

PRESENTING YOURSELF

As we were driving to campus one day, Amir asked me, “Why are you serving me and the other internationals on campus? What organization do you work for?” At some point, you will also be asked questions like these.

As your relationships deepen with international students, there is a time and a place to explain your purpose. In addition to students, you will need to present yourself to others-including school administrators and volunteers. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind as you present your ministry to others:

In your early conversations, seek to establish trust. Check out the article on “Presenting Yourself.” Remember- Long-term trust is built with honesty.

- **Don’t feel that you must tell your whole life story.** As Americans we often share more details than what is necessary. Give enough information to answer questions, but don’t feel that you must give a thorough answer to every question.
- **Answer questions with questions.** An international student will tend to be curious about life and culture in the U.S. Often his or her question will be strictly inquisitive. By asking a question in answer to such a question, you will be able to show interest in your friend and also minimize any continued probing. Here’s an example. Let’s say you just mentioned that you work full time with a parachurch organization. You might then ask, “Have you ever heard that term, ‘parachurch’?” Your friend will probably be more interested in learning a new English vocabulary word than in any further details of your vocation.
- **Help your friend know your purpose.** Clearly stating your purpose allows a student to know that you are there to serve him or her. A suggested purpose that you could tell your student would be: “We are a Christian club and while anyone is welcome to come, no one will be pressured to become a Christian. We also have spiritual discussions, fun activities and opportunities to make new friendships.”
- **Don’t avoid the spiritual... but don’t begin with it.** As evangelical Christians we often feel the immediate need to communicate the gospel message. Take some time to establish a relationship with your friend before you dive into spiritual conversations. On the other hand, when you do discuss spiritual matters, remember that while this subject is taboo for many Americans, many internationals are much more open.

- **Be prepared by practicing your answers.** Whether your conversation is with an international student or a school administrator, be prepared to give an answer regarding your ministry.

Presenting yourself well involves understanding your purpose and clearly communicating it. In addition, as you engage students and administrators on campus it is important to share common ground with them. Be prepared to communicate, and when the opportunity arises boldly share the message of the gospel.