

Pastors' Forum 2014

The Unreached at Our Doorstep, Summary



The annual Crossworld Pastors' Forum gathers church leaders for a discussion on issues facing missions today. See photos, watch videos and learn more at crossworld.org/churches. Would you like to be notified about the [2015 Pastors' Forums?](#)

The 2014 Forums in Philadelphia and Kansas City featured local practitioners serving "The Unreached at Our Doorstep." Here, they share why and how they serve, some challenges in the ministry, and what it might look like for you to make disciples among internationals.

Names of the practitioners, ministries and partners are kept confidential for security reasons.

Thousands of immigrants and refugees have come to our cities to start new lives. God is using hardship and even oppression to scatter people all over the world — He is bringing all the nations to our doorstep. Our heart is to love these people from other places and to invite the outsider to become an insider in the kingdom of heaven.

Our cities are more diverse than we think. Kansas City alone is home to:

- 8,000 Somalis
- 1,200 Liberians
- 1,000-1,200 Bhutanese
- 12,000-20,000 Vietnamese
- 2,000 Bosnians
- 3,000-4,000 Iraqis
- 1,200 Burmese
- 3,000-4,000 Sudanese
- 50,000+ Hispanics

More than 950,000 international students and scholars are studying in American universities. Sixty percent come from least-reached nations, and 25% come from countries where missionary activity is not allowed. India and China have 330 unreached people groups between them; these are the top two nations sending international students to the U.S.!

The students coming to study in the U.S. are the best and brightest in their countries. They will lead in government, industry, education, medicine and the military around the world. In fact, 40% of the world's heads of state today once studied in America. God has arranged for the countries that are the most unreached to send the largest number of their future influencers to us.

Sadly, four out of five international students will never enter an American home, and 80% will never enter a church. Most return to their home country without knowing an American, let alone experiencing the love of Christ or meeting even one follower of Jesus.

The dual call of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission — to love our neighbor as ourselves and to make disciples of all nations — compels us to move quickly past cultural preferences and economics to emphasize the immense love of God. The repeated biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and to care for widows, orphans and immigrants calls our attention to the needs newcomers face as they struggle to navigate a new language, a new culture and an entirely new way of life.

Ways the featured practitioners and their ministries serve the unreached

Meals in a home | We seek to build genuine friendships with those from other countries to listen with love and respect about their cultures and beliefs. As we listen and interact, we both show and speak the good news of the kingdom of God when appropriate. Much of our work takes place in our home over meals. Most international students have never been invited to an American home and are impacted by the love expressed when this is done.

Coffee | Most immigrants come from cultures where the men in particular socialize in cafés. We have created a social café and are praying that the Lord will draw in immigrants who are looking for a comfortable place to gather in the community.

Conversational English | We've organized weekly conversational English times, which have involved more than 50 international students from local universities. Native English-speaking volunteers from local churches work with these students.

Fun activities | We organize other activities for international students, such as cooking events, tours of the city, camping, and various field trips and fun activities. These activities give volunteers opportunities to develop deeper relationships with the students and to further connect with those who may be interested in learning more about Jesus.

Student housing | Currently there are five international students in our housing facility. An American couple functions as house parents and has many opportunities for ministry in this role. We are also interacting with the students' friends who come to hang out in our home. We are introducing these students to our believing friends from the local church, with the goal of helping the students see the body of Christ in action.

Meeting their needs | We are developing other services to the immigrant community to meet their needs and widen our sphere of relationships. Some of these services may include business development or job search classes, training for first-generation immigrant parents in raising their children in American culture, and refugee resettlement. We also invite immigrants to express other needs and then we look for ways to meet them.

What does it look like to disciple internationals?

Discipleship is not just:

- Giving things away to poor people
- A weekend event once a year
- A one-sided relationship where you contribute and they don't
- Only volunteering in a program

Discipleship involves:

- Living life side-by-side
- Being together frequently
- Learning how to obey Jesus together
- Serving and relaxing together
- Bathing the relationship in prayer

Step 1: Entering their world

The most natural way of entering into relationship with internationals is to meet them in your workplace or your neighborhood. You don't need an explanation for why you are there, and you instantly share some things in common.

Start your discipleship journey with prayer, and ask God to direct you to a person who is open to friendship with you.

Another easy way to get involved is to adopt a refugee family through a resettlement agency like [Jewish Vocational Services](#).

You can also meet internationals through your hobbies (sports, art class, fitness class) or by volunteering to teach ESL, tutor kids, coach a kids' team, etc. But the ultimate goal is to build a friendship that goes beyond the program. It's also important to allow the other person to contribute, so that your friendship is not one-sided.

If you're serious about reaching internationals, you'll need to make time for these new relationships. Cross-cultural disciple-makers who go overseas put great distance between themselves and their friends and family. Cross-cultural disciple-makers here must also be willing to say "no" to a lot of opportunities so that we can say "yes" to potential discipleship relationships with internationals.

Step 2: Sharing the gospel

As you develop your friendship, discuss matters of the heart. Listen to the needs in their life and be open to sharing your testimony or something that Jesus has taught you that guides you in a specific area. Bible stories work nicely. But keep the friendship focused on authenticity. Don't be spiritually obnoxious, but be spiritually obvious, and point things to Jesus if the door is open.

Step 3: Making disciples

For those who are interested in taking another step, invite them to start reading the Bible with you. One way, called the [Discovery Bible Study approach](#), involves allowing them to discover God's truth themselves. Simply read a Bible story together and ask pointed questions to dig out truth.

Step 4: Gathering into churches

Some people groups need a church that's culturally appropriate, so one option is to gather a family or group into a home to study the Bible and pray. This group can eventually become a fully-functional New Testament church that will reproduce more churches. Other people groups might integrate better into American-style churches. Ask God to guide new believers to the church He wants for them.

Challenges in serving the unreached

One challenge is [motivating] our local church to engage in the opportunity of serving scholars and students, and simply responding to the large number of international students.

Another challenge is feeling we need to always be witnessing to others and seeing quantifiable results. Realizing that the kingdom of God was always visible through us by His Spirit, we came to trust that the Lord is always at work as we live for and speak of Him.

A third challenge is understanding how to work with the international church community. We have different cultures and different ways of doing things. The best way to deal with this situation is to have open communication and humility to recognize them as equal partners.

How you can serve the unreached in your community

- Pray for them.
- Pray for workers to befriend them and show them the love of God.
- Look for opportunities to meet an international.
- Invite internationals to your home for a meal.
- Share your story with internationals of how God has worked in your life.
- Invite internationals to a cultural event, like a Christmas candlelight service or an Easter sunrise service, and share about its significance.
- Come alongside ministries already serving internationals, and use your skills and resources to serve through English conversation classes, English Bible studies, trips to sites of interest, airport pick-ups, shopping, help with drivers' licenses, etc.

Learn more about ministries serving internationals: [International Students Inc.](#) | [Mission Adelante](#)



John Spadafora
Director of Church Connections
john.spadafora@crossworld.org



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