

## REACHING THE WORLD IN OUR BACKYARD

Jesus called believers to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) but knowing how to share the gospel with different faiths can seem overwhelming. As we pray for opportunities to share our faith and build relationships with people across cultures, our goal is to love our neighbors so the Holy Spirit can work in their lives.

### God is Bringing the World to Us

Nearly 40% of the world's population do not have access to the gospel because there are no believers around them to share the gospel. So, in God's sovereign plan He is bringing the unreached world to us so that they may hear the Good News.

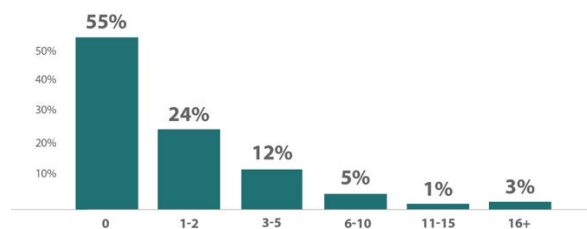
- 1.5 million international students and scholars are currently studying in North America.
- 27.7% of the people living in Oakland County were born outside of the U.S.
- Troy and Clawson to Sterling Heights and Shelby Township are the fastest growing home to residents born outside the U.S.
- The city of Hamtramck leads the area with 43.6 percent of its population born outside the U.S.
- There are 140 mosques registered in Michigan.
- There are 13 Hindu temples registered in Michigan with 10 of them located in Oakland County.
- Every year for the past six or seven years, there are 3-4,000 new refugees from Iraq coming to the Detroit area.

### Be Committed

According to Lifeway Research, more than half (55%) of those who attend church at least once a month say they have not shared with someone how to become a Christian in the past six months. As Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:8), He gave His disciples one last commandment; "You shall be my Witnesses." Nearly 2,000 years later that same commandment rings true for us today.

#### In the past six months, how many times did you share with someone how to become a Christian?

Among Protestant churchgoers

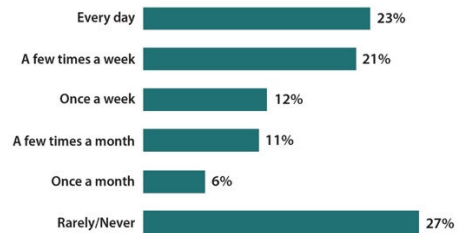


Lifeway

LifewayResearch.com

#### About how often, if at all, do you personally pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ?

Among Protestant churchgoers



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#### Start with Prayer:

- Pray that God will give you eyes to see the people He wants you to love and build relationships with.
- Pray that God will give you opportunities to show love to the people you interact with on a daily basis.
- Pray that God will lead you to people of peace.
- Take opportunities to ask others how you can pray for them.
- Write down the names of people the Holy Spirit lays on your heart so that you will be able to see how God answers our prayers.

## Be Hospitable

Hospitality goes beyond friendship; it is an opportunity to invite others into your family. For many cultures, hospitality is the first priority before establishing a business or personal relationship. As God brings people into your life from other cultures, be sure to invite them into your home and show them honor. Here are a few things that will help build these newfound relationships.

- **Notice them:** We cannot provide radical hospitality until we first notice. Everything that follows — all our hospitality efforts — depend on us first noticing. One way to honor others is by giving them our time (quality and quantity).
- **Listen to them:** Don't talk, but listen to people, their struggles, their pains, and their victories.
- **Honor their Culture:**
  - **Food:** Many cultures have food restrictions such as being Kosher, Halal or vegetarian. Be sure to ask your guests about any special requests regarding the menu.
  - **Holidays:** Every culture, religion and country celebrate holidays different from the US. Research the holidays of the people that God has placed in your life and celebrate with them.
- **Share your culture:** Many international families that live in the US do not fully understand the US holidays. This is a great opportunity to invite them into your home to celebrate together.
- **Ask Questions:** There is nothing more important in honoring your guest than to ask them questions about their family, culture and faith.
  - **FORM:** Family-Occupation-Religion-Main Interest

## Be Respectful

A person's beliefs may be strongly tied to cultural influences. In some families, people are persecuted for straying from or renouncing the major religion of the family. Individuals may fear their families or community will disown them if they convert to Christianity.

Understanding a person's background and beliefs will help you approach the topic of faith with sensitivity and knowledge. Take time to listen and understand people of different faiths and cultures. Our desire is to share the truth of our faith in Jesus while honoring others. Even while honoring others, we do recognize that the Gospel message is offensive. Our desire is to bring down the "fists" of those we share with and direct them to the power of the cross.

**Identity:** Muslim Americans overwhelmingly embrace both the "Muslim" and "American" parts of their identity. For instance, the vast majority of U.S. Muslims say they are proud to be American (92%), while nearly all say they are proud to be Muslim (97%). Indeed, about nine-in-ten (89%) say they are proud to be both Muslim and American.

- **High-Identity:** A person that has a "high-identity" faith is committed deeply to the study and practice of their faith. They have a grasp of their "scriptures" and most likely have a defense against Christianity.
- **Low-Identity:** A person with a "low-identity" faith is culturally connected to their faith through their family and community. They may not fully understand their own faith and may have many misconceptions about Christianity.

## Understanding Honor-Shame Cultures

### RELATIONSHIPS: Equality vs. Hierarchy

Western culture is egalitarian. Everybody is equal, regardless of age, status, or position. We're all buddies! But to Easterners, ignoring social distinctions is disrespectful and rude. People should "know their place" in society!

Eastern culture is stratified. The older people are more respected and admired. There is a social hierarchy, a status-based pecking-order. For Westerners, this perceived oppression limits people's freedom and personal expression. Such inequality is injustice.

### TIME: Task-Focus vs. Event-Focus

Westerners use time to complete a task. They "save time" and "spend time" as efficiently as possible. For Easterners, focusing exclusively on the task at hand is unkind and demeaning to others.

Easterners are event-focused. People have unlimited time for relationships. For Westerners, staying 3 hours for tea is inconsiderate. People should respect my time!

### SPEECH: Honesty vs. Harmony

Westerners speak to communicate truth. They "get to the point" and "don't beat around the bush." For Easterners this style is rude and makes people lose face.

Easterners value harmony in communication. We avoid saying "no" because in doing so it would disrupt relationships. For Westerners, focusing on face instead of facts seems like deception and lying.

### MONEY: Independence vs. Patronage

Westerners try to be financially independent. We raise our kids not to be dependent, because that indicates a moral deficiency. For Easterners, an unwillingness to share resources comes across as stingy and even immoral.

Easterners share resources through patron-client networks. The wealthy provide security and stability to people in exchange for loyalty and praise. For Westerners, these "financial friendships" seem like corruption.

### FOOD: Efficiency vs. Hospitality

Westerners view food as an unavoidable nuisance, an interruption of our day. So we eat "fast-food" as we drive to a meeting or work at our desk. For Easterners, this food-efficiency neglects rituals of ethnic identity, like having special foods or eating with family.

Easterners value hospitality. They share food generously, making sure to honor their guests. For Westerners, the expectations of lavish feasts are ostentatious and onerous.



## ETHICS: Guilt-based vs. Shame-based

Westerners regulate social behavior with guilt. The government creates and enforces laws. And children are socialized so their conscience feels guilty for breaking rules. For Eastern cultures, people who disregard social decencies have no sense of shame (i.e., shameless), even if they are 100% innocent before the law.

Eastern cultures regulate behavior with shame. Relationships and public opinions determine what is right and wrong. Children are taught to bring honor to their family or tribe. For Western cultures, this contextual ethic appears lawless—people ignore the laws and do whatever they want.

Source: *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials*, by Jayson Georges (Author), Mark D. Baker (Author)

## Be Confident

People have a reason for believing what they believe. They also have a reason for not believing in certain things. For some they may not have faith in Jesus because they have a misunderstanding of Christianity or believe that they will lose everything if they follow Jesus. For others they may even be prepared to argue their point to disprove Christianity.

It's imperative to stand firm in the faith and remain confident in what the Bible teaches. For we are not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16, see also Gal. 2:21) Be prepared to respond to criticisms about Christianity (1 Peter 3:15), but one of the most impactful things you have is your story.

- **My Story/God's Story:** To effectively share your faith, you need to know God's Story of sending His Son for the redemption of the world and how your story intersects with the cross. As you write your testimony, focus on the elements of your story that illustrate God's work in your life, how He drew you to Himself, how your heart turned to Him in repentance, and the trust you have in Christ as your Lord and Savior. It should also include what a new life in Christ is like. It is important that it is God-honoring (vs. sin-honoring) and that God's work of redemption is shown throughout the story. It is important that all the glory goes to Him and not ourselves. (Source: [www.grave.church/mystory](http://www.grave.church/mystory))
- **Study the Bible Together:** The Word of God is powerful and does not return void. Invite people that are interested in knowing more about Jesus to study the Bible together. This is a great way to walk through a process of gaining a deep understanding of God's desire for a relationship with everyone no matter their culture or background.

**1 GOD CREATED US TO BE WITH HIM.**  
To love Him, to glorify Him, to enjoy Him forever.

**2 OUR SINS SEPARATE US FROM GOD.**  
Man sinned and chose to go his independent way, defaming God's glory, rightly earning His wrath, and severing the relationship with Him.

**3 SINS CANNOT BE REMOVED BY GOOD DEEDS.**  
God is holy and we are sinful and separated from Him.

**4 PAYING THE PRICE FOR SIN, JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN.**  
Who is Jesus? He is God in human flesh "and the Father and I are one." - John 10:30

**5 EVERYONE WHO TRUSTS IN HIM ALONE HAS ETERNAL LIFE.**

**6 LIFE WITH JESUS STARTS NOW AND LASTS FOREVER.**

**"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." - Romans 10:13**

*"Lord Jesus, I need You. I realize that I am a sinner and can't save myself. I need Your forgiveness. I believe You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. I repent of my sins and trust You as Savior and Lord. Take control of my life and help me to follow You in obedience in Jesus' name. Amen."*

- **Discovery Bible Study:** Discovery Bible Study, or DBS, is a study method that relies on the Bible itself, rather than the leader, to do the heavy lifting of discipleship. On the surface, DBS is simply reading a Bible passage and responding with a series of questions. Going deeper, DBS is a blueprint for house churches, teaching people to apply and share what they learn from the Bible.
  - Discover Bible Study (<https://www.dbsguide.org/>)
  - Discovery Bible Study App – 23 languages available (<https://discoverapp.org/>)
- **Jesus Film:** One of the most compelling ways for someone to meet Jesus is to see him and hear him speak in their own language. To date, more than 200 million men, women and children have indicated decisions to know Christ after viewing the JESUS film, and new churches are being planted daily.
  - Jesus Film App – 1600 Languages (<https://www.jesusfilm.org/tools/app/>)
- **Define your terms:** People with different faith backgrounds may have a distorted view of who Jesus is and God’s love for us. It will be important to clarify these details as you share your faith.
  - Who is Jesus and what was His message to us?
  - Who is God and why did He send His Son?
  - Is Jesus the only way to have eternal life with the Father?

## You are Sent

God is calling each one of us to be His Witnesses to the nations and to our neighbors. Take time to pray and put a plan into action to share the Good News with those who have never heard.

1. **Pray:** Take time to stop and ask God who He is asking you to build a relationship with. Get your journal and write down the names of the people He brings to your mind.
2. **Investigate:** Look around and notice the internationals that God has placed around you. They could be your neighbors, at school, at local businesses or at work.
3. **Invite:** Take the simple step to invite the people on your list to an event, coffee or to your home for dinner. Don’t be discouraged if some of the people do not take you up on the offer. Our job is to obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit and plant seeds.
4. **Build:** Commit to spend the time building relationships. People need to see God’s love demonstrated through you to fully understand His love for them. This is a time to get to know their story.
5. **Share:** You have the greatest gift of all to share – the gift of Jesus. Share your story of how God has changed your life and share God’s story of salvation through Jesus Christ.

## Resources

- **Bless: 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World** – by Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson
- **The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door** – by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon
- **The Case for Christ, Revised & Updated: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus** – by Lee Strobel
- **Discover Bible Study** (<https://www.dbsguide.org/>)
- **Discovery Bible Study App** – 23 languages available (<https://discoverapp.org/>)
- **Jesus Film App** – 1600 Languages (<https://www.jesusfilm.org/tools/app/>)
- **Online Personalized Tract:** <https://grace.church/mystory/>
- **Connect to the Nations:** <https://connectthenations.org/>