



2017 Kentucky State Missions Emphasis
Master Article
By Joy Bolton

Look around Kentucky and you will find people from the nations in our midst. In the mountains of Kentucky, an average of sixty international students make their way to Oneida Baptist Institute each year. On our university campuses, the brightest students from around the world come to study. In our cities, people of every nationality live and work. There are communities of people who share language and culture in urban neighborhoods and apartment complexes.

Kentucky Baptists are responding to the ministry opportunities, recognizing that God is orchestrating the movement of people around the world in order to make the gospel known. To be a witness to the nations is a theme of scripture beginning with the call of Abraham. That calling is echoed in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Rise up and shine, for your light has come. The shining greatness of the Lord has risen upon you. For see, darkness will cover the earth. Much darkness will cover the people. But the Lord will rise upon you, and His shining greatness will be seen upon you. Nations will come to your light and kings will see the shining greatness of the Lord on you (Isaiah 60:1-3 NLV).

Isaiah's words to Israel were fulfilled in Jesus and now are passed to us as Christ followers. The light of Christ has risen upon us. The darkness of sin still covers our world, but the shining greatness of the Lord is seen in believers. We are to let the Christ light shine and in so doing, people from around the world are coming to faith in Jesus as they see the shining greatness of the Lord.



On International Students

Over 8,000 international students ages 12-24 study in Kentucky each year. The majority of these students are coming from China, India, and Saudi Arabia. Most people in these countries have not only never heard the gospel, but rarely even met a Christian. When students from these countries and others, come to the USA for college, this is a prime opportunity to share the gospel.

The **Twelve24 Initiative** of the Kentucky Baptist Convention is a movement to help churches reach students from the ages of 12 to 24 on every campus. This includes international students. On our campuses today, it is estimated that 95% of the students (American and international) would say they are not a practicing Christian.



Thus, churches are needed to see campuses as their mission field. For the Twelve24 Initiative, this includes middle and high school as well as college campuses. In regard to the international element of this initiative, the goal is not only to lead international students to Christ, but also to equip them as missionaries before they return home.

Brett Martin leads the KBC international student ministry. His desire is to help churches grasp that through ministry with international students, Kentucky Baptists have the potential to be a catalyst in the sharing of the gospel with unreached people in other nations. He explains, "If a student from a country with little access to the gospel comes to Kentucky, is welcomed by a Kentucky Baptist church, comes to faith in Christ, is equipped as a missionary, then returns home to share the gospel and start a church, Kentucky Baptists have had a part in taking the gospel to that place and people. Our desire is for every Kentucky Baptist to catch the vision of international missions through ministry to international students."

Sandi McDowell, First Baptist Church of Richmond, works with international student ministry at Eastern Kentucky University. Thanksgiving is a good time to introduce students to a special American holiday. It is also an opportunity to share the Christian perspective on both Thanksgiving and Christmas. At EKV, students are invited to a traditional dinner of turkey and dressing with all the side dishes. Tates Creek Association churches decorate and help provide the meal.

At the Thanksgiving gathering, McDowell invited students to sign up if they were interested in being in an

American home during Thanksgiving and/or Christmas. Last year about 20 students wanted to do this. Families from several churches wanted to connect with students and there were enough homes for everyone. Outings for the students were as different as the families that hosted. Each had a wonderful experience with their students.

After the holidays, additional outings with students included sledding with hot chocolate, shopping trips, site seeing, etc. Families that connected with students planned movie nights and other family gatherings. As relationships have grown, gospel conversations flow naturally.

McDowell is working to engage more churches from Tates Creek Association in the ministry with international students. Welcoming events held when the students first arrive in August include meeting students at the airport, showing them the community, taking them to the university, and providing linens for those who arrive without them. Some students arrive without a coat and may not have the funds to purchase one.

WMU groups have made hospitality baskets to give to students. These include anything that might make their stay a little more comfortable. International students generally arrive with only what will fit in a couple of suitcases. The majority will not have transportation and are dependent on others for an opportunity to get off campus.

Sandi speaks at churches to make them aware of the ministry to international students. She offers several ways of getting involved: helping to host the Thanksgiving dinner, collecting linens, making hospitality baskets, providing rides from the airport, having students in homes for meals, and hosting students for holidays and times when dorms are closed.



Sandi McDowell poses with international students at the International Student Conference

Brett Martin tells of a family in Kentucky who hosted an international student and had questions such as "Who is Jesus?" and "Why did He have to die?" This student even told the family, "I want to treat my future wife and children the way you treat yours, not the way my culture treats theirs."

Martin says, “The KBC consists of 2,400 churches who cooperate together to reach Kentucky and the world for Christ. One would think Kentucky and the world would be two different ministry locations, but with God bringing the nations to us, we see that one can reach the world by simply walking out the front door. You can impact the world by stepping onto a campus. Now you can impact the world by simply inviting students into your home.”

Prior experience interacting with cultures is not required to participate in the Twelve24 Initiative with international students. To get started, Martin urges Kentucky Baptists to pray for international students and for more people to serve in this ministry. He encourages churches who want to get started to connect with a regional campus missionary to learn more about the needs and opportunities.

Churches who are engaging in International Student Ministry testify to the impact of this work. Todd Martin (no relation to Brett Martin) got his start in international student ministry with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) as a US/C-2 missionary. He assisted local churches in the Lexington area and from that beginning, Ashland Avenue Baptist Church approached him about continuing his work on their staff as a missionary to international students. Todd’s wife, Anca, is an integral part of Connexion International, Ashland Avenue’s international student ministry. She is from Romania and now leads Bible study for international women.

Each week Ashland Avenue has church members who invite students to Sunday morning activities, provide rides, and have lunch with the students afterwards. After morning worship, there is a small group that is designed to help international students explore the truths of the Bible in a discussion format. No background knowledge of the Bible is required to participate and facilitators seek to explain the gospel in language that is comfortable for those who speak English as a Second Language.

Each Wednesday night, Anca Martin leads the international women’s Bible student, and a men’s Bible study was started this past January. In collaboration with other churches in Lexington and with the help of Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM), there is a dinner and conversation night for students every Monday. The ministry also helps with airport pickups, shopping trips, baby showers, out-of-town trips, and other types of ministry. Each Thanksgiving, they host an international student Thanksgiving dinner that usually includes about

400 people from about 30 different nationalities. Each table is hosted by believers who share Christian hospitality and are able to share their thankfulness for what God has done for them through Christ.

Todd Martin says that Connexion International is often able to stay in touch with students and scholars when they return to their home countries. One professor who came to faith was the head of the English literature department at her university. Upon returning to her school, she was able to share biblical truth with her classes whenever there were biblical illustrations in the literature.

Anca Martin recently received a message from a student who had returned home saying that she had just become a believer. This student was not at all interested in Christianity when she came to Kentucky, but the kindness of believers and the message of God’s word over time had changed her heart and mind. “She is a very thoughtful lady,” said Anca, “and considered carefully the cost of following Christ. Though she is no longer here, God has brought her into contact with a wonderful Chinese Christian couple who are continuing to invest in her life.”

Two Kentucky students were recently able to visit a Japanese student who had become a believer before returning home. Her mother threatened suicide if she did not discontinue her involvement with Christianity. But this student’s faith has held strong and she committed to follow through with baptism.

Another student from China came to faith and then, about a year later, her husband also became a believer. This couple decided to stay in the USA. After having a baby, her mother came to visit and was able to see the Christian way of life and hear the teachings. She became a believer. Later the husband’s mother started reading the Bible and listening to sermons online after seeing the difference in her son. She has also become a believer.

Brett Martin encourages churches to reach out to international students. “In so doing, your church could reach, teach, and send an international student to plant churches where there are none, all around the world.” Pray for international students as they adjust to life in the United States. Pray that they will hear and understand the gospel while they are here. Pray for laborers to be sent out into the harvest, coming from your local church.

For more information on ministry to international students, contact Brett Martin at 502-489-3351 or email: Brett.Martin@kybaptist.org.



International Students as Missionaries

Brett Martin and others who work with international students try to stay connected with students as they return home. They understand the importance of continuing to encourage students who have come to faith in Christ, especially those who go back to cultures that are hostile to the gospel.

Out of the desire not only to keep mentoring new believers, but also to equip them to be bold witnesses in their home countries, a new training opportunity for internationals has been developed called the M3 Intensive: Missionary-Member-Mobilizer. The first event was held February 10-12, 2017 at Refuge Louisville to provide training for Christian internationals and church leaders. The purpose was to teach internationals how to live like a missionary when they return home.

The M3 Intensive training included cross-cultural ministry skills, how to lead evangelistic Bible studies, one-to-one evangelism, as well as practical witnessing experience with internationals in the community around Refuge. As a result of the training, attendees are challenged to connect with a local church to reach, teach, and minister to international students, utilizing what they learned in the M3 Intensive experience.

But Martin wants Kentucky Baptists to envision an even bigger opportunity. He asks, "What if a Christian international student returned home and opened the door for you and your church to share the gospel and even plant a church in a neighborhood that you did not

originally have access to? What if you could reach an international student and connect him/her with missionaries sent either through the International Mission Board or from your local church?" He said, "I can only imagine IMB missionary teams being strengthened and churches growing in their local missions endeavors. I can sense Christian international students being effective to reach unreached people groups whom we will see in heaven."

"One day we will hear about a movement of God in a place that is closed to traditional missionaries that started because of the witness of an international student who came to faith in Christ while studying in Kentucky," says Joy Bolton, Executive Director of Kentucky WMU. "This is the dream of our international student ministry. Kentucky Baptists want to reach Kentucky and the world for Christ. This is a way to do just that right here at home."

Pray for international students who have become Christ followers during their time of study in Kentucky. Pray for those who are leading discipleship with these students, that they will be well-grounded in the Christian faith before returning to their home countries. Pray for efforts like the M3 Intensive Conference to equip them to witness and start churches.

For more information about the M3 Intensive Conference, contact Brett Martin at 502-489-3351 or email: Brett.Martin@kybaptist.org.



Friendship International

Can you imagine up-rooting your family, selling almost all of your possessions, and moving nearly half-way around the world? That was the experience of a student from an Eastern European country that upheld atheistic beliefs. After winning an immigration lottery, the family made plans to leave their country and come to the USA. A previous contact with someone from western Kentucky made an impact on the family. Their internet search revealed quality schools in the Paducah area.

After months of planning and paperwork, a 10-hour flight from Moscow to New York, renting a car and driving 18-hours to west Kentucky, the family arrived and settled in the area. They quickly found their way to Friendship International sponsored by West Union Baptist Association.

Surprise registered on the father's face as a Bible, provided by funds from the Eliza Broadus Offering, was presented to him. This Bible was in both his native language and English in a side-by-side format. Bilingual Bibles are used in the English as a Second Language classes at Friendship International as well as other textbooks provided by gifts from Kentucky Baptists. This family is now attending a church near their home as they experience their new culture.

Friendship International in West Union Association was started in 1993 after Delores Spears, former Kentucky WMU President, had an inspiration after traveling back and forth to Louisville for Kentucky WMU Executive Board meetings with Estelle Gray. Estelle and her husband, the late George Gray, worked with Friendship International in Murray and led Bible studies for international students.

After visiting the Murray site and holding ESL training for West Union Association churches, Friendship International was organized in the fall of 1993. Immanuel Baptist Church in Paducah is the host site. Other Friendship International sites include Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville and Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.

The West Union Friendship International meets from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. on Thursdays. The ministry

helps internationals living in the Paducah area make adjustments to life in America. Activities include English classes, Bible study, and music. New this year, a Wednesday night group has begun to teach English to those who have day jobs.

Social activities occur several times a year. At Thanksgiving there is a pot-luck luncheon and all former students are invited to attend. Students bring a favorite dish from their culture. Field trips to area museums, the public library, and restaurants help the students learn more about the area and resources available to them.

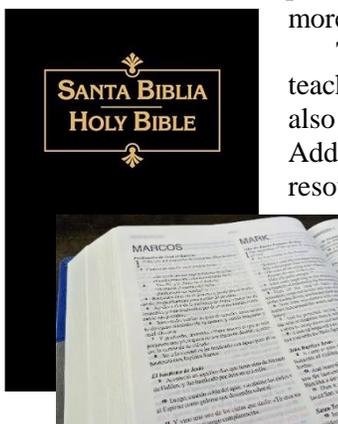
The goal of Friendship International is not only to teach the students and their children in childcare, but also to befriend them and build trust for times of need. Additional helps is provided regarding community resources such as housing, training opportunities, work permission cards, and citizenship information.

Childcare workers teach English by teaching children the alphabet, numbers, common English words used in the home, zoo animals, and Christian children's songs. They also read preschool Bible stories to the children.

When the West Union Friendship International began in 1993, the majority of the students came from Puerto Rico and Mexico. Word spread about the free English classes and students from other countries began attending. Across the years, Friendship International has welcomed students from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Thailand, Hong Kong, France, China, Korea, Turkey, Slovakia, Japan, Guam, India, Syria, Vietnam, Russia, Brazil, Morocco, Jordan, Peru, Nigeria, Colombia, South Korea, Guatemala, Albania, Spain, and Bangladesh.

Glenda Phillips, a retired office technology instructor from West Kentucky Community and Technical College, now serves as the director. There are seven teachers along with nursery workers and a pianist. Churches in West Union Association provide refreshments. One of the teachers, Mary Lu Moore, is a retired IMB missionary to Italy and is able to continue her ministry through Friendship International.

Friendship is not only a place to learn English. It is a place for hope. A woman from an African country arrived in the Paducah area several years ago after experiencing much grief in her homeland. Needing less English tutoring than most internationals do, this student needed the friendship, love, and community that Friendship International provides. Having experienced the death of an infant and a toddler, she came to the USA



Delores Spears and Glenda Phillips

when her third child was four weeks old. She has focused on keeping this child in good health. While working through the steps to citizenship, she became an important part of Friendship by providing loving care to babies of students studying English. She is now pursuing a career in nursing, hoping to provide expert care for newborns. She and her child are now active at Immanuel Baptist Church in Paducah, participating in Bible study, worship, music, and children's programs.

The Eliza Broadus Offering provides grants each year to all of the Friendship International ministries in Kentucky. Many of the international participants continue to stay in contact with family members in their home countries. Friendship International helps Kentucky Baptists reach Kentucky and the world for Christ as students who come to faith share Jesus with family and friends in their countries of origin.

Pray for Friendship International ministries in Paducah, Louisville, and Lexington. Pray for other Friendship International ministries to be started. Pray for those who teach English as a Second Language, Bible, crafts, citizenship, and other classes for internationals. Pray that the gospel will be shared and understood by internationals who participate in this ministry.

For more information about Friendship International, please contact:

- Paducah: Glenda Phillips, gphillips426@gmail.com
- Louisville: Donna Martin, dsmartin57@yahoo.com
- Lexington: Karen Crawford, karenpc@ibclex.com



Volunteers teach English as a Second Language classes at Friendship International



Welcome Teams

Global strife and suffering have brought many unreached people to the United States and specifically to Kentucky. In Louisville alone there are 120 nationalities speaking over 100 different languages. This presents a massive opportunity to share the gospel with those who have fled violence and persecution to seek a safer, better life. They come to build a life free of fear and to become contributing members of society.

Welcome Teams represent a joint effort between Refuge Louisville and area resettlement agencies. Refuge hopes to see more refugees benefit from having special care upon their initial arrival and first few months of resettlement. By working with resettlement agencies, Refuge has found this allows Christians to be the first people a refugee meets upon their arrival to America. By helping with arrival needs, members of the Welcome Team get an open invitation into the refugee's world and relationships are formed early. Above all, Welcome Teams are able to love people like Jesus.

Refuge Louisville exists to empower churches to serve refugees. Their vision is to see the local church



touch lives, transform communities, and end the cycle of suffering among refugees. Your church can form a Welcome Team and Refuge will gladly

help you get started by providing training on how to set up a team.

Welcome Teams do a variety of things to assist refugee families. They set up the apartment of the incoming family (using donations from the resettlement agency as well as items the church can provide). The teams purchase groceries and prepares a welcome basket for each family before they arrive. Then the team meets the refugee family at the airport and assists with transportation. During the first few weeks, the team provides as much



transportation as possible and shares time with the family for their first three months in country. At the end of three months, teams throw a Milestone Party to celebrate with the family that they made it through their first days in America.

Welcome Teams are an important part of ministry to internationals.

John Barnett, executive director of Refuge Louisville, says, "Look across the global landscape and it is clear that God is working mightily through global migration. Many of those who have come to the United States come from countries with no access to the gospel. Acts 17:24-27 reveals that God's sovereign hand is behind the movements of humanity and we need to realize that He is at work. God is placing the nations at our doorstep. Since Jesus instructs us to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), we can easily get involved in His mission to the nations at home."



John Barnett

Through the Acts 17 Initiative, Refuge is seeking to collaborate with others to effectively ministry to people from the nations that are now our neighbors. One of these collaboration efforts is with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Coy Webb, Disaster Relief Director, is also helping to lead coordinate refugee ministries. "We are seeking to partner with local churches, ministries, and associations in reaching refugees," said Webb. "We are working through Louisville Regional Baptist Association and Refuge Louisville to connect churches in Louisville area. We are also working currently to develop a strategy in Owensboro through Bellevue Baptist Church, Owensboro FBC, and several other churches partnering together."

Webb is also excited about the upcoming Community Mapping and Engagement Workshop to be held November 30-December 1, 2017. "We have invited Terry Sharp, Director and Lead Strategist for State and Association Relations and Urban Mobilization Strategies with the International Mission Board, to come to KBC to lead a two-day workshop to help churches learn about the internationals in their communities and how they can engage with them to share the gospel. Terry is an expert in understanding demographics and developing strategies to respond."

Pray for internationals who are coming to Kentucky. Pray for opportunities to welcome them, to help them get settled, to assist them in learning English, and to share Jesus with them.

For more information about Welcome Team Ministry, contact John Barnett by email, phone, or text (JBarnett@refugelouisville.com or 602-654-3385). Learn more on the web: refugelouisville.com.

For more information and to register for the Community Mapping and Engagement Workshop, go to www.kybaptist.org/engage.



Ethnic/Language Churches and Ministries

When internationals arrive in the United States, even if they speak some English, adjustment is challenging. They must quickly adapt to speaking a new language all the time except when at home with family. They must adjust to a culture that is different from what they have experienced. While they may be very glad to be in the USA, they may still be homesick for family, friends, and foods from their home country.

This is a prime time to reach out to internationals with the gospel in their own language by people who share their culture. In Kentucky we are reaching many ethnic/language groups including Nepalis, Filipinos, Burmese, Haitians, Hispanics, Africans, Koreans, and Hindus.

Eddie Torres, Language Missions Catalyst for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, is excited about new language work. "In Kentucky there are new churches for people from Nepal and Burma, something we have never seen in our state before," he said. "In addition, the Nepali church is growing at a faster pace than the other ethnic churches. I am working with a new Nepali church planter in Bowling Green. After just four months they were having around 100 in attendance and the sponsoring church had to provide a bigger place because they were growing so fast. In just six months, this group was nearly self-supporting."



Eddie Torres

Torres asks Kentucky Baptists first to pray. "The need is great," he says. "The church must pray."

Torres also encourages churches to reach out to their ethnic neighbors. "For example," he said, "there is a large group of people from Bosnia living in Bowling Green. We need to find a pastor to minister to them. We need to have a called minister for language/ethnic groups so we can relate and reach them with the gospel."

When asked about churches who are reaching out to ethnic/language neighbors, Torres provided several examples. "Living Hope Baptist Church in Bowling Green has a number of ethnic groups within the church. The Global Pastor is Clay Mullins, but each of the various language groups are led by one of their own. Living Hope is not trying to assimilate these groups into their membership," explains Torres, "but rather, they are letting them become constituted KBC affiliated churches that use the same building."

Prasad Aghamkar serves as the South Asian Ministry Catalyst at Hurstbourne Baptist Church in Louisville. He is originally from Mumbai, India where

he served as a pastor for 14 years and planted three churches among the Hindu community. Prasad came to Southern Seminary as a student in 2007 and has a burden for ministry to people from India. In 2010 he started the first Nepali church in Louisville among the refugee population

Since 2014, Prasad has been serving with Hurstbourne and has started a small group called Aashirwad Asian Fellowship for new believers and seekers. Aashirwad means blessing in the Indian language. The group meets every month in the Fellowship Hall at Hurstbourne where people of different faiths, backgrounds, and nationalities come together to hear the gospel through music, prayer, testimonies, and Bible study.

A large Indian population lives in The Hurstbourne Grand Apartments, located right next door to Hurstbourne Baptist Church. Most who live there are people who have come to the United States as professionals in their fields or for higher education. Indians are very fond of tea or "chai." Because it is part of the Indian culture to have tea and talk, Prasad and his wife, Vandana, have started the first ever "Indian Tea Stall Project" for outreach and evangelism.

The tea cart is located on the church parking lot from spring to fall every Thursday from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. People are out for their evening walk and when they see the cart, they stop because it looks very "Indian." Prasad and Vandana offer visitors free chai and get to know them. Through the Tea Stall, they have made many new contacts and invited people to the monthly fellowship meetings. The feedback is so positive that not only do people come back to the tea cart every week, but they also bring friends. On an average, there are 25-30 people every week who visit the tea stall.



Prasad Aghamkar



Prasad says, "We praise God for giving us this opportunity to reach out to our community in such a unique way. Please pray that God blesses this ethnic ministry and uses this project to reach out to many unreached people from India/Asia. Our vision is that one day God will open their hearts to accept Jesus and to receive the gift of salvation and eternal life."

As ethnic/language congregations are established, one sign of their growth is how they embrace involvement with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and their support of missions. In 2016 the Filipino International Baptist Church was accepted as a KBC-affiliated church. Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Mayfield went through the affiliation process three years ago and they had started supporting the Cooperative Program even before their affiliation with KBC. The Nepali Baptist Church in Bowling Green will soon start the affiliation process.



Anecito C. Ricardo, Jr. ("Jun")

Anecito C. Ricardo, Jr. is the pastor of the Filipino International Baptist Church (FIBC). He is grateful for the help of Eddie Torres in completing the application to become a KBC-affiliated church. It was exciting for the congregation to be invited to the Kentucky Baptist Convention Annual Meeting last year and be officially welcomed into the

KBC. FIBC reaches Americans as well as those who are Filipino. The first person baptized by the congregation was American. The church meets at Maple Grove Baptist Church and on fifth Sundays, they have combined worship with the pastors taking turns preaching.

When asked about reaching Filipinos with the gospel, Pastor Jun (as he is called) said, "The best thing an American can do to share Christ is to introduce yourself and become friends. After you gain trust, then you can introduce Christ. Filipinos listen to people they trust, so build a relationship first. Evangelism is all about building relationships."

Pray for language/ethnic churches in Kentucky. Pray for leaders to start new language ministries and to start new churches. Pray for churches who will welcome these new church starts to share space and resources. Pray for the language churches to grow strong and to take a strong role in missions in Kentucky and beyond.

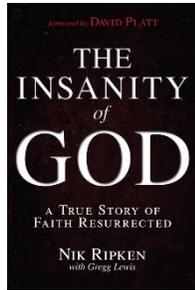
Among gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions received from Kentucky Baptist churches last year was an LMCO envelope containing a 100 Chinese Yuan bill. A note on the envelope said "Chinese Yuan out of appreciation for what Lottie Moon has done for Chinese." It was simply signed "Chinese Christians." We do not know who sent the bill but a donation for its value was made to the offering and the bill and note are on display in the Kentucky WMU office.

For more information about language missions and church planting, contact: Carlos De la Barra, Church Planting Strategist, at 502-489-3419 or Carlos.De.La.Barra@kybaptist.org. Learn more on the web: www.kybaptist.org/multi-ethnic-missions-ministries,1676.

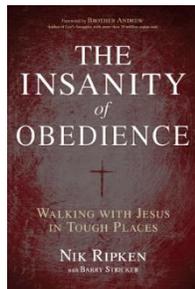


Internationals in Your Community – Thoughts from *The Insanity of Obedience* by Nik Ripken

Kentucky missionary and author, Nik Ripken, has written two books which have much to say to Kentucky Baptists about ministry to internationals. The first volume, *The Insanity of God*, shares riveting stories of believers around the world who have not only survived, but thrived in persecution. This book was made into a movie by the same name and released in the summer of 2016. The first national showing drew so many that a second national showing was scheduled followed by a national simulcast of the movie. It is now available on DVD.



Ripken's second book, *The Insanity of Obedience*, reflects much of what he and his wife, Ruth, teach in churches around the world. There is much from this book that will inform Kentucky Baptists as we minister to internationals.



Of persecution, Ripken says: "It became clear in our interviews that the ultimate goal of the persecutors is always to deny people access to Jesus." Ripken challenges us to understand that believers unwittingly become complicit "with the persecutors by simply refusing to share their faith." He makes his readers uncomfortable when he says "*When we witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we identify with those in chains. When we refuse to witness, we identify with those who place the chains on followers of Christ.*"

Ripken points out that many American Christians are thankful to live in a country where we have freedom to worship and often hear this stated in public prayers. Ripken says, however, "*It is interesting that public prayers are rarely uttered thanking God that we are 'free to witness!'*" He reminds us that, "Being a witness for Jesus has little to do with political freedom. On the contrary, our willingness to witness has everything to do with obedience and courage."

As we consider the ministry opportunities to share Jesus with internationals, if we fail to reach out to them, we must answer the hard question Ripken raises at the end of chapter 3: "What if the worst persecution today was having little or no access to Jesus? Am I a persecutor when I keep my faith to myself, only within the environment of the church?"

We must not perpetuate the persecution faced by so many in other parts of the world by failing to witness. God is entrusting Kentucky Baptists with a global opportunity. Will we be obedient?

Ripken says that we should ask ourselves, "Why am I not being persecuted?" The answer is not because we live in America. The answer is that we are not witnessing. Ripken demonstrates in the *Insanity of Obedience* that Jesus Himself told us to expect persecution when we witness for Him. According to Ripken, hardship is sure to come when the message of Jesus is received. "Clearly, there is a high cost for not sharing our faith: there is an eternal consequence for those who have never heard. At the same time, there is a high cost for sharing our faith as well! The inevitable result of a bold witness is persecution."

Ripken defines persecution as "a negative reaction to the incarnate presence of Jesus among His people." Negative reactions can take many forms and come from many sources. But we must not deny people access to the gospel by failing to witness because of fear of persecution. Ripken makes us consider whether we are we census Christians, member Christians, practicing Christians, committed believers, or hidden Christians. This is food for thought when we view the level of apathy in many of our churches.

Ripken points out that wars in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places may indicate "a failure by the Body of Christ to sacrifice and obey in taking the gospel of Jesus to those hard places. As a result, the cost in blood for the disobedience of the church might be greater than the cost in blood for obedience." He emphasizes that his comments are not meant to be controversial but to point out that "*the price that the peoples of the world pay*

when followers of Jesus are disobedient to take the gospel to all peoples is staggering.”

So, God has sent the nations to Kentucky. Will we be obedient to welcome them? Share our homes and lives? Share Jesus?

We celebrate the potential witness that may take place around the world if we are faithful to witness to the internationals in our midst. But we must consider the potential harm if we fail to treat internationals with kindness, meeting needs, and changing attitudes. Not only are there eternal consequences for those who never hear the gospel, but there may be international diplomatic consequences as well.

Many of us fail to reach out to the internationals in our midst because we are afraid. Listen to what Ripken says about fear. “Fear is devastating. Fear paralyzes. Fear causes people to run and hide. Fear is a black hole that will deplete joy from the soul of a believer. Fear is a deadly enemy of the church. *Your fear is the greatest tool you will ever give to Satan. Overcoming your fear is your greatest tool against Satan.*”

One of the greatest challenges Ripken provides in *The Insanity of Obedience* is in regard to our witness with Muslims. “Western believing families must allow Muslims access to their homes, watching us as we model how believers love and raise their children, love and honor their wives. This is transforming – but will Western Christians and workers open their homes to those families with little witness and without Christian behavior. Lost people are messy, and most Christians do not want them around their children!”

How would you answer this question: “How many non-believing families have visited your home for a meal this past year?” How would you respond to this observation and question: “Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists tell us universally that ‘America is the loneliest place they have ever experienced.’ How will you change their perception?”

On his website, Ripken challenges western believers to get involved. He says: *It is a great honor to walk across the street to share Jesus with*

your neighbor. A large percentage of people in America, along with most of the Western world, do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, nor is He the only way to eternal life.

Ripken continues, “God is also bringing the nations to our doorstep. Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and all other religions are flocking to America. In many cases we have not been faithful to go to them, so God has brought them to us – giving us a second chance to reach them for Jesus. Jesus has called us to go locally and globally. It is the height of folly to take Jesus across the oceans while failing to share him with our neighbors who live just across the street.”

“God’s command for us to go to the nations is just that; it is a command,” says Ripken. “Please don’t wait until you get a special call to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of the people groups, as we have already been commanded to do just this. We all are commanded, but under the power of the Holy Spirit we understand which place on this planet, being close to home or far from home, we are under the command of God to take the gospel.”

Pray for the internationals that live in your community. Pray for believers to be kind and welcoming. Pray for opportunities to meet people from other countries and invite them to your home, community events, and your church.

Learn more from Nik Ripken at: www.nikriipken.com.





In the Halls of Government

Kentucky Baptists are reaching into the halls of state government through the work of Steve Weaver, chaplain at the Kentucky State Capitol. Through a national ministry called the Capitol Commission, Steve is providing pastoral ministry to all who work at the Kentucky state capitol. This includes the janitors, kitchen staff, legislative staff, legislators (Senators and Representatives), executive branch, and officials.

Weaver characterizes his ministry mostly as a ministry of presence. He tries to be available to elected officials and staff for any prayer needs they may have. He lets them know that he is praying for them and that as chaplain, he represents many across the Commonwealth who are praying for them.

The Capitol Commission is a national ministry with a presence in over twenty state capitols. The role of Capitol Chaplain is strictly to minister to whomever the Lord allows. It is a non-partisan role with no lobbying or political aspect to the work. Weaver offers weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for various groups at the capitol and is teaching separate Bible studies for executive branch staff, legislators, legislative staff, and general employees.



God is opening doors for Weaver to establish relationships and minister to spiritual needs. Initially funded through a donation given to the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, the Eliza Broadus Offering now supports this evangelism/missions opportunity.

Please pray for Steve Weaver and those who serve at the Kentucky State Capitol. Pray that Weaver and other believers will rise up and shine in Frankfort.

Contact: steve.weaver@capitolcom.org. Learn more: www.capitolcom.org/kentucky.

Rise up and shine!

God has been sending people from around the world to Kentucky for some time. May we as Kentucky Baptists continue to shine for Jesus as we welcome the nations. May we shine for Jesus before a watching world, including in our own state capitol.

Rise up and shine, for your light has come. The shining greatness of the Lord has risen upon you. For see, darkness will cover the earth. Much darkness will cover the people. But the Lord will rise upon you, and His shining greatness will be seen upon you. Nations will come to your light and kings will see the shining greatness of the Lord on you (Isaiah 60:1-3 NLV).