

ISM Ideas with Coronavirus Impact

March 19, 2020

Ideas for connecting to international students during the coronavirus epidemic

This is a unique time around the globe. I believe God is giving us an opportunity to be intentional with those around us who do not know Jesus. This is especially true for the nations He has dropped in our lap. This is a great time to challenge Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) students and church members to engage international students in various ways.

These internationals may be fearful, anxious, and depressed. They are probably missing their families more than ever. They may feel isolated. They may turn to unhealthy patterns to help cope with this situation. We can be the light of Christ to them in this unparalleled time.

Please encourage BCM students and churches (church members) who have relationships with the international students to reach out to their local international students.

When possible please invite Christian brothers and/or sisters who have not spent time with internationals to join you. They will understand the need as they get a taste of hands-on ministry to the students. This has proven to be one of the best ways of enlisting more volunteers and churches for ISM.

Ideas for ministering to international students.

PRAY for them.

Connect to them by making regular contact via phone; email; Facebook post; Facebook Messenger; We Chat (Chinese); What's App, GroupMe; cell phone text or US mail with letters and cards.

Create an environment for natural conversation

Ask about the impact of the Coronavirus restrictions; ask about their thoughts and feelings. This could easily lead to discussion of God's love, such as, "Perfect love casts out all fear." 1 John 4:18

Ask about their *family, friends, food, festivals and future*, using the *Who, What, When, Where and Why* questions.

Ask them what they think a Christian is? Have they ever heard the big picture story of God and His relationship with men and women? Ask if they would like for you to tell them?

Listen well. Each of these questions could lead to questions about their faith and your faith.

Here are some suggestions for reaching out to them:

- Check and see if they need housing. This is a great opportunity for students to be in temporary homes with families.
- If they are asked to move out of dorms, and no families will take them, check with local camps, or even hotels to see if they will provide a reduced rate.
- Take them cookies, a special treat, or care packages.
- Gather “cold supplies” such as: sore throat spray, tissues, mints, tea, crackers, soup, or oranges for those who may be sick.
- Consider outdoor activities with them such as hiking, playing frisbee, walking, basketball, camping, etc.
- Use this as an opportunity to have some one-on-one time with them.
- Invite them to your home for board games, watch movies, a meal or maybe let them cook a meal for you from their country.
- Volunteers may want to invite an international to travel with them to visit their families.
- Use precaution if they are sick, but don’t forget about them.
- Serve meals or prepare frozen meals to those who need them at a specified location, such as BCM, a local church or maybe providing a delivery service at their door.

How to provide community with internationals electronically

Virtual group hangout through **Zoom or Facebook** is a great way for face to face visits.

Zoom will allow you to host up to 100 people for 40 minutes. These virtual group avenues will allow you to continue bible studies, small groups and possibly small group conversation clubs.

Please encourage students and church volunteers who are already engaging international students to experiment with this. This provides opportunity to bring other Americans alongside of ISM Volunteers to meet nations attending local colleges and universities.

Some basic education to reduce the spread of germs:

1. How and when to wash hands
2. An extra measure of caution, i.e. forgo handshaking...other cultures greetings like bowing (not kissing) are great in this situation.

3. When and how to get medical help, i.e. if you have a fever and/or are coughing DO NOT just show up at a doctor's office or hospital, call ahead and find out their protocol to keep everyone safe. It is recommended to call the local health department for instructions. Please do not run to the store one last time to pick things up, instead ask a friend to go for you and drop it at the entrance of your place.

Helpful Links:

[UAMS Health COVID-19 Screening](#) for free

or call 800-632-4502

[Arkansas Department of Health COVID-19](#)