Building Friendships with International Students

Sharing the Good News with Cultural Wisdom

Find where international students gather on campus and go there. Think network maps (tiny.cc/net-map): try international clubs, cultural events, or pick-up sports games.

Use open-ended questions in conversations to build relationships and share your faith. Reveal early on that you are a Christian. Internationals cherish reciprocity and hospitality. Ask what they need, offer practical help, and learn from them. Eg: Swap rides for cooking lessons.

Most international students would love to have a close American friend, but 40% do not. Friendship in an unfamiliar culture is valuable.

You might be the first Christian your international friend has met. Internationals are often open to spiritual conversations.

Developing trust takes time and consistent prayer. Internationals often look for relationships that go deeper.

Avoid idioms, jokes, and pop-culture references unless you explain them. Speak at a slower pace; this will greatly increase understanding.

Avoid assuming things about your new international friends. They have much they can teach you. Come with a learning posture.

Avoid viewing your international friends as a project or ministry. International students need true friendships, and so do you!

Avoid putting your friend into a box. Use open-ended questions in conversations to build relationships and share your faith. Reveal early on that you are a Christian.

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THINGS TO TRY

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THINGS TO AVOID

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More resources

Questions? Email Adri adri.fonteijn@intervarsity.org Put “Friendship 3x3” in subject line.

Article: Being Culturally Sensitive tiny.cc/3x3friend
Booklet: Crossing Cultures Here and Now Tiny.cc/ccdh
Book: Crossing Cultures with Jesus: Sharing Good News with Sensitivity and Grace Tiny.cc/ccjl

3X3 resources give you quick tips and tools to help you engage international students. Check out more 3X3s at tiny.cc/3BY3