

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.
– JOHN 4:35



Ministering to **MY NEIGHBORHOOD**



| MULTICULTURAL
MINISTRIES

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Introduction

"From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."

– Acts 17:26-27

God is bringing the nations to Mississippi. What an incredible opportunity we have to share the Gospel with people who, otherwise, may have never heard. Multicultural Ministries of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board prays this resource:

- helps you better understand your international neighbors.
- brings to light what the Bible teaches us about loving our neighbor, stranger, and sojourner.
- guides you to develop ways your church can reach the nations who have now reached us.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mississippi Baptist Churches worship in 7 languages each Sunday (American Sign Language, Chinese, Choctaw, English, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese). Bible studies are also in the above languages as well as Amharic, Arabic, Hindi, Persian, and Tagalog.

(Statistics from Multicultural Ministries that we are aware of at this time)

How Can My Church Minister to the Different Cultures in My Neighborhood?

God is relocating "new neighbors" in our communities from around the world, so that we can minister and share His Gospel message. Naturally being relocated to Mississippi from other parts of the world brings some unique challenges to our new neighbors. The following are some ideas to help your church family be prepared and ready to minister to their new international neighbors right where they are.

FIRST PRAY:

Resources to learn about needs and up-to-date prayer requests can be found at the following websites:

- www.prayercast.com
- www.imb.org/prayerpoints
- www.namb.net/pray
- www.mbc.org/?s=prayer
- www.mbc.org/get-support/prayer/2025-prayer-guide
- www.wmu.com/missions-discipleship/prayercalendar

MEET NEEDS:

"The number of refugees resettling in Mississippi has fluctuated over the past decade, with a peak of 325 refugees in 2016 and a low of 148 refugees in 2019. Overall, there have been a slight increase in the number of refugees resettling in Mississippi since 2010, with an average annual intake of around 200 refugees."

(www.stateregstoday.com/family/immigration/state-refugee-resettlement-programs-in-mississippi)

Mississippi has low numbers compared to other states for resettling refugees (NOTE the ministry in Clarkston, Georgia, where many Mississippians have served at NAMB's Send Relief Ministry Center). To be able to minister adequately, there is a requirement for appropriate housing, transportation, and job opportunities. Even so, our state receives people with great needs. It is a wonderful way for churches to meet needs by providing clothing, furniture, food, water, and other necessities.

Many international neighbors do not speak English fluently. Consider offering English classes at your church or a local ethnic restaurant. To get started, visit: www.mbc.org/ministry/missions/wmu/literacy-missions.

Often children of non-English speaking parents struggle to complete homework. Perhaps your church can provide homework help to the children of internationals in your area. To get started, visit: www.mbc.org/ministry/missions/wmu/literacy-missions.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

- Invite an international neighbor to your home for dinner or fellowship.
- Frequent local ethnic restaurants or markets and build friendships with the employees.
- Connect with a nearby university or one of our Baptist Student Unions. Contact (www.mbc.org/ministry/missions/collegiate-ministry) about ways you can encourage an international student.
- Mentor an international family and walk alongside them as they adjust to American culture.
- Start a sports ministry, or other activity, for international children in your area.
- Facilitate a multicultural Sunday School class to foster fellowship and cross-cultural engagement.
- Coordinate an "All Nations Worship" day in your church to honor and recognize the diverse nations represented in your congregation, featuring opportunities for prayer, testimonies, and cultural interviews.
- Host a Day of Prayer for the nations to encourage prayer for global communities.
- Volunteer at local elementary and high schools to help tutor international students.

Sharing the Gospel

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

- Pray regularly for a church planter working with internationals.
- Partner with one of the MBCB ethnic church plants as they work to reach the nations.
- Many of the internationals living in Mississippi are followers of Jesus and some attend our churches. Your church might consider hosting a Bible study or worship time in another language.
- Host a community outreach event at your church, specifically for internationals in your area.
- Pray for internationals living in your community. Pray for opportunities to build relationships with them and to share the Gospel. Practice and be ready to share how Jesus has changed your life.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP TELL "YOUR STORY"

1. What was your life like before you followed Jesus?
2. How do you decide to follow Jesus?
3. How has Jesus changed your life?

How Should I Approach Evangelism with Different Cultures, Faiths, & Worldviews?

We have become a melting pot of cultures and worldviews in the United States. Migration has brought Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists to cities around the country. Sadly, more and more Americans trend toward agnosticism, atheism, and apathy in their worldview.

As Western Christians, we are waking up to the fact that a religiously plural society is no longer a foreign missionary challenge. In our own melting pot of faiths, we must learn how to adapt. For example, the first generation Hindu immigrant you meet will have different assumptions about issues of sin and salvation than those of the postmodern college student. Therefore, we must learn to show how the Gospel speaks to each of these differing worldviews. Here are some ways to be adaptable:

LISTEN TO THE PERSON'S STORY

Whatever the religious context we face in evangelism, listening is crucial. Listening conveys a person's value as one who is uniquely made in the image of God. Asking good questions helps us understand:

- what is most important to the person (the object of their devotion).
- the story that person tells themselves in order to explain reality.

Ask questions about the person's hometown or country, family, cultural holidays, hobbies, passions, and future goals. For example, "Tell me the story behind your festival or holiday." A natural follow-up might be, "That's interesting. Are you a devotional kind of person? Tell me about your devotional life."

Concrete type questions are usually better than theoretical ones. For example, "What do you believe about God?" Listen to how the person describes their view of God, humanity, and the stories embedded in their devotional practices. Religious traditions, experiences, and societal values communicate just as much about a person's worldview as does their intellectual beliefs and convictions. You can then naturally begin sharing your own story of meeting Jesus and then share the story of Jesus.

REMEMBER THE ESSENTIALS

When we share the story of Jesus, we need to keep in mind some essential elements:

- It's natural to introduce the Gospel story by sharing your own story of how you become a follower of Jesus.
- Remember to ask about their belief in God, creation, sin, Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the need for repentance and faith.
- It is helpful to use the four-fold model of the Bible's grand narrative of creation, fall, rescue, and restoration.
- Another approach is to answer these questions in your Gospel presentation:
 - Who is Jesus?
 - What has Jesus done?
 - Why is Jesus important?
 - How should we respond?

RESPOND TO THEIR STORY WITH THE STORY OF JESUS

Listen and learn intently to their story and remember what you learned as you share the story of the Gospel. You respond to their story with the story of Jesus. For example:

- If the person shares that their family is the most important thing in the world to them, it can be helpful to include Abraham's story of how God used his descendants to spread the Good News of salvation and bless all the families of the world.
- Perhaps the festival that's important to them has aspects of the Gospel embedded within it.
- The Hindu festival Diwali is about light conquering the dark. You can highlight the fact that Jesus calls himself the light of the world. You are not claiming that Jesus is the fulfillment of their festival; instead, you're taking a familiar concept (light vs. dark) and connecting it to the biblical message.

Contextualizing the Gospel is not making the Gospel more relevant. The Gospel is already relevant. Our job is to show *how* it is relevant. We best do this by listening and applying the Gospel to what we have learned about this person.

WALK ALONGSIDE THEM MOVING FORWARD

We don't just share Christ with a person one time. We follow up with them. Jesus called us to make disciples and this involves investing time in people. As long as an individual is willing to talk, continue to process the Gospel with them. This is described as "walking" because it's a process and it's a relationship that is moving in a direction – toward faith in Christ.

People who have very little exposure to a biblical worldview, such as Hindus and Muslims, need time to process everything. This involves getting them in the Scriptures as much as possible. Utilizing a resource like the *Bible.is* app gives you an opportunity to read the Bible in English and allows them to read the Bible in their own language.

Let the Holy Spirit use His sword on their hearts. Let them see how Christ is truly alive and working in your life. Help them meet other believers and witness the love of God in the body of Christ.

We also describe this as “walking alongside” because we are not in a position of authority over them. You are letting the Word of God serve as the authority as you continue to listen and learn about the person. Walking alongside others is how we can best learn to apply the Gospel in a variety of cultural settings. Contextualization in Gospel ministry is best learned in relationships with people.

These thoughts are from articles and conversations with Multicultural Ministries in the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina as well as notes from classes on worldview.



*Magnolia Islamic Center >
(Madison)*

*< The Hindu Temple of MS
(Brandon)*



*< Swami Narayan
Temple
(Jackson)*

Cross-Cultural Disciple Making

Cross-cultural disciple making is an essential aspect of spreading the Gospel to unreached populations across the globe. As Christians, we are called to bridge the gaps between cultures, foster connections, and share the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. This can be both challenging and rewarding, but with intentionality, humility, and prayerful guidance, we can effectively engage in cross-cultural evangelism.

BE INTENTIONAL

Nothing great ever happened by accident. What strategies could you employ to effectively engage in evangelism? Are there any particular cultural customs or norms that must be incorporated into your approach? By taking an intentional approach to disciple making, you can maximize the impact and more effectively reach out to people. Evangelism requires a conscious effort (John 4:4; Acts 16:13). As disciples, we must be deliberate in our approach to sharing the Gospel, particularly when faced with cross-cultural challenges.

LEARN AS YOU GO

Stay open to learning about others, yourself, and the Holy Spirit's work. Take a genuine interest in others and seek to understand them. Be flexible, adapting your approach when necessary, and listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance (Proverbs 18:13).

EMBRACE MISTAKES

No one likes to make mistakes, but that is a part of the learning process. Accept failure and use it as an opportunity to grow. Accept that mistakes will occur and trust that the Holy Spirit will work through your shortcomings. Most people are understanding and forgiving of cultural faux pas. Learn from your errors, apologize, and move forward.

IDENTIFY GOD'S BRIDGES

The purpose of a bridge is to connect two places that were once separated. In disciple making, we should seek out the bridges God has already constructed between cultures – the common ground that links us to those we're trying to reach. God creates social opportunities for sharing the Gospel (John 4:39). Leverage these relationships to spread the Gospel more effectively, helping to bridge cultural divides.

SEEK RECEPTIVITY

While we should share the Gospel with everyone, prioritize those who are most receptive (Acts 18:5-8). Focus on building relationships with those who show interest and openness to the Gospel message. Receptivity doesn't mean complacency, though. Regardless of the level of receptivity, stay committed to being authentic and honest about your faith (Romans 12:10-18).

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

In cross-cultural disciple making, set aside time each day to pray for yourself, those you are engaging with, and the spiritual growth of all involved. Disciple making relies on divine intervention, not human ingenuity. Pray for yourself, ask others to pray for you (Colossians 4:3-4), and pray for those with whom you're sharing the Gospel.

ESTABLISH A CONNECTION

Find common ground to foster gospel conversations. Jesus and the early disciples met people where they were in their spiritual journeys (Acts 8:30). Engage in discussions about hometowns, food, family, or sports, and participate in tea or coffee rituals to create opportunities for gospel conversations.

PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

Ultimately, our goal is to guide others toward repentance and faith in Jesus (Acts 20:21). While learning about other cultures and building relationships is valuable, we must remember that salvation comes through the Gospel message, not our friendships or influence.

CULTIVATE CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Developing cultural sensitivity is crucial for effective cross-cultural disciple making (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Take time to research and understand the customs, beliefs, and values of the people you are engaging with. This will help you avoid unintentional offenses and demonstrate respect for their culture. By showing genuine interest and appreciation for their traditions, you can build trust and rapport, creating a more conducive environment for sharing the Gospel message. Remember, our ultimate goal is to effectively communicate the love of Christ, and being culturally sensitive allows us to do so in a way that truly resonates with others.

MAKE DISCIPLES

Cross-cultural disciple making is an incredible opportunity to expand the reach of the gospel and share the love of Christ with people from diverse backgrounds. Remember the importance of intentionality, learning, humility, prayer, and cultural sensitivity. Ultimately, it is through the power of the Holy Spirit and our obedience to God's call that we bring the life-changing message of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. Embrace this calling and watch as God works through you to transform lives for His glory.

www.goglobalministries.com/blog/cross-cultural-disciple-making-9-essential-guidelines

5 Ways to Share the Gospel Across Cultures

We don't have to be experts to share the gospel with someone different from us. Instead, we need to remain faithfully obedient in sharing our faith.

1. CONTEXTUALIZE THE GOSPEL

When sharing with cultures different from ours, it's essential to explain it in a way that makes sense to their context. As long as the Gospel remains the central message, we can help them understand.

2. ASK LOTS OF QUESTIONS

When we train mission teams, we always tell them to ask about the Five F's – family/friends, festivals, food, future and faith. These questions open the door to diving deeper and provide ways to clearly present the gospel.

3. DISPLAY YOUR FAITH IN LITTLE WAYS

One of the best ways to start Gospel conversations is by interjecting our faith into conversations and actions. We can tell our friends we will pray for them if they are hurting or mention something from a recent sermon.

4. USE VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual tools provide a great way to help present the gospel message. Whether it's the 3 Circles or a movie like "The JESUS Film" (translated into 2,000 languages!), visual resources provide a great way to ensure a clear gospel presentation.

5. LOVE THEM LIKE JESUS

It sounds simple and it is. When we love radically and unconditionally as Jesus does, our words and actions look different to those who don't know Him and people take notice. Many Gospel conversations can start when our lives reflect the Savior, not the world.

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www.namb.net/resource/5-ways-to-share-the-gospel-across-cultures

Understanding the Terms

What does it mean to be **displaced**?

Forcibly Displaced – internally displaced; asylum seekers; refugees

Vulnerably Displaced – human trafficking; homeless; orphans

Purposefully Displaced – international students; immigrants; migrant workers

Naturally Displaced – natural disaster; famine; disease

Asylum Seeker – A person who is seeking protection from persecution. The person is fleeing persecution in their home country, but they apply for asylum either at the border or from within the United States. Seeking asylum is not something that can be done from an embassy or from their home – individuals may file for asylum only if they are physically in the United States or at a port of entry. (UNHCR)

Dreamer – A young undocumented immigrant who came to the United States as a child. The term comes from a piece of legislation, the Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act – which has been introduced repeatedly since 2001 but has not yet been passed into law – that would provide permanent legal status to certain undocumented individuals who arrived in the U.S. as minors.

Immigrants – A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country. They are also known as permanent resident aliens and have been admitted to the United States as lawful permanent residents. (USDHS)

International Student – A person who comes to the United States to pursue a full course of study in an approved program in either an academic or a vocational or other recognized nonacademic institution. (USDHS)

Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) – A foreign-born person who has been granted an indefinitely renewable visa to live and work in the United States. Synonymous with: Green Card holder and Legal Permanent Resident.

Migrant – Any person who moves from one place to another to find work or better living conditions. Migrants can be “immigrants” if they intend to stay permanently in a country other than their place of birth or “non-immigrants” if they intend to stay temporarily.

Non-Immigrant Visa – Visas for persons who have permanent residency outside the U.S. and are authorized to be in the country on a temporary basis. Non-immigrant visas may or may not include employment authorization. Examples of non-immigrant visas include tourist visas, student visas, and temporary worker visas.

Refugee – A person who has fled his or her home country and is unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The government legally assigns the status of refugee after an extensive referral, application, and interview process. Refugees resettled to the U.S. are identified by the U.S. government abroad, flown to the U.S. and then resettle in partnership with faith-based or non-profit organizations that partner with the U.S. State Department. (UNHCR)

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) – Temporary status is granted to eligible foreign-born individuals who are unable to return home safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling the return.

Unaccompanied Children (UAC) – Children who cross the border alone or without their parents. Unaccompanied children receive more protections than other immigrants, including being housed in licensed Health and Human Services child shelters rather than Border Patrol detention facilities. Synonymous with: Unaccompanied Minor.

Undocumented Immigrant – A foreign-born person who does not have the legal right to be or remain in the United States. Immigrants become undocumented either by crossing the border illegally or by overstaying their temporary visas. Synonymous with: Illegal Alien, Illegal Immigrant, Unauthorized Immigrant.

U.S. Citizen – An individual who was born within the United States, who acquired U.S. citizenship when born abroad as a child of a U.S. citizen, who completed a naturalization process or who derived citizenship as the child of a parent who naturalized. To naturalize, an individual must first qualify for Lawful Permanent Resident status and, in most cases, maintain that status for at least five years, in addition to complying with other requirements.

Information from several different resources:

- *Evangelical Immigration Table, World Relief*
- *Christian Community Development Association*
- *The Migration Policy Institute*
- *The National Immigration Forum*
- *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*
- *United States Department of Homeland Security (USDHS)*

What Does the Bible Teach Us About the Stranger?

Acts 17:26-27 tells us that it is God who determines the times and places where people live. God's desire is that people may find Him, and He has seen fit to bring many people to Mississippi so that we can share the hope of Jesus with them.

It is clear throughout Scripture that the responsibility of God's people is to **welcome**, **care for**, and **love** the stranger in our midst. Our own salvation experience of being a stranger to God who was brought near, by Jesus, should directly inform our response to the strangers, the internationals, the migrants, and the refugees living in Mississippi.

"I WAS A STRANGER" SCRIPTURES

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
– Genesis 1:27-28

The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you.
– Exodus 12:49

Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.
– Exodus 22:21

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.
– Leviticus 19:9-10

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.
– Leviticus 19:33-34

The community is to have the same rules for you and for the foreigner residing among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the foreigner shall be the same before the Lord: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing among you.

– Numbers 15:15-16

And I charged your judges at that time, "Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you."

– Deuteronomy 1:16

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

– Deuteronomy 10:18-19

Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns.

– Deuteronomy 24:14

Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

– Deuteronomy 24:17-18

When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

– Deuteronomy 26:12

"When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt.

– Matthew 2:13-14

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in . . .

– Matthew 25:35

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

– Luke 10:36-37

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