective for Christ. I hope that this article and the other materials on the Probe Web Site will be helpful to you in that regard.

Notes

1. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 21.
2. Ibid., 28
3. Ibid., 30
4. Ibid., 28
5. Ibid., 32
6. Fernand Braudel, *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 226.
7. Huntington, 21.
8. Ibid., 28.

Reaching The World That Has Come to Us

World Missions in Perspective

What images or conceptions enter your mind when you hear the phrase *world missions*? Do you think of khaki clad missionaries fighting their way through impenetrable forests? Do you think of sparsely attended meetings featuring pictures of a world totally unrelated to your day-to-day life? Or does the phrase *world missions* evoke a sense of excitement and opportunity?

Though the phrase *world missions* never appears in Scripture, the concept of penetrating every culture in the world with the message of God's gracious provision through Christ, captures one of the most important themes of the Bible! From Genesis to Revelation, world missions is at the heart of God's purpose on earth.

Immediately following the record of God's judgment at Babel, which resulted in the division of the human race into diverse nations and cultures, we read of God's selection of Abram and his descendants as His special people. God promised to make of Abram's seed "a great nation" and to "make great their name" (Gen. 12:1-2). But He made it clear that beyond His intention to bless the children of Abram, God had a multicultural purpose in view: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). It was God's design that through Israel He might reach a world that had spurned His love.

One of the most familiar passages of Scripture is found at the end of Matthew's Gospel; we call it the Great Commission. Among the final words of Jesus were his instructions to "make

disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18-20). And for the past two thousand years the church has been on a mission to penetrate every culture with the message of God's grace. In this way we've filled the role of Abram's seed in bringing God's blessing to "all the families of the earth" by going into all the world with the gospel.

But what of the two millennia that have transpired between God's declaration to Abram of His multicultural purpose, and Jesus' pronouncement of the Great Commission? How did God fulfill His purpose to bless all nations before the church existed? He did it through His people, Israel. A hint is given, I believe, in a divine statement recorded by the prophet Ezekiel: "This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her" (Ezek. 5:5). A glance at a world map will reveal that God placed Israel at the crossroads of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. He could not have chosen a more strategic location through which to influence the entire world! As diplomats, merchants, and armies traversed the world, they inevitably passed through that tiny strip of land which God had deeded to Abram's seed!

When King Solomon offered his prayer of dedication for the temple in Jerusalem, he included these words: "Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Thy people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Thy name's sake (for they will hear of Thy great name and Thy mighty hand, and of Thine outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear Thou in heaven..., and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to Thee, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee..." (1 Kings 8:41-43).

For two thousand years at least, God's method for fulfilling His multicultural purpose, rather than sending His people to the nations of the world, was to bring the world to His people. The Great Commission, issued after two thousand years, reflected an adjustment in God's method. But as we shall see, it did not mark an end to His practice of bringing the world

to His people, wherever they might be.

World Missions In Reverse

In the fifth chapter of Revelation we read of the vision of the throne of God granted to the apostle John, and of the heavenly worship of Christ. In the course of the vision, the apostle hears sung these words: "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). This heavenly anthem makes note of the fulfillment of a purpose which God declared nearly four thousand years ago, to extend his grace to every nation on earth.

This purpose has been fulfilled during the past two thousand years primarily through the response of faithful Christians to Jesus' Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. But as we discussed above, the Great Commission, rather than signaling the beginning of the fulfillment of God's multicultural purpose, simply reflected an adjustment in God's method of carrying it out. For centuries, God had been reaching out to a spiritually needy world not primarily by sending His people to the world, but by bringing the world to His people. He did it by placing His people Israel at the crossroads of three continents, with the intent of using their influence to draw the nations of the world to Himself.

To prepare them for this special assignment, God gave His people Israel some very specific instructions with regard to how they should conduct themselves toward these "alien visitors." First, He said, "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 33-34a). International visitors were to receive a warm and loving welcome in Israel. This alone would make Israel unique among

the nations of the world!

But second, they were to give the alien an opportunity to know God, through exposure to the Scriptures. In giving instructions concerning the reading of Scripture at the Feast of Tabernacles, the Lord said, "Assemble the people, the men and the 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. 31:11-12).

What is of interest to us, however, is that even with the giving of the Great Commission to go into all the world with the gospel, God continued to bring the world to his people, wherever they might be.

This was evident, for instance, even on the day of Pentecost itself. As the Holy Spirit was giving birth to the church, it's recorded in the book of Acts that "there were Jews living in Jerusalem...from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). At the church's inception, God had brought the world to His people.

A while later we read that a man had come to Jerusalem to worship, who "was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure" (Acts 8:27). As he was returning to Ethiopia, he was intercepted by Philip, whom God had directed across his path. As the church was growing, God continued to bring the world to His people.

A bit later we read of "a certain man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort" (Acts 10:1). Through a series of extraordinary circumstances, God led Peter to Cornelius' house to explain to him the gospel through which he came to know Christ.

Throughout the church's history, God has continued to fulfill His purpose to extend His grace to every nation, not only by sending His people to the world, but also by bringing the

world to His people. And the instructions He gave to Israel concerning their treatment of the international visitor are as valid for us today in our own situation as they were for them so many centuries ago!

The World at Our Doorstep

Most Christians have a sincere desire to be involved in the work of world missions, and faithfully pray for and contribute to those missions that God has laid on their hearts. Yet few of us realize that it's possible to be involved in the world's most exciting enterprise in an even more direct way, by befriending and ministering to the world of international students whom God has brought to us!

Every year approximately half a million students from virtually every nation on earth are enrolled in the colleges and universities of the U.S., more than in any other country! And I agree with Rev. Billy Graham when he said that the presence of these future world leaders constitutes one of the most strategic missions opportunities for the church today. Consider for a moment just a few facts about this group of international students.

First, more than half of these students generally come from countries that restrict or prohibit traditional Christian ministry within their borders. It's difficult to carry on the work of Christian ministry in countries like China, Malaysia, or Nepal. Yet each of these countries sends many students to the U.S. every year. In fact, approximately sixty percent of the international students in the U.S. come from what is known as the "10/40 Window." This is the group of countries located in the area between the 10th and 40th degree northern parallels, in which 90 percent of the world's "unreached peoples" reside! As one person has put it, "The door into these countries may be closed or barely open, but the door out is wide open!"

The second fact about these international students is that they compose the pool from which many of the world's future leaders will emerge. Mark Hanna, in a talk delivered at Park Street Church in Boston in 1975, said that one-third to one-half of the world's top positions in politics, business, education and the military would be filled in the following twenty-five years by foreign students then attending colleges and universities in the United States.[\[1\]](#) How much more could this be true today! Consider this list of just a few of the scores of international leaders who received their college education in the U.S.: Jose Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador studied at Notre Dame; Corazon Aquino studied at the College of Mount St. Vincent in New York; Ingvar Carlsson of Sweden studied at Northwestern; Andreas Papandreu of Greece studied at Harvard, as did King Birendra Bir Bikram Shad Dev of Nepal. As recently as 1987, some forty heads of state were educated in America.

Not only do many international students originate from countries that restrict Christian ministry, and not only are many of them destined to fill positions of leadership in their home countries, but while they are here they're generally more receptive to considering new ideas than they would be at home. And not only this, but these students are invariably in need of genuine friendship during their stay in the U.S.

Some time ago a study was done to determine the factors which contributed to the adjustment of international students to their stay in America. It was found that those who were best adjusted to their sojourn in the U.S. had two things in common. First, they had a close friend from their home country. And second, they had forged a close friendship with an American. Yet it was also found that no more than twenty percent of international students have such a friendship with an American, and fewer still have ever stepped foot inside an American home!

Students Among Us

In the 1950s a young man from Ethiopia came for military training to Aberdeen, Maryland. During the course of his stay, as the result of unfortunate experiences, he became embittered against America, and against the Christian faith. After his training here he returned to Ethiopia, and in 1974 participated as a key figure in the military coup which resulted in the establishment of a Marxist regime. Among his actions as head of state over the new government, were the launching of a campaign to root out "alien" religion in Ethiopia. In a speech to the nation, he named missionaries as the number one source of "imperialist infiltration" in Ethiopia. Many missionaries were expelled, and many national Christians were imprisoned. Churches were closed, and the formerly Christian radio station was converted into a voice for Marxist propaganda. The student's name was Mengistu Mariam.

About the time Mengistu was returning to Ethiopia, another student by the name of Tuisem Shishak arrived in Chicago from India, and later completed his Ph.D. in education at the State University of New York-Buffalo. While he was here Christian friends encouraged Tuisem in his faith, and encouraged him in his vision to return to India to establish a Christian college. In 1974 he did exactly that, founding Patkai Christian College, the first Christian liberal arts college in India. Since then, hundreds of graduates have entered India's society to fill positions of leadership in business, government, agriculture, the arts, and Christian ministry.

About the time Tuisem Shishak was returning to India, a Muslim student from Afghanistan arrived to study at an east coast university. In 1980 he received his Ph.D. in education. While he was here, as the result of being befriended by a Christian family, he came to faith in Christ. This student went on to translate Christian educational materials into his native

tongue of Dari, and to record gospel broadcasts transmitted into Afghanistan, Pakistan, and southern Russia.

A number of years ago, Hal Guffey (former president of International Students, Inc.) was speaking to a group of Christians about the opportunity to befriend international students. At the end of his talk a young lady from another country approached him. She told him that though her father had not become a Christian as a result of his student days in the U.S., nonetheless he had returned home with a favorable impression of Christians. Many years later he found himself in a position to decide whether Christian missionaries should be allowed to remain in his country. He decided they should be allowed to stay.

These are just a few of the thousands of similar stories that could be told about students who have come to America, and have returned to make a contribution in their home countries. While they were here, their attitudes toward the U.S. and toward American Christianity were indelibly shaped by their personal experiences. Some of them returned with an attitude that could be characterized as less than friendly. Others have returned with at least a positive impression of America and American Christians. And not a few have taken with them a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, as a result of their encounter with Christian friends.

Reaching Out

We've noted that at least half of these students come from countries that restrict or prohibit Christian ministry. We've also noted that at least 80 percent of these international students eventually return home, many of them to fill positions of leadership in their home countries—whether in business, education, government, or some other field. Some believe that as many as half of the world's future leaders are studying at American universities today.

We also recounted some of the stories of international students who have studied among us, and who returned home with attitudes that determined their future actions toward the work of Christ. Some returned to do much harm. Others returned, not only as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus, but as effective leaders in Christian ministry in their own country.

In the case of the latter, God invariably used an American Christian who was willing to invest a little of his time in befriending and encouraging an international student in his pursuit of a relationship with God. In surveying international students who have come to know Christ during their stay in the U.S., two elements were voiced over and over again. The first was that they had enjoyed more than a merely surface relationship with a Christian friend. Someone had taken the initiative to express real love and concern to them, and had demonstrated a life of Christian integrity. Not that they had attempted to project an image of perfection or an impeccable spiritual life. But in some way a life of genuine love and faith had made an impact they could not forget. Several years ago, in the wake of the bloody incident at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, American Christians acted to assist students from China in the U.S. who had extraordinary needs. I remember one student who said in my presence, "You Christians really care about us, don't you." Another student who was from India stated publicly that though he had not yet become a Christian, nonetheless Christians had expressed the most genuine concern to him and he counted them as his closest friends. He has since come to faith in Christ.

The other element God used in drawing these students to Himself was a careful exposure to the Scriptures. In many cases, we may be surprised to learn that our international friend has never even opened a Bible before we invite him or her to study it with us. I recall one Chinese student who stated to me at the outset of a personal study, "This is my first exposure to the Bible." Another student agreed to meet

over lunch once a week to study the Scriptures. He told me as we began our series of studies, "I'm open to God." Several months later, after completing an overview of the life of Christ, I asked him who he believed Jesus Christ to be. He said to me, "Jesus is the Son of God. And He is my Savior."

A number of years ago, a Muslim student from Jordan was studying at a major university in southern California. He was befriended by a Christian worker on his campus, who shared with him the message of the gospel. At first, this student said he was not interested. But over time, and as a result of this Christian's consistent love toward this student, he came to know Jesus Christ in a personal way. Later, this student decided to attend an evangelical seminary here in the U.S., and eventually returned to found the first evangelical seminary in Jordan. What made the difference in this student's life, and in the future of the church in Jordan? The faithful love and witness of one Christian in southern California.

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Notes

1. Lawson Lau, *The World at Your Doorstep* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 13.

Resources

Andrews, Dick and Stacey Bieler. *China at Your Doorstep*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987.

Lau, Lawson. *The World at Your Doorstep*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984.

To learn more about ministry to international students, we

highly recommend that you write to International Students, Inc., requesting information on how to launch such a ministry in your home church (or just on a personal basis), and for a list of their published materials. You can contact them at:

International Students, Inc.

P.O. Box C

Colorado Springs, CO 80901

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