

EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

1. Contend for Their Time

There is a balance here. Clearly, we do not want to be insensitive or unconcerned about the other dimensions of a student's life—academics, family, rest. But the opportunity to know and follow Christ is also not to be minimized. He gave His life for us, and we have been crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20)!

Of course, a new believer may not yet appreciate the wonder of his or her relationship with God, so we may need to accommodate this person a bit:

Flex your schedule in order to meet your friend for Bible study, fellowship and prayer.

If you want to get a large chunk of time with your friend, you may want to take a weekend trip. Just because the weekend is designed for fun doesn't mean you can't talk about significant truths in the car or at other times.

Someone who has known the Lord a bit longer, however, should be challenged to give priority time for spiritual development. Don't be harsh or demanding in your challenge, and don't have this conversation one day before a huge academic deadline. But speaking from the love of the Holy Spirit, share some good passages on priorities and commitment, such as Romans 12:1,2 and Luke 14:28-33.

2. Challenge Them to Study the Word

Don't forget who you're working with. These intellectuals from around the world are comfortable with books! If your friend is not reading the Word, ask why not.

Share passages that describe the importance of God's Word. (Psalms 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16, etc.).

Encourage your friend to read and study each day. If your friend is intent on reading an English Bible (for language growth) but is getting bogged down, point out that the spiritual benefits of the Bible far outweigh any language benefits.

Urge the reading of a bilingual Bible.

3. Help Them Begin to Share Their Faith

Your international friends will be just like your American friends—hesitant to share the gospel at

first. Help them break through this barrier. We encourage a process of steps toward boldness:

- First, of course, comes some training which you can provide directly or through a training conference.
- Second, have your friend listen and watch while you share the gospel with another international friend of yours (preferably from their culture).
- Next, have your friend do the witnessing with another friend of yours or his, while you observe and support.
- Eventually, your friend will be telling others the Good News on his own initiative!

4. Deal with Character Issues

Every culture has its typical sins—overlooked by those in that culture but not acceptable to God. Certain transgressions of law and certain moral practices may be condoned by 95% of the members of that culture. But if your friend wants to really walk with God, he will need to trust God to overcome such things.

Don't "play Holy Spirit" by recklessly jumping in at the first hint of sin or weakness.

If your friend engages in inappropriate behaviours over time, ask if you may share with him about a concern you have.

Be supportive and gentle. Be open about some of your own struggles with sin.

Remind your friend that we continue to live through God's grace as believers (2 Timothy 2:1).

The bottom line is this: we are not discipling anyone if we concern ourselves only with ministry activities and not with character.

5. Stretch Their Vision

There's a very big world out there, and most of its inhabitants need Jesus. Many cultures will tend to begin with concern for one's immediate family and friends—and that's a good thing. But what about others who need the love of Christ?

Over time, challenge your friend to think about the other internationals on campus or in the community, and also the nearby Americans.

Team up to do some creative evangelism with students from other nationalities.

As your disciple develops in faith and commitment, you'll want to share statistics and stories from the nations and especially the "10-40 Window."

Expand the vision of your disciples at a conference that is especially designed for international students.