



# International FRIENDSHIPS

**MAKING THE WORLD FEEL AT HOME**

**PRAYER GUIDE - THE OHIO STATE**

**UNIVERSITY**

**31 DAYS OF PRAYER, AUGUST 1ST - AUGUST 31ST**

**PRAYING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM 112+ COUNTRIES**



# WHO WE ARE

International Friendships, Inc. (IFI) is a community organization that works in partnership with universities and Christian volunteers to promote friendship and hospitality for international students, scholars, and their families. IFI also partners with internationals through on-campus student organizations.

Our mission is to extend life-changing hospitality and friendship to international students out of reverence for Jesus. We envision God's love extending globally in partnership with spiritually vibrant international students. See how IFI USA has reached international students across the country this year through our [2020 Ministry Impact Report](#).

With the help of churches and volunteers, we have been serving international students since 1979. We continue to learn and provide resources and training for all so that we may improve the cultural understanding of our volunteers to effectively minister to international students. Our continuous growth has been a blessing and provision from the Lord.

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”  
[Hebrews 13:2]

# OUR VALUES



FOUNDATION

**Intimacy with Christ  
and Love for One Another**



DISCIPLESHIP PHILOSOPHY

**Life-Involvement  
Discipleship as a Process**



MINISTRY APPROACH

**Hospitality in Partnership  
with Churches**



ORGANIZATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

**God-Honoring  
Stewardship Practices**

# WELCOME

A note from the Columbus IFI Area Director.

We find that we are preparing for an environment that is constantly changing. As we prepared for our fall activities, we have been trying to keep a dual potential focus in mind. We had been hoping that the COVID season was coming to an end since OSU had decided to have in person classes. We have been preparing for our typical Welcome Picnic a week before school starts, and the International Student Welcome Party the evening of the first day of classes (with some Covid inspired safety precautions), and simultaneously searching for outdoor locations where we could have a replacement event if needed. Just days ago we were notified that the Ohio Union will not open till mid September (several weeks after our scheduled event) and OSU is not allowing any in person events to be scheduled by student organizations in August.

Meanwhile, the number of COVID cases has started rising in Columbus, and the Border Patrol ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) recently issued a revised ruling that students whose school only had Virtual classes would lose their F-1 VISA status and have to leave the country. IFI wrote a letter and 180 colleges and universities sued the U.S. government to return to the March directives to allow students to remain in the US even if their school was online. Fortunately, that ruling was reviewed and dismissed in court, so students can stay in the U.S. while studying, even if they are taking all online classes. However, there are many students we worked with last year who are having trouble getting back into the U.S., experiencing difficulty getting an entry VISA because the U.S. Embassies are closed worldwide, international flights are hard to find, and immigration is not allowing passengers from certain COVID active countries to enter the US.

Yet, God sits enthroned in the highest heavens. He is not worried. We are asking God to show us what the most effective ways we can reach returning International students and connect with new students. We realize that not even staying at home and social distancing can completely protect us from risk. We are looking for ways to engage the International students that minimize risks. Our efforts this fall will likely be numerous small events, like the Red, White & Barbeque activity for the July 4th weekend. We are looking at similar events throughout August and then again for the Labor Day weekend. Please prayerfully consider what events you feel comfortable as a family or individual participating in. We will be working with our Columbus team to outline some precautions. As we have students sign up for Airport Pickup, we will be modeling our safeguards after Uber and Lyft who have found ways to serve those in need during Covid. As we have students sign up for Temporary Housing, we are contacting local hotels to see what practices and safeguards are helpful in minimizing risks of reaching Covid. Our love for God compels us to take action, since the plague of sin has a 100 percent mortality rate. Through prayer, some of us will sense the urging of God to participate in activities which have a lower risk level out of a desire to impact the hearts of International students and invite them to know the God who loves them.

We don't know what activities we will have this fall to welcome students, and we don't have a good idea yet on how many international students there will be at OSU and other area campuses this fall. Yet, we do know that the mandate we have from God is still necessary,

To extend life-changing hospitality and friendship to international students out of reverence for Jesus.

As King Jehoshaphat was faced with a vast army beyond his ability to respond, he called the people to pray. "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you," (2 Chronicles 20:12b). Therefore, we ask you to partner with us in prayer for the month of August and join us daily as we call on the Lord of Hosts to be our guard and guide.

As you pray, if you have any insights from the Lord that you would like to share with the Columbus team, please send me an email at [phil@ifiusa.org](mailto:phil@ifiusa.org). If you would like to provide financial support to help us respond quickly to these emerging opportunities/challenges that we have not budgeted for, please use this link <https://www.ifipartners.org/give/columbus-special-projects>.

Thank you for your partnership with IFI to reach the Nations!

Phil Foell  
*Area Director* - Columbus  
International Friendships, Inc.



# THE END IN MIND; AGENTS OF CHANGE

## DAY 1

It's important to have a goal in mind when we set out to do something. That goal is what drives the steps to reach a desired outcome and affects which steps we choose to take. We want to firmly understand the mission and purpose behind our month of prayer.

The final command Jesus said before ascending into heaven was,

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you to the very end of the age.”

[Matthew 28:19-20]

This is our mission within International Friendships; that our outreach would make disciples who can extend beyond our reach and create more followers of Jesus through the spreading of the gospel. This mission leads us to extend life-changing hospitality and friendship to international students out of reverence for Jesus so that they may become agents of change and continue this mission in their homelands.

Our actions, such as events, conversation partners or airport pickups, and values, such as discipleship and hospitality, stem from our mission. This month, August, 2020, will be dedicated to praying over the mission of IFI and the people involved.



Pray that IFI would effectively follow the command of Matthew 28:19-20 (above) and pray John 17:20-23 (below) over international students, modeling Jesus' prayer over non-believers.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Pray that IFI would make disciples of international students that become disciples themselves.  
Pray specifically over the Columbus Campus Ministry Team: stamina, flexibility and creativity.

# PRAYING SCRIPTURE

## DAY 2

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”  
[Hebrews 4:12]

The Word of God and prayer are powerful. They are even more so when working together. Scripture not only teaches us how to pray but also provides specific words we can pray back to God. An [article](#) on the IFI blog says, “[scripture] is a double-edged sword, working its power both on behalf of the one prayed for and also for the one doing the praying.”

Praying the word of God brings us under His authority and the guidance of the spirit while bringing forth the needs of others.

Pray scripture over international students and insert specific names or groups of students. Use Colossians 1:9-12 below as a model:



“We continually ask God to fill \_\_\_ with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that \_\_\_ may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that \_\_\_ may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified \_\_\_ to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.”

Memorize this passage or pray more scripture over students. Other helpful [articles of cross-cultural training](#) can be found on the IFI Partner’s website.

Ask God to show you what other scriptures to pray and specific people to pray for. Continue to pray scripture over international students throughout the month of August. Pray that international students would be exposed to the power and truth of His word.

# BOLD AND CONFIDENT PRAYER

## DAY 3

A core value of IFI is our foundation in Christ. We value intimacy with Christ and love for one another that are modeled through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, which has inspired this 31 day prayer guide.

The Bible is filled with the prayers of its people and the teachings of prayer. When we pray, it's important that we not approach God timidly or complacently, but boldly and confidently (Hebrews 4:16, Mark 11:23-24, 1 John 5:14-16).

Such boldness can be seen in the prayer of Joshua.



“On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel:

“Sun, stand still over Gibeon,  
and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.”

So the sun stood still,  
and the moon stopped,  
till the nation avenged itself on its enemies,

as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.”

[Joshua 10:12-13]

Joshua and his men were at battle and they needed more daylight to overtake the Amorite forces, so Joshua prayed. He asked the Lord for a seemingly impossible action - that the sun would not set. Joshua prayed boldly to the Lord with the confidence that He would help Joshua and his men overcome.

As we pray over international students, and pray in our daily lives, let us do so with confidence in the God we serve, boldly presenting our requests.

Pray for the salvation and specific needs of individual students and groups.

Give thanks that we can approach God's throne with such confidence because of Christ.

# ADJUSTED LIFE DURING COVID-19

## DAY 4

We are all trying to find a new normal following an international pandemic with the constant concern of another wave in the outbreak. People fear for their loved ones who are considered “at risk”, unforeseen financial burdens have arisen and internationals have faced hardships to stay in America or had to go back to their home countries.

Beginning school following this unprecedented time will be new for everyone and even more intimidating for international students around the world. Studying abroad has a huge impact on a student’s life because it is an uncomfortable and daunting time, often made more difficult by feeling alone in an unfamiliar culture. This year, students face these challenges along with the unknowns associated with the Coronavirus.



Read some of the experiences of international students as they tried to navigate the unknown impact of COVID19 this past spring [here](#) and [here](#).

Many students intending to study abroad may no longer be permitted to travel or remain in America. Students in the middle of their studies may want to remain at their schools, but are wary of a sudden forced departure. Other students may have been shaken from the pandemic and simply want to return home to their families, as many domestic students had the ability to do. They may also encounter pressure from their families to return home.

For the international students who travel to The Ohio State University this fall, we want to extend hospitality and love to them in a time that is so unnerving. We ultimately want them to know and be assured by the confidence found through the spirit of God.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”  
[2 Timothy 1:7]

Pray that international students would be able to study abroad this fall.  
Pray that IFI would be a place of comfort following these uncertain times.  
Ask God to guide each student and give them wisdom to face these challenges.

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE

## DAY 5

Whether we realize it or not, we're fighting a spiritual battle everyday.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."  
[Ephesians 6:12]

Non-believers, and even some Christians, are unaware. As believers, it's important that we pray on behalf of these international students against the enemy as we learn from Jesus' way of prayer.

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."  
[John 17:15]

The enemy wants students who do not know the truth to remain in the dark and he will do all that he can to keep them there. But our Father is greater and higher, wanting goodness and light for his children.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."  
[John 10:10]

Let us pray boldly and confidently over the spiritual battle of the Heavenly realms where Jesus constantly intercedes on our behalf and for those who don't yet know Christ.



Pray John 17:15 over specific students or groups and against the tactics of the enemy.  
Praise God that He is most powerful and that victory has already been won through Christ.  
Pray that students would come to learn of the spiritual battle we wage.  
Pray for protection over Friday night Bible Discussions around Columbus.

# CONNECTIONS

## DAY 6

IFI's mission is dependent on students and the relationships we build with them. It's important to be vigilant to pursue doors the Lord may be opening and establish new connections.



The IFI blog has an article on [“Building Bridges to Talk About Jesus”](#) that discusses approaches to effectively reach students. To do this well, we must first care for our own relationship with the Lord. Connecting with Jesus comes before connecting with others so that we may be attuned to and led by the Spirit within us.

“...those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”  
[Romans 8:5]

What the spirit desires is freeing God's children who are under the weight of sin (2 Corinthians 3:17) and furthering the kingdom of God (Luke 4:43).

The connections we build with each student will look different. Some students may keep us at a distance, while others may fully invite us into their lives. We want to be equipped for whatever each connection may bring and pursue them with the same love Christ has for them and us.

Ultimately, we want these connections to lead to conversations about Jesus. Our desire is that our care for them would model the even deeper love Christ has for them and that we would get the privilege of sharing with them the life-changing gospel message.

Pray that IFI Staff and Volunteers would nourish their own relationships with the Lord.  
Pray that IFI Staff and Volunteers would be spirit led and obedient to where the Lord may call them.  
Pray that genuine connections would be built among students and IFI that would lead to life-changing conversations about Jesus.

# BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUPS

## DAY 7



IFI [Bible Discussions](#) happen every Friday evening. Students and volunteers enjoy meals together and engage in conversations about the Bible. Many international students come from different religions or no religion at all, yet are curious about Christianity. These weekly meetings help students engage scripture, develop deeper friendships and establish a place of belonging. All of our Bible discussions transformed to virtual meetings this past spring and may be hybrid this fall.

Scripture tells us the importance of meeting together and power it can have in every person's life:

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."  
[Matthew 18:20]

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."  
[2 Timothy 3:16-17]

Students are encountering God's word, asking questions and befriending believers who desire their salvation. These weekly gatherings are life giving.

Pray over Bible Discussions across Columbus tonight and that more students would join these weekly gatherings.

Pray that God would work in the hearts of students as they read His word.

Pray that more volunteers would host a weekly Bible discussion.

Ask God to give IFI wisdom in navigating COVID constraints and plan fall discussion groups.

# WIVES AND MOTHERS GROUPS

## DAY 8

IFI hosts gatherings for people other than students. The mission and impact of IFI extends beyond the students and into the lives of their loved ones who travel with them. Every week there is a Mothers group and a Wives group that join together in community. Some groups will meet virtually this fall.

The [Mothers group](#) meets every Friday morning. This group provides a space for international moms to bond with each other while their husbands and children may be at school. This is also a space to practice English, engage in Bible discussions and grow in community.



The [Wives group](#) meets every Thursday afternoon. This group provides a space for international wives whose husbands are busy studying. This is also a space where women can learn more about American culture, engage in Bible discussions, and cultivate friendships.

Pray that international mothers would join this group and hear about Jesus.  
Pray that international wives would join this group and hear about Jesus.  
Pray that connections would form a sense of belonging in these communities.  
Ask God to give IFI wisdom in navigating COVID constraints and plan fall gatherings.

# VOLUNTEERS

## DAY 9

Volunteers are an integral branch of IFI. They help the entire organization and ministry function and can make a significant impact in the lives of international students. With so many avenues available to serve, there's a place every volunteer can use their gifts and talents.

The first common way of volunteering is airport pickup and temporary housing for one to four days. IFI volunteers are often the first people international students meet. They have the opportunity to extend kindness and hospitality to students.

Being a conversation partner is another avenue of volunteering with IFI. Many international students want to improve their English speaking skills and learn more about our culture. Consistently speaking with a volunteer allows them to practice and learn as well as establish a friendship in a transitional period of life. Many of our conversation partners transitioned to virtual meetings this past spring. We encourage partners to talk about COVID and decide whether to meet in person or virtually as the situation continues to change.

Some volunteers host Bible discussion groups. They welcome students into their homes and often provide food on a weekly basis. These volunteers open conversations about scripture and provide a space for encounters with Jesus.

Volunteers selflessly serve international students and model Jesus' approach to ministry:

“For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many.”  
[Mark 10:45]

Volunteers sacrificially give of their time for these students. The more volunteers that join alongside the mission of IFI to extend hospitality, the more students that can be reached. Last year we served over 1,600 of the 6,000+ internationals at OSU. We are always welcoming and needing more volunteers to partner with us in our mission. More information can be found on our [website](#).



Give thanks for our current volunteers and pray that the Lord would sustain them.  
Pray that current volunteers would continue to build and strengthen relationships with students.  
Pray for more volunteers. (Luke 10:2)

# THE COLUMBUS CAMPUS MINISTRY TEAM

## DAY 10



International Friendships was founded in 1979 as an official non-profit organization in Columbus, Ohio working at The Ohio State University. Since then, it has expanded into 10 other states, totaling 35 different branches around the United State.

Columbus is the headquarters of IFI and is composed of the largest team. The team is made up of multiple Campus Ministers who work directly with students, Directors and Leaders who encourage, organize and equip those who outreach to students, and other various, essential positions that help IFI to function and work towards our mission. The Columbus Campus Ministry Team had six former missionaries, seven pastors and 10 people born in other countries.

Our team is dedicated to extending hospitality and seeing the gospel spread among the nations. Each team member uses their talents and skills for the success of IFI and the care of students.

Pray that staff members who raise their own support would reach full funding.  
Pray that staff members would establish connections and relationships with students.  
Pray for continued unity within the Columbus team.

# STUDENT TESTIMONY - JUAN

## DAY 11

Juan moved from Oaxaca City, Mexico to Columbus, Ohio to pursue his PhD at The Ohio State University. After arriving in America, Juan was under a lot of stress: He was unfamiliar with and lonely in his new home, he and his fiancé had just separated and he was under an enormous amount of academic pressure. He felt hopeless.

Juan had thought that he would be happy following his career -- not caring about anything else. With so much stress, he was discontent in life and could see the error in his thoughts.

“I thought [my career] was my truth. I thought that was the way I was going to be happy, but God opened my eyes deeply,” said Juan.

Juan went on an IFI trip to Hocking Hills where he connected with friends and IFI Staff member Phil Foell and his wife Ellen. The trip and people made such an impact on Juan that he craved being around such a community. He began regularly attending a Bible discussion group and later participated in a Masterclass discipleship class.

Over lunch one memorable day with Phil and Ellen, Juan decided to give his life to Christ. He no longer wanted his studies or career to be the center of his life, but Jesus. The parables of Matthew 13 especially impacted his life. Through these stories, God showed him the truth: that he could always access and experience joy without having to earn it.

From that day forward, Juan’s purpose and life were completely altered. His love and passion for Christ grew and he wanted to share the good news with others around him. After accepting Jesus, Juan shared this truth with his family and continuously prayed for them. Today, his parents and two sisters follow Jesus and many of his father’s family are now actively growing in faith.

Jesus is alive and active in our lives and the lives of those around us. Juan is one of many redemption stories. We rejoice over those who have made the same decision as Juan and pray that more students would receive the same truth in their life as well.



Praise God for the international students who have welcomed Jesus into their heart.  
Pray that more students would join IFI who would hear and respond to the gospel message.  
Pray that the lives of students would be transformed as Juan’s was.

# LABELS AND IDENTITY

## DAY 12

Think about your life in America: your job, your habits, your favorite places. You may have established relationships, talents and interests, all which help others identify you.

Now, imagine beginning a new life in a completely different country. You have no job, no habits - nor do you know where to begin - because you've only been there for a few days. You're alone, your talents have no current use and nobody knows your interests. You're simply labeled the foreigner or defined by a distinct feature. It would be difficult to be diminished down to one thing; something less than the whole.



That's what international students face. Others often identify them by their ethnicity or their accent and fail to see anything else. Some assume all internationals are Chinese or Mexican. European students may blend in. They are not seen for who they really are. When someone is continuously mislabeled, it can be easy to feel lost and insignificant.

We want international students to see their true potential and know their true identity. Christ sees each student in full and offers them everlasting value. Ephesians tells us that in Christ we are chosen, alive, members of God's household and God's handiwork (Ephesians 1:11, 2:4, 2:10, 2:19).

If international students heard and knew this truth, their experience in America and their life would be changed. They could fight the mislabels knowing who and whose they truly are.

Pray that students would learn their true identity and refute any false labels. (1 John 3:1)  
Pray Psalm 139 over specific students or groups.  
Pray that IFI staff and volunteers can speak the truth of identity to international students.

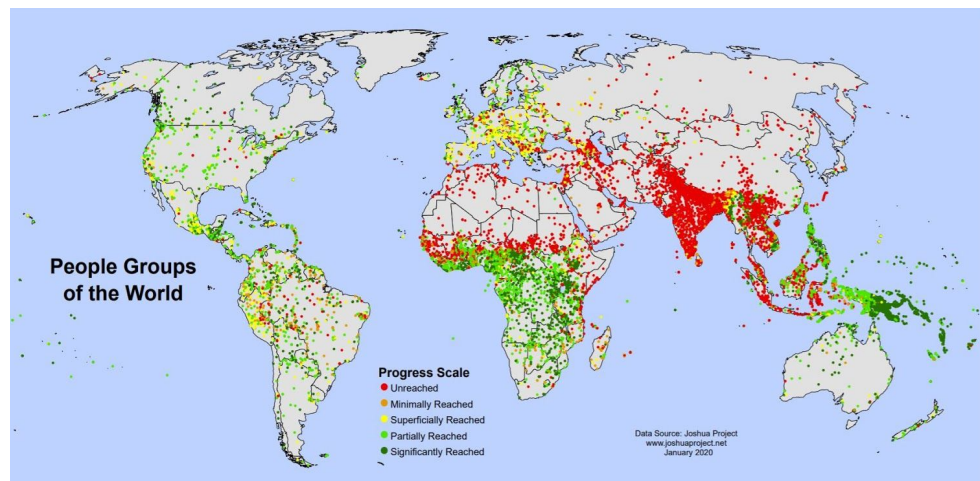
# UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

## DAY 13

The first day of our guide focused on praying over the impact international students could have when they return to their home countries and the overall spread of the gospel message. Some of these students may not only come from another religion, but could come from, or one day impact, an unreached people group.

[Unreached people groups](#) share a culture, language and self-identity. In regards to ministry, it refers to the largest possible group in which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding and acceptance.

A group is considered unreached if it lacks Christian community members. [The Joshua Project](#), a ministry dedicated to the awareness and outreach of unreached people groups, collects and reports the global data of such groups.



Today there are over 7.6 billion people in the world, representing over 10,000 people groups. Over 4.5 thousand of these groups, more than three billion individuals, are considered to be unreached. They have not had access to or heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you to the very end of the age”  
[Matthew 28:19-20]

Pray that international students would come to know Jesus and spread the gospel message in their home countries.

Pray for the safety and success of returning students and missionaries as they attempt to reach these groups.

Pray that these 3 billion individuals would come to know and love Jesus.

# CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## DAY 14

The People's Republic of China remains officially atheist and Communist Party member numbers remain well over 70 million. Atheism has long been promoted throughout the Republic of China and thoroughly propagated in the education system. The Christian population, however, has surpassed this number as well as the population of Chinese Buddhists. There has been an increase in the number of Party members who are believers. These government workers have the potential to influence and bring redemption to the Republic of China through their positions.

China continues to send the vast majority of its nation's international students to The Ohio State University. Nearly 70 percent of OSU's international population is from China. It is not a coincidence, but an intentional act by God that so many unreached international students from China attend OSU, the leading ministry school/location of all IFI.

Staff and volunteers need wisdom to outreach to Chinese students on campus this year. Especially during the pandemic, we can develop a stronger presence on campus and spend more one-on-one time with students. Not only do believing students have the potential to influence their peers on campus or friends back home, but they too could become prominent agents of change working for the government of China where they could influence the redemption of the Republic of China.



Pray that God strengthens the faith and knowledge of Chinese Christian students at OSU.  
Pray that God would prepare and equip students before they return to China.  
Pray that they would influence and be a light to those around them.  
Pray that they would persevere under the persecution.  
Pray that all followers of Christ working in state structures might walk faultlessly and be a redemptive force within the government.  
Pray that Atheism in China will finally be revealed as hollow and deceptive.

# INDIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## DAY 15

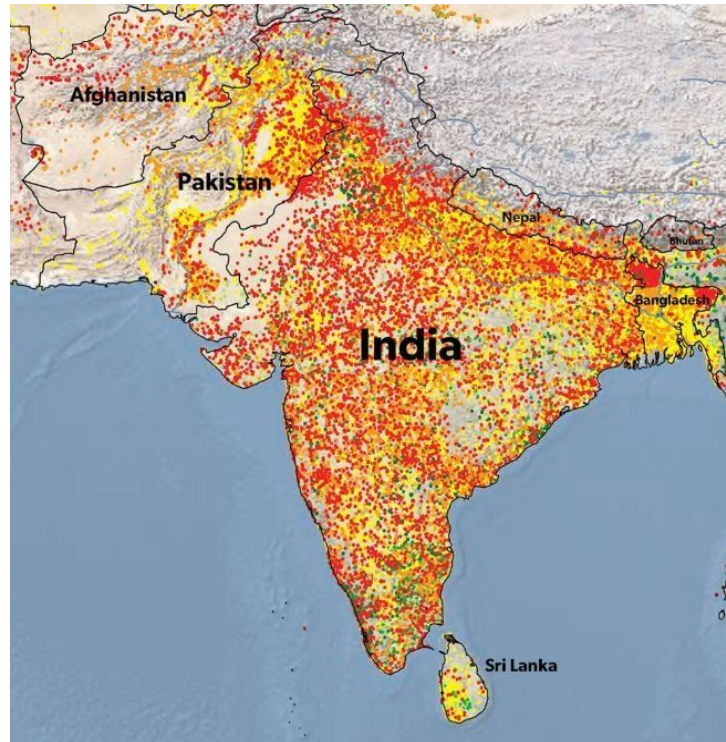
India has more unreached people groups than any other country in the world. The total population includes over 1.36 billion people with more than 2,500 people groups, yet over 95 percent of India's people have never heard the good news of Jesus. The country is dominated by Hinduism and many people are hindered by poverty and a lack of education and literacy.

The second largest group of international students on The Ohio State University's campus are Indian. It's more than likely they come from a region with less than two percent Christians, as indicated by the red dots scattered across the [map of india](#).

We have the unique opportunity of these students coming to America compared to missionaries who have to go to their country. They come to us unreached, but we don't want them to leave that way. For the last three years, we have had a team of volunteers plan events specifically for Indian students. We have a monthly truth gathering, Satsang, where students sing in Hindi and discuss Bible stories (in English). We also have special gatherings to celebrate Diwali, Holi and the Indian independence day, today, August 15th.

This spring, God answered our prayers by providing us with a new team member who will focus on reaching students from a Hindu background with our new Indian outreach team.

We envision God's love extending globally, especially to unreached regions such as India. Students who come to know the Lord here in America can become vital agents of change in such countries. This is our mission within International Friendships; that our outreach would make disciples who can extend beyond our reach and create more followers of Jesus through the spreading of the gospel.



Pray for dynamic connections with Indian students that we are hosting and serving.  
Pray that our Indian students would come to follow Christ and extend their knowledge and faith back home.  
Pray for wisdom and discernment for the new Indian outreach team.

# MUSLIM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## DAY 16

Over 1.8 billion people practice Islam in the world today. In recent years, more Muslims have relocated to the United States and other predominantly Christian countries than ever before. This has led to an increase in Muslim conversions, but the necessity of outreach still remains.



For the last eight year, IFI has partnered with [The Crescent Project](#), an organization dedicated to sharing the good news with Muslims and providing resources for new believers and believers who have a heart to serve muslims. their goal is to see every Muslim have an opportunity to respond to the Gospel and be connected to a true follower of Jesus.

Many Muslims, especially women, who convert to Christianity are vulnerable;

they fear for their safety and the repercussions for leaving their past religion and beliefs. The Crescent Project works to help these new believers in times of fear and uncertainty, and equip believers to effectively share their faith with Muslims.

IFI has a team of volunteers who have been trained to reach muslims. They meet several times a month for prayer and outreach to students. They also host a Hallel Thanksgiving and celebration at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting, to share about Jesus.

Pray for wisdom and discernment for the Muslim fellowship team.  
Pray that bridges would be built with Muslim students at OSU.  
Pray that Muslim conversions would continue to increase.  
Pray for the safety of Muslim women who live in fear because of their relationship with Christ.

# IFI EVENTS, ACTIVITIES & TRIPS

## DAY 17

Each year, IFI hosts numerous events, activities, meetings and trips for international students to take part in. In years past, these have always been in-person gatherings, sometimes with upwards of 1,000 attendees.



Groups that meet on a regular basis include

Conversation Partners, Bible Discussion groups, the Wives Group, the Mothers Group, the English Conversation Club and individual discipling all across Columbus. Large scale events and activities that typically happen through the academic year include the Welcome Party, the Labor Day Picnic, helping students move in, cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year, trips to Hocking Hills, community gathering such as ice-cream socials, and many more. This year we are faced with the struggle of engaging students through these events with severe restrictions and limited physical contact.

We are in need of innovative and creative ideas through which we can make our presence known on campus, meet new international students and extend life-changing hospitality. With so much ambiguity about the future and details of these gatherings, it is urgent that we bring ourselves, these specific circumstances and this entire semester before the Lord in prayer.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”  
[Ephesians 6:18]

Pray that IFI would find favor with the Lord and that He would bless and guide our gatherings.  
Pray that IFI would develop creative and engaging ideas for student gatherings and virtual contact.  
Pray that students would be willing to sign up/attend the events, groups and activities.  
Pray that volunteers would continue to engage with and host students.  
Pray for a venue to host the welcome party this year (virtual or delayed or any other circumstance).

# MOVE-IN WEEK

## DAY 18

Students have begun moving into dorms and apartments, clubs and organizations are making plans to accommodate for COVID and airports are bringing in hundreds of students from all over the world. Everyone is mindful of COVID-19 and IFI is trying to establish a new normal to balance outreach and safety.

From August 12th through August 23rd, students are moving into their housing assignments at The Ohio State University. This week looks different from years past. This year, students must schedule a move-in date and time in order to limit the number of people in living spaces, students will only be allowed one or two individuals to help them move in their belongings, and OSU will only provide a limited and restricted number of volunteers to assist during the move in process.



This week usually holds countless opportunities to meet international students, offer them hospitality and service, and lay the foundations of relationships with them. These first few days and weeks this year will be more restricted and may be more fear-filled than ever before, making connections more difficult and loneliness more pervasive. We hope, with the guidance and favor of the Lord, to still be able to offer international students the help that they need during this uncertain, transitional time.

Pray that international students would find flights and have time to adjustment before the semester begins.

Pray that life changing relationships would begin this week.

Pray for the health and safety of students, staff and volunteers.

Praise God that international students are allowed to stay at their universities and that new international students are being welcomed.

# STUDENT NEEDS

## DAY 19

Thousands of international students arrive at The Ohio State University every fall. Many of them are eager for life in America as they walk off the plane, but understandably, it's easy for them to feel timid or overwhelmed. International students move to the states with limited belongings, some with little more than the clothes on their back.

Students who cross borders to get here are often in need of materials and resources we wouldn't consider. They need bank accounts, cell phones or sim cards, school supplies, apartment supplies and so much more. OSU only provides housing for freshman and sophomores, so 60 percent of students have to find and furnish their own apartments. Some have never cooked and now have to learn where to get food and how to prepare it. They need to know where to find resources and how to obtain them. These are things we've slowly accumulated throughout our life with the support of others. International students are attempting to acquire such resources alone in a very short time.



Chapter 16 in the book of Exodus talks about the Israelite's needs as they journey through the desert. They are hungry, tired, and shaken being in an unfamiliar place, much like international students when they arrive.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you...”  
[Exodus 16:4]

The Lord did not abandon his people, but provided their every need. We are confident the Lord will provide for these students and we want to be a part of his provision. We want to provide guidance, help and resources.

Pray for provision for material resources and needs of international students.  
Pray that IFI could model that same provision for these students as God did for the Israelites.  
Thank God that he is a provider and that we can trust He will meet the needs of every student.

# BARRIERS

## DAY 20

International students experience barriers when they begin life in America.

Many are fluent, or nearly fluent, in English, yet struggle to communicate. Some may read fluently but have little experience with pronunciation, or struggle keeping up with the speed of a conversation. They are usually unfamiliar with slang or commonly used idioms which can hinder them from understanding conversations. Their accent, or lack of experiential immersion in our language, can make it difficult for others to understand what they're saying. They may also have learned a British term or a word not commonly used in the U.S. These factors, and more, can hinder possible connections and instill a barrier between these students and a successful life in America.



Many international students face financial burdens. They can struggle to find employment, or don't know where to begin looking. They may also be unfamiliar with what jobs they are eligible for with a student visa. Their families may be under financial stress with a child studying abroad. The cost of tuition is usually much higher for international students and the exchange rates increase this burden, often by a factor of seven to 10.

International students experience racial barriers from other students and even college staff or employers. They can feel like and be viewed as outsiders just because of how they look, dress, walk or sound.

The culture in America is often different for international students. Our food, orientation to time and cultural values are a few of the culture-shock factors that these students can be faced with. At first, experiencing cultural differences can seem fun and intriguing, but frustration for these differences and lack of familiarity can set in as they navigate and learn our culture. IFI hopes to play a part in helping them navigate our culture and be successful.

Pray that students can approach these barriers with confidence and with support.  
Pray against injustice international students face. (Psalm 7:6-7 & Psalm 50:6)  
Pray that IFI can be an accepting and loving resource for international students.

# OLD AND NEW BURDENS

## DAY 21

International students approach a lot of unknown factors as they enter college. They encounter struggles as they figure out their means of life in America and many bring preexisting burdens along with them. IFI wants to be a resource for these students. They face challenges such as finding an apartment or creating a bank account. Some carry emotional burdens from their family, while others bare religious and spiritual burdens from their upbringing. Our staff and volunteers want to walk alongside these students in the issues they will inevitably face or have already faced in their lives.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

[Galatians 6:2]

These international students need people and places of comfort and relief. We are called to embrace those who struggle to stand on their own and help them overcome difficulties.

“But pity to anyone who falls And has no one to help them up.”

[Ecclesiastes 4:10]



COVID-19 may create new burdens for students, or make existing ones even heavier. These circumstances have also implemented challenges for IFI. Staff and volunteers face new burdens of connecting with students which has the potential to hinder us from walking with students through their struggles. Our desire is to find new, creative ways through which we can genuinely and effectively connect with students and create lasting relationships where we help bare their burdens and share the good news of Jesus with them, our advocate who has eternally taken our sins and burdens upon himself.

Pray that IFI would be seen as a resource to international students.  
Pray for creative ideas through which we could genuinely connect with internationals.  
Pray that international students would find help, solace and deliverance in the Lord.

# SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

## DAY 22

The majority of international students attending OSU are from China. They make up over 75 percent of the international undergraduate population. In total, there are almost 4,000 international undergraduate students that represent over 100 countries. There are an additional 2,000 internationals in graduate programs.

With such diverse representation comes many different religions, or lack there-of. In China, the most pronounced religion is Atheism, in India, Hindu, and in Malaysia, Islam. These are a few examples from the most represented countries among OSU international students.

Christianity is associated with American culture, so many international students are curious to learn more about God. In such an important stage and transitional period of life, these students may begin to figure out what they believe in contrast to what they have been taught.

“Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.”

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.”

[Matthew 20:33-34]

With so many students unaware of their spiritual blindness, we want to show them compassion and reveal the one true God, as Jesus did his disciples. This is an opportune time for international students to learn the truth of the gospel.



Pray that international students would gain new sight despite their upbringing/past beliefs.

Pray they would ask about, seek, and find Jesus. (Matthew 7)

Pray over the spiritually lost and blind countries of the world.

Give thanks for the compassion Jesus extends to people from every nation.

# FREEDOM

## DAY 23

College is usually the first time a student experiences a sense of individual freedom. They are no longer under the roof of their parents and are free to make their own decisions; to lead the kind of life they want to live. This new exposure to independence leads to new habits, both good and bad.

What many students don't realize is that their idea of freedom may not be true freedom at all. The world's definition of freedom is distorted and leads to temptation and indulgence. Only in Christ can anyone truly live free.

"Then you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free."  
[John 8:32]

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."  
[Galatians 5:1]

The enemy wants to take advantage of this vulnerable time in student's lives. They are tempted with the ways of the world that lead to pain and destruction, and away from true freedom. The parents of many African students who are believers are fearful that their children will be seduced by evil during their time in the United States.

Our prayer is that students would be mindful of what they are giving their life to and consider if it leads to value or purpose. In a vulnerable time full of temptation, we want students to know the good that awaits them and the true freedom offered to them. The beginning of each semester is a chance to start good habits like meeting a conversation partner and attending Bible discussion groups.



Pray that students would learn the true meaning and source of freedom.

Pray against the lies of worldly freedom.

Pray that Christian students and volunteers would be an example of what it looks like to walk in freedom.

Ask God to protect the faith of believing international students and provide them with Christian mentors and fellowship.

# COMMUNITY

## DAY 24

Leaving home entails leaving a familiar way of life and loved ones. International students come from a diverse number and style of backgrounds with different family dynamics, but they usually share a feeling of loneliness as they begin their life in America.



Each year we encounter international students who have been at OSU for several years, but have yet to make any American friends. Nationally, 75 percent or more of international students are never invited into an American home. International Friendships plays a vital role in helping to create a supportive community for them during their time in America. International students are often eager for the family and connection that can be found through a community like the one IFI offers. Jesus tells us our family is made up of believers around us.

“Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

[Matthew 12: 49-50]

As believers, and as humans, we need community. We crave the joy, connection and relief that comes through companionship. These relationships can be built through Bible discussion groups, conversation partners, natural friendships and meal sharing. Community relationships are even more important this year as students balance relational needs with COVID restrictions.

A [short film](#) made by IFI shows the stark contrast of international students' experiences when they are surrounded by a welcoming community compared to when they are alone. One student's community makes his life in America enjoyable and worthwhile. His connection and invitation to a group such as IFI changes the life of a lonely girl for the better in her search for relationships and purpose.

We want the community of IFI, and ultimately the kingdom of God, to grow. Through our generosity and hospitality in relationships, we can invite our international friends into a community that truly cares and can make a lasting impact on their lives.

Pray that the Lord would lead students to the community of IFI.

Pray that IFI would extend hospitality to lonely students.

Pray that international students would feel welcome and that they would find their place at IFI.

# CLASSES BEGIN; OSU START DATE

## DAY 25

As the end of summer draws near and the fall semester approaches, many of us are weary of schools and colleges opening. Some schools in Columbus, such as Columbus State Community College, remain virtual, while others, like OSU, plan for in-person classes to begin today, August 25th.



The beginning of a semester, especially under the circumstances of COVID-19, evokes many emotions: excitement and fear, confidence and insecurity, determination and hesitancy. International students especially need a friendly face and comfort more than ever this first year during a national pandemic.

IFI typically hosts a welcome party at the Ohio Union the first evening of classes. As we assemble this prayer guide, the Ohio Union has not finalized their meeting requirements and restrictions, but we know it will be closed and unavailable for our welcome party. We are unsure whether we will be able to host our event somewhere else or what it could look like with COVID restrictions.

With unprecedented challenges facing our charge in ministry, we remain prayerful and determined in our efforts to know and love international students this semester and those to come. God is sovereign and we believe He holds even this season in His hands. Pray with us as we continue forward with Him on our side to expand His Kingdom at OSU.

Pray that international students would encounter inviting and friendly believers on campus.  
Pray that students would find places of belonging and involvement as they create their new routines.

Pray that international students would build friendships with believers who can share the gospel.  
Pray that international students would get connected with IFI.

# UNINTENTIONAL INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

## DAY 26

A long time ago during the 6th century BC, there were four unintentional international students contemporary with the prophet Ezekiel, Jehoiakim was king of Judah and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Who were these international students and how can we learn about them? The answer is found in the book of Daniel which is more famous for the three Hebrew children who were thrown into the fiery furnace or Daniel and the Lion's den. Have you thought about how they got to Babylon or what they did before entering the King's service?

Daniel chapter one tells us that they were young men from the royal family and the nobility who were captured when Jerusalem was besieged. They were captured and taken to Babylon. The Bible tells us that they were handsome, showing aptitude in every kind of learning, well informed and quick to understand. They were to be trained for three years and then enter the king's service. This sounds a lot like the international students we meet today who are some of the best and brightest students from around the world. They typically come for three to five years and usually have already learned English before they arrive.

They had the challenge of learning a new language, dealing with new food and having their names changed. As with most people, their names are a key part of their identity. At least two of the Hebrew young men had a form of Yahweh in their name, but their new Babylonian names had references to the gods of Babylon. Imagine how difficult this would have been for these young men as they were facing deportation, captivity, slavery and a new culture. If you ask me, Daniel really got the short end of the stick on having his name changed. I can pronounce Daniel, not so sure about his Babylonian name.

"The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego."  
[Daniel 1:7]

Because they honored God, God gave them favor with the training official and their later service as advisors for a series of four kings. We don't know how God will use the students that we meet this year, but many of them will go back to their country and be leaders and influencers. We need God to direct our steps so that we connect with the students who are looking for Him and prepare them for a future none of us can anticipate. As we yield to the work of the Holy Spirit, He will guide us and use us to accomplish His purpose.

Ask God to show IFI staff and volunteers more students who are searching for God and capable of teaching others what they are learning.

Ask God to give IFI favor at OSU and other area universities.

Ask God to give us boldness to be intentional in sharing about Jesus with the students we encounter.

# SEARCHING

## DAY 27

College is one of the most influential periods of a person's life. They're encountering new people, shaping their opinions, learning new information and challenging their beliefs. They are presented with a lot of new ideas that they are trying to filter through.

International students can experience more difficulty digesting new concepts or information. They are exposed to racial barriers, language barriers and accent barriers that keep them from understanding or having a voice to ask questions.

Their voice is just as important as any other student. They should know and experience such equality. When they are curious and confident enough to ask questions, we can point them back to Jesus. When they're open to learning and engaging in conversations, the Lord can move in their heart and stir up more questions about who He is. Questions have the potential to lead to life giving conversations.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."  
[Matthew 7:7-8]



Our prayer is that every student would have a believing friend who can help them experience true love and encounter Jesus.

Pray that international students would be curious and have confidence to ask questions.  
Pray that conversations would lead to the truth of Jesus.  
Pray that IFI staff and volunteers would be equipped to address difficult questions and topics.

# GOD'S WORD

## DAY 28

“Finally, believers,  
whatever is true,  
whatever is honorable and worthy of respect,  
whatever is right and confirmed by God’s word,  
whatever is pure and wholesome,  
whatever is lovely and brings peace,  
whatever is admirable and of good repute;  
if there is any excellence,  
if there is anything worthy of praise,  
think continually on these things [center your  
mind on them, and implant them in your heart].”  
[Philippians 4:8]



Slowly and thoughtfully read this scripture, then pray as God directs.  
Amen!

# STUDENT TESTIMONY - XIA

## DAY 29

Xia moved from mainland China to Columbus, Ohio in 2015 to pursue a degree in early childhood education at The Ohio State University. Before she had set foot in America, God had begun connecting her to IFI and believers that would later share their faith and encourage her own.



When she arrived in the United States, she was greeted by IFI volunteers as part of the airport pickup service. These initial and immediate connections led her to attend the welcome party and other IFI events, meet regularly with a conversation partner, and participate in a Bible Discussion group for three years. It was through those in her Bible discussion group and conversation partner pouring into her that she came to faith.

After graduating in 2019, she joined IFI's ISEED program where she grew in faith and personal development. From this experience, she better understood her identity in Christ, the characteristics of God and how to disciple others. This fall, she will be joining IFI staff as a Columbus Ministry Team Campus Minister.

"I want to see international students' lives changed," said Xia.

As a Campus Minister, Xia looks forward to sharing the love of God with others. Having herself been an international student, she is excited to be committed full time to ministry where she can welcome international students and build relationships with them. Xia hopes to share with students the same life-changing story of Jesus that transformed her own life and welcome in more believers to God's family and kingdom.

Pray that Xia's VISA would be processed quickly so that she can join the Columbus Campus ministry team.

Pray that Xia would be able to raise the funds needed to support her minister position

Ask God to show the IFI staff and volunteers more students like Xia who are capable of teaching others what they are learning.

# EMOTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH

## DAY 30

International students can face isolation and loneliness that can easily lead to a decline in mental health and a fluctuation of emotions. Many students come from cultures where such topics are never discussed. In this new place, they may not know where to go, who to turn to for help or understand why they feel the way they do. That is one reason international friendships are so important for students.

This is a painful and confusing time for some students. The Psalmist states it well:

“Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my savior and my God.”  
[Psalm 42:5]



It can be difficult to pin-point the source of our sorrows, but the psalmist knew surrendering it over to God was the solution. We know that the Lord is our hope that He is an anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6:19). Through the Lord, the battle of mental health is more effectively fought. These students need a supportive community that can be a light to them in these times. They need the sustaining power and provisions of Christ.

Pray that international students would speak up if they're struggling.  
Pray that we can serve international students struggling with mental health.  
Pray that we can tell them the lasting hope found in Christ..

# WILDFIRE

## DAY 31

“...for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’ ”  
[Hebrews 12:29]

This attribute of God is good news because he and the message of the gospel will spread like wildfire. When one connection is built or one life is transformed, it spreads into the lives of others beyond our scope of vision. It only takes one person to ignite a gospel movement.

The IFI blog wrote a story about [“A Conversation that Led to Many More.”](#) A relationship began between conversation partners: an American believer and a Pakistani nonbeliever. Everyday conversations slowly changed into more meaningful topics of faith and religion. The Pakistani brought others like him into these discussions that eventually turned into a study group of the Bible and Quran.

One relationship sparked an entire group gathering where the Spirit could move. God was at work, spreading and consuming those who were reading his word and talking about truth.

This is one story of many to come. This year will bring new students engaging with conversation partners, Bible discussion groups and friendships. God can and will spread in the hearts of new students as we set sparks.



Pray that one spark (a relationship, a conversation, a person) would lead to God consuming the lives of international students.

Pray that IFI staff, partners and volunteers would be bold and guided as they get to know students.

Pray that the Lord's consuming fire would spread across OSU's campus.

# THANK YOU

In such uncertain times, our team could not be more grateful for those who have rallied together in prayer over the needs of IFI and the lives of international students. Your time and words throughout this past month will not only influence our organization, but affect the eternal Kingdom of God.

Throughout all the years that IFI has worked in the lives of international students, we have witnessed the provision of the Lord and countless answers to prayer. Our Heavenly Father is good and faithful. Our hope and confidence lies in Him that we will see him do it again and again the days ahead.

We ask and hope that you will continue with us in prayer beyond the month of August as this uncertain and changing school year progresses.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we may ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.”  
[Ephesians 3:20-21]

From the entire Columbus Campus Ministry Team, thank you.

