

---

*Partnership Development  
Refresher Training  
Resources*

---



Published by:  
International Students Inc.  
PO Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80901  
ISBN # 978-1-930942-06-6

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise – without prior written permission.

## **Table of Contents**

The Partnership Development Ministry Agreement.....	4
First Thing Monday Report (FTM) .....	5
Issues to Discuss with Your Coach .....	7
Sample of One Month’s Action Plan .....	8
Your Action Plan.....	9
Sample Daily Log.....	11
Sample Letters.....	13
Perspectives of the Bible on Partnership Development .....	24
Do’s and Don’ts of Using Social Media in Support Raising.....	29
Writing for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Reader .....	31

## *The Partnership Development Ministry Agreement*

It is ISI's expectation that I will reach 100% of my approved budget and maintain that level consistently. I will have *18 months* to complete this focus on PD and reach this goal.

I will support myself through the PD period by working \_\_\_ HPW at a job (outside of ISI). It is my intention to make full use of the training ISI has given me to seek out those partners the Lord has already appointed for me.

I understand and agree to the accountability of regular and timely reporting to a PD Coach. I understand ISI's statement of expectations of me during my PD ministry period and am ready to begin this part of my ministry with ISI.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
PD Training Completed (month/year): \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Approved monthly budget</b>	\$ _____ /mo
<b>Amount raised to date</b>	\$ _____
<b>Balance to raise</b>	\$ _____
<b>Number on PCL</b>	_____
<b>Number of potential churches</b>	_____
<b>HPW given to PD</b>	_____
<b>HPW given to local ministry</b>	_____
<b>Local supervisor</b>	_____
<b>RFD</b>	_____
<b>PD Coach</b>	_____

<b><i>Support Goals</i></b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>
10%	_____
50%	_____ (9 months or less)
75%	_____
90%	_____
100%	_____ (18 months or less)

Return this to the Director of Field Development at your orientation. Please make an additional copy to send to your PD Coach, RFD, and local supervisor.

Abbreviations:

PD—Partnership Development  
PCL—Personal Contact List  
HPW—Hours per Week  
RFD—Regional Field Director

## *First Thing Monday Report (FTM)*

**DIRECTIONS:** *Please supply all information requested, expanding the form as needed, and submit as a Word document email attachment to your PD coach only on each Monday that an FTM Report is due.*

**Name:**

**Date:**

Month and Year PD was initiated \_\_\_\_\_

Current approved monthly budget \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Percent of support committed (to your knowledge) \_\_\_\_\_ %

Amount of monthly partial salary you are presently receiving (if any) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Hours per week given to PD since last FTM \_\_\_\_\_

Last PD letter mailed (provide date & attach a copy) \_\_\_\_\_

Status of the next letter (provide date) \_\_\_\_\_

New support committed since last FTM (include details below) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer effort—Self and Prayer Team:

New contacts developed:

Accountability Partner contact and discussion points:

Champion contact and discussion points:

Action Plan (AP) is current through:

(If your AP has expired, **attach a new one for the next two months.** Keep your AP up to date.)

**What I did the last two weeks.**

**PART 1—Asks:**

<u>Whom did you ask?</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Type of Appeal</u>	<u>Reply</u>	<u>Commitment</u>
		(FF – Call – Ltr)	(Y/N/U)	
		(Monthly/Annual/Special)		

**PART 2—Other PD-related Activities:**

*This should include decisions received from those previously undecided, relationship-building letters and thank-you letters/cards sent, calls for appointments or decisions, meetings and speaking engagements, highlights, and praises.*

**What I will do the next two weeks:** *Provide the same details as requested above in PARTS 1 & 2. Refer to your **Action Plan** to state exactly what you plan to do the next **two** weeks.*

**Anything else you wish to share with your coach:** *How are you feeling about the process? This is an important area for communicating with your coach. We are grateful when you feel comfortable sharing what is going on in your head and your heart as you raise support. We need to know how you are holding up so we can help you address any concerns.*

### *Issues to Discuss with Your Coach*

1. What is your greatest strength in Partnership Development? What do you do best and enjoy the most about PD?
2. What aspect of PD causes you stress? What do you dread, put off, and end up not doing at all?
3. What is presently overwhelming you regarding support? A call you have to make? Dealing with a church?
4. Memory of an embarrassing contact.
5. A friend or relative who has never supported you.
6. Not enough contacts. Making the time to do PD.

Discussing these issues with your coach will be revealing as well as a relief. There are solutions!

## *Sample of One Month's Action Plan*

### **Goals for the entire plan (March through June)**

- To reach 100% of budget by May 31.
- To give 12 F2F presentations monthly.
- To make 10 phone calls weekly to set up F2F presentations or ask for support.
- To present ministry to four churches.
- To send one personalized PD letter a month.
- To gain \$400 in new monthly support each month.

### *March*

- 5-11 Church to contact: Willow Valley. Send PD Letter by the 8<sup>th</sup>.  
F2F Presentations: Steve Jessee, Beth and Paul Braybill, Troy Davis.  
Phone contacts: Hayden, Bays, Keelers.  
Research addresses for lost friends.  
\$100 in new support!
- 12-18 FF Presentations: Phil and Barb Sweet, Greg and Pat Taylor, Bill and Jean Welsh, Trudy Charter, Bob Wilson.  
Phone contacts: Yee, Trey, Jackson, Robbins; Special letter version (no ask) for new contacts and old acquaintances.  
RB (Relationship Building) dinner with new local contact, C and R Beck. Follow-up calls from PD letter last week.  
Believe God for \$100 in new support.
- 19-25 FF Presentations: Vince and Tok Aye, Reese and Sue Borgerman, Scott Denny, Stan Jones, Maggie Elders.  
Phone contacts: Casey and Kayla Judd, Tom Kerrs , Bill and Lenda Prince, Kris Fasting, Dayla Reese.  
Do letter/calls to local pastors asking for appointment to share ISI.  
Follow-up F2F Presentations from last week.  
\$100 in new support this week.
- 26-April 1  
F2F Presentations: Rick and Alice Carden, Jeff and Eileen Farris, Barton and Joy Adcock, Richard George.  
Phone contacts: Tim and Beth Leonard, Erik and Mysti Wolle, Bill James, Ed Wolfowitz.  
Review plan to see what I've missed, what needs to be followed up.  
Pull in the churches. Call missions pastors to see if they have any info on decisions about support.

## ***Your Action Plan***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date Plan Begins \_\_\_\_\_

Date to Complete Support-raising \_\_\_\_\_

Current Budget \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Needed to Reach 100% \_\_\_\_\_

### **Overall Plan Goals**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. (Add more as necessary.) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week One** (List specific people and activities.) **Dates:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. (Add more if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week Two Dates:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. (Add more if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week Three Dates:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. *(Add more if necessary)* \_\_\_\_\_

***Week Four Dates:***

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. *(Add more if necessary)* \_\_\_\_\_

*Increase in Percentage of Support so far* \_\_\_\_\_%

## *Sample Daily Log*

Keeping a log of your PD activity makes it easy to do your *First Thing Monday* report form. Here is a sample log used to report daily activity on your computer.

### **ISI Partnership Development Log: February**

February 2

- Call to Lowell R. They are committing to \$25.00 per month. Sent “Getting Started” letter on 4<sup>th</sup>.

February 3

- Call to Glenn D. They have decided not to give at this time. Still will receive newsletter.
- Call to Dr. Randall B. in Bristol thanking them for their \$400 gift. Must receive newsletter. He indicated that “we will see what the future brings!” Called to tell him how much we appreciated his gift. He was genuinely pleased by the call.

February 4

- Call to Neil H. at Pioneer in Max Meadows. Set up lunch to do F2F on February 18.
- Email to Brent B. “Anything we need to do to help you get started with partnership?” He emailed back and said they were working on the Easy Giving Plan right now.
- Call to Pete I. He said that he could not support us at this time. He was just getting started in his business and felt his financial situation was not stable enough.
- Call to Bob and Toni B. He said that they just received the packet yesterday and that they needed more time to look it over and prayer would be welcomed. I will call back at the end of next week—February 12. Call back from Bob on 9<sup>th</sup>. They have decided they cannot give at this time. Maybe later.

February 7

- Call back to Ed D. He said they will not be able to give at this time. I thanked him for his looking over the materials.
- Called Martin and Edwina M. They will be willing to receive the packet. I will send it tomorrow in the mail. They too raise support for their new ministry (I.I.). Sent them a letter introducing our ministry and asking for support—February 20<sup>th</sup>. Call in one week.

February 8

- I preached at Fairlawn Church (Danny C ) and took Lynn R. , Catherine A., and Sandra together with Lyusyena and her son from Armenia with him. Contact Danny C. later about speaking to Missions Team. Very good visit.

February 9

- Called to Lynn A. to check on his giving status. He said that yes, he was giving and though he had sent in one check on early January. I checked with ISI, but they had no record of the check. So I checked back with Lynn and he is going to check his account. They will be giving \$50 per month.

February 11

- We met with Thomas R. and with University Faculty and Staff to talk about ISI.

February 12

- Called Wendell H., Skyview Baptist Church. They will not be supporting us. They are doing all they can with SBC and SBCV.

February 14

- Thank you cards for First Contribution as donor to ISI—Church in Galloway, Kenny and Linda Jo, Lowell and Cindy, Dave C.
- Thank you to Steve and Carla E. for help with ACROSS dinner.

February 15

- Email to Danny C. of Fairlawn Church about meeting with his Missions Team for a F2F. He has indicated that I can meet with the Missions Team sometime in the week of March 1. I am working on a date now by email.

February 18

- FF with Neal H. at Pioneer Baptist Church. Sent thank-you card for the F2F on 18<sup>th</sup>. Call back in one week.
- Called Lawrence C. of First Baptist. He said he would give me a F2F if I would let him know the day before I am coming there.
- Called Sheila R. (Richard) and left a message for her to call me when she got in (hm 544-555-1212). Talked to Richard. They would like to meet with us possibly for lunch. Call him back on February 23 to see what date would work. They both want to be present for the F2F.

February 19

- Call – James C. at Hillcrest (276-236-5858). They have decided not to give. Thanked James.
- Call – Phillip C. – The church is looking to have a dinner this spring during which people can make pledges to support the ministry of ISI. Phillip still requested videos and video stories that they can use in church and on their web site!
- Call – Hanna’s in Hillsville. Will call back.
- Call – David L. of Memorial Baptist. David said that they needed more time to bring the issue to his church leaders. He said he would call me and let me know.
- Call to Phyllis. We talked at length and she said that they would be delighted to receive a packet and to learn more about our ministry. She was very open. Sent letter introducing ministry and asking for support – February 20<sup>th</sup>. Call back in one week.

February 22

- Called Gary H. on his giving commitment. Discovered that they had just not gotten underway! They are now starting their giving plan at \$50.00 per month.

## Sample Letters

Following are many samples you can freely plagiarize to suit your own situation.

### The PCL Cull Letter

Do not send this with a letter about the ministry. You want it to receive **primary** attention so it must appear different in every way.

Use a half sheet of colored paper for your message and mail in a card-sized envelope. Keep it brief. It will receive attention because it will be very different from what you normally send. For the best rate of return, use cardstock or a postcard for donors' reply message. Address the backside to yourself. Here's the message:

*Are you getting more mail than you have time to read? We understand. It happens to us too. We can't possibly support, pray for, and respond to everyone who writes to us about their ministry. We want to make sure that everyone who receives our letters really wants to receive them. We are giving you an opportunity to remove yourself from the list if you'd like. It's easy.*

*If you would rather **not** receive our letters, you don't have to do a thing. If we haven't heard back from you by (use a date two to three weeks away), we will assume you would like to be removed. We understand. If you would like to continue to receive our letters, please return this card with a brief note, perhaps with a current prayer request you would like to share with us. We'll keep you on our list. Thanks so much for taking a moment to let us know.*

*John and Tammy Roundbush~ 9472 Broadbush St.~ Flatbush, Iowa 60421~ 678-9213*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Message: Hi, John and Tammy: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Ask Letters** (All of these letters are **short** and focused on the need for support alone.)

An Ask Letter is a brief, very personal letter that can be sent to many friends with the first paragraph changed for each one. It is an update on you and your need, **not** the ministry. It keeps the focus on the need and nothing else.

*“Dear Gus and Peggy,*

*I’m glad to hear that things are going better with the kids and that you are enjoying ministry opportunities at your church. I’m not surprised, Peggy, that you are going to do the stained glass window. You’ve come a long way from butterflies and hummingbirds!*

*I’m writing today because I have a specific need to share with you. I must enlarge my base of financial support. I am taking time out from much of my work the next few weeks to write and call friends. The longer I am in ministry the more I need to make an effort to do this. But I struggle with the time this takes because my responsibilities continue to increase.*

*Pray for patience for me in the process. And pray for courage to ask my friends to consider supporting me.*

*This is still hard for me to do. But here goes: We’ve known each other for many years and it would be a great joy to me if you were to join me with monthly support for my ministry. Will you consider it? I’ll give you a call in a few days to see how God is leading you.*

*Sincerely in Christ,”*

Here, the first sentence says what this letter is about. No hinting.

*“Dear Larry and Dana,*

*I am writing to invite you to become a financial partner in this ministry with me.*

*Whatever I am able to accomplish is because of the enabling of my friends who invest in me, making it possible for me to focus full-time on this ministry. Friends who support me in this work also reap the harvest of those being reached with the Gospel. You’ll meet them someday in heaven!*

*Larry and Dana, I need a few more friends to join me right now. Several of my faithful, very elderly donors have graduated to Heaven recently. They were so ready to go ‘home.’ I need to replace the support I lost. Would you prayerfully consider becoming a monthly financial partner with me? I will call you in a few days to see how God has led you. Know that I love you, respect you, and appreciate all the good fruit I see in your lives as you serve Him in so many areas at the church. I value our friendship.*

*Sincerely in our loving Lord,”*

## **Lay out the Fruit and Then Ask**

*"Dear Bob and Pam,*

*April signaled the start of my fourth year on staff with ISI. This ministry has been such a joy as well as rewarding in many ways. It has drawn us closer to our Lord as we realize more and more each day that only God can change a heart. Students transition from atheist, to follower of Jesus, to a growing disciple of Christ, to a mature Christian leader. What a privilege to stand by and watch God at work in the lives of those who seek Him.*

*Tianyou and his wife, Yan, came to UCC as atheists from China. She committed her life to Christ at a spring break retreat. He watched the Jesus video, read the tract that was with it, then prayed and asked Christ to come into his life.*

*Tao came to the university as an atheist from China. Christians reached out to help him. That motivated him to start reading the Bible and he gave his heart to Jesus at a bible study.*

*Lucy became a Christian through her English teachers in China. She is on fire for the Lord and has led several other international students to the Lord.*

*If I thought you'd take the time to read it all, I would go on with stories about others that have recently met Jesus Christ.*

*I'm writing today because frankly, we have a financial need right now. I want to ask if you would consider investing in this ministry with us. Enclosed is a response envelope. Monthly or quarterly support commitments are most needed. Would you please pray about it? I will call you in a few days to see how God is leading you. I would love to hear from you and have you as a partner in this work.*

*Sincerely in Christ,"*

## **Short and Sweet ... and Long Overdue!**

One of our staff sent a letter to potential donors that focused entirely on her financial needs. It was short, just a half page. They had been hearing from her for over a year and there had been no response. Her letters had always concluded with a line at the end almost apologetically saying she needed support. In this letter, after a brief statement about the strategic nature of the ministry of ISI, she wrote:

*"Dear Herb and Marie,*

*Excuse my passion, but I am so eager to be set free to do this ministry that I am bold to ask if you would consider becoming a part of this ministry with a commitment of \$10, \$25, \$50 or \$100 per month for the next year. I'll be calling*

*you in a few days to see what you think and how the Lord is leading you. I need you.”*

She received an emailed response from old friends who had not yet joined her support team.

*“We got your recent letter and liked the part about becoming bold. That’s all we were waiting for, a direct, personal invitation to get involved in your ministry. All the hinting in the world will never work, or general appeals. Direct contact works every time with us. Jesus said ‘ask and you shall receive.’ We would like to commit \$100 per month to support. God bless. Keep the cards and letters coming.”*

Not everyone will respond like this, but there are people who will not respond to anything but a very direct and personal approach. They are out there waiting for you to tell them exactly what you want them to do. If you are still hesitant about being direct, take a risk and see what happens.

Don’t decide for people. Your job is to ask, to invite people to participate with you, not to decide who will and who won’t support you, to anticipate what they will say, or how much they can afford to give. Allow God to lead them as He leads you in such decisions. Be ready for some surprises. Pray for sensitivity to the Spirit and then go for it, remembering you are giving them an opportunity to invest in a mission effort that is bearing much fruit.

### **Thank You Letters**

*“Dear John and Mary,*

*We’re always happy to hear that our investments are paying off, bearing a good return. Investing in ministry that is bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God is good stewardship. Encouraging words from afar indicate that the share you had in the development of the British ministry is paying off. The seeds planted there fell on good soil. International Student Christian Services, ISI’s sister ministry in Great Britain, is thriving. This past year they’ve added to the team and opened ministry in four more cities. They are now ministering in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Bath, Manchester, Nottingham, Canterbury, Bournemouth, Durham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Loughborough, Guildford, Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen and Cardiff. All of the funds for the initial development of that work came from our personal support team in the States. I trust it will put a smile in your heart this Christmas to know that your investment of financial support and prayer has resulted in high-impact ministry to internationals in twenty of the major university centers in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.” (Sent in a Christmas card several years ago)*

Another example...

*"Dear John,*

*I want to thank you for your contribution to my support last month. It is always a joy for me to see your name on my monthly Investor's Report from ISI. I know that you have many fruitful ministries to choose from as you invest in God's work. Thank you for choosing me. I consider it an honor to have you as a partner in this ministry.*

*In the past two months, 127 students have been in a bible study in our city. Three made a decision to follow Christ. Seventeen were guests in American Christian homes for a meal. Ten went on a trip to Washington, D.C.*

*John, I know that God has called you to work at Boeing as surely as He has called me to work with ISI. I pray that you will find as much joy in your work as I do in mine. But while I can't share in what you do at Boeing, you do share in my ministry; in every Bible study I lead, every trip I take with students, every time I have the privilege of assisting a student in some practical way, every one that comes to Christ here. Whatever fruit God brings is because of our joint effort, and the work of the Holy Spirit in hearts."*

Another example...

*"Dear Jason and Allyson,*

*This morning, as I was praying, it struck me again how helpless I would be without people like you who keep 'holding up my hands.' Thank you again for the confidence you continue to place in me to carry out my part of our partnership. You have entrusted me with a part of your investment in spreading the Gospel, and I take that very seriously.*

*Sometimes I feel that I can't possibly communicate the joy of seeing a student arrive at that moment when the light of truth dawns. The adrenaline is up and emotions are high much like those on a maternity ward when a new life is brought forth. But you're not here. I am. Thanks for letting me serve in front, where there are so many moments of victory and joy.*

*But then I get a sense of how important it is for you to be where you are, doing what you do. Each time you write a check, each time you remember to pray for me, you are standing beside me holding up my arms, enabling me to continue in the battle.*

*We are working as partners, and we will have a shared joy in heaven when those who are meeting the Savior here, meet us there. God bless you. Thank you again for your continued faithfulness. "*

### ***Letter to Current Donors Asking for Monthly Increase***

Keep it short, focused on just one thing, increasing support. This letter would lend itself well to a handwritten letter on your letterhead.

*“Dear John and Joan,*

*Every day when I sit down to my desk to prepare a bible study or head for the campus to meet with students, I am reminded that I have the joy of doing this because of your faithful support. You and others make it possible for me to spend my time in ministry.*

*Because you are a financial partner, I am going to share a need with you. At the same time that the Lord has been bringing an increase in students to our ministry, we are facing a \$466 per month shortage in pledged support. I need to take one day a week to develop new support until we reach 100%. I want to ask if you would consider raising your level of support by even \$15.00 per month. I’m going to ask everyone on our support team to pray about considering an increase. I’m working hard at this so I can again give all of my time to reaching internationals for Christ. I have contacted eight individuals and five churches so far this week. I’m hopeful to have responses by the end of the month, so I’ll give you a call in the next few days. Please pray about this request and ask God to lead you.*

*Thanks for your faithful prayers and support over the years. We appreciate you. We clearly understand that whatever fruit comes from this ministry is a result of your consistent prayers and financial support.”*

Another Example...

This letter from a staff person helped him reach and exceed his goal of 100%. Try it!

*“Dear Todd and Mary,*

*Is the job still keeping you busier than you’d like, Todd? I’ve heard that you’re considering taking on the Missions Team Leader role. I think you’d do a great job. You have cross-cultural experience and a heart for ministry, a great combination.*

*You two are a key part of our financial support team. Barb and I consider you indispensable partners in our ministry. I am writing to you to ask you to consider increasing your support by \$10 per month. In our last letter, I told you about the student from China who put his faith in Christ after he graduated and*

*moved to Chicago. Last night I received an email from him with photos of his baptism. 'My wife and I were baptized last Sunday May 5! The baptizing was at an American Church which hosts my Chinese Church. So Americans and Chinese were baptized at the same time. This is a magic (very special) thing for me because American and Chinese Christians have help in building my faith in God. I would feel sorry for one side if I were baptize in another.'*

*We were also blessed to see the Lord work in the hearts of another Chinese couple who recently put their faith in Christ. Both prayed to receive Christ at our recent evangelistic conference in Illinois. Our happy task now is to help this young couple, and other recent converts, grow in their faith.*

*In order for Barb and me to be able to continue to work full time evangelizing and discipling international students, we need to have full financial support. To reach 100% of our budget we need to raise an additional \$501 per month. If everyone on our support team increased their contributions to ISI on our behalf just a little, we could make up this shortfall. Please prayerfully consider whether you could increase your support at this time. I'll call you in a few days to see how the Lord is leading you. This will help me plan additional support development I may need to do. Thanks so much for your faithfulness in prayers, and financial support. We appreciate you.*

*Your partner in ministry,*

Notes about this letter:

- He begins with a paragraph directed at the individual donor, not himself.
- He shares results of the ministry, the “fruit stories” our investors need to be hearing.
- He thanks them for their partnership.
- He clearly states his need.
- He is direct in inviting them to participate in meeting that need.
- He asks for a quick response, letting them know it matters.
- He kept the letter short, one page. It has one purpose only, to increase his support.
- He will keep the initiative and call them, not rely on them to respond.

### **Potential Donors Letter**

*"Dear John and Joan,*

*We hope you have recovered from your move across country. How does it feel to be back in Colorado? You've had to trade sandy beaches for snow. Hope you didn't sell off all of your snow gear when you moved to Florida.*

*We are excited about some of the developments in our ministry to internationals this year. The attendance at our Friday night International Fellowship meeting has grown. More people are being exposed to biblical truths than ever before. And the new evangelistic bible study that we began this semester is also growing. These students are sincere seekers. We are trusting the Lord to bring them into His family in the next few weeks. Let me tell you about one student so you can be praying for him (or her) while you wait to hear the good news of his (or her) new birth.*

*(Insert student story here.)*

*At the same time that the Lord has been bringing an increase in students to our ministry, we find ourselves facing a \$\_\_\_ per month shortage in pledged support. I am writing to ask you to consider becoming a part of our ministry team by supporting us monthly. Please read over the enclosed brochure which outlines our ministry to internationals and our need for new support.*

*I will call you in the next few days to see if we may be able to get together for thirty minutes or so to discuss the possibility of your joining us in ministry as financial partners. In the meantime, please prayerfully consider how the Lord is leading you. I am looking forward to speaking, and hopefully, meeting with you soon.*

*Sincerely, "*

### **Lapsed Donor Letter**

We cannot afford to neglect support maintenance month by month. We have to be paying attention to our support level and dealing with problems promptly. The price we pay if we don't is a steadily eroding base of support.

A staff person noticed in January that a faithful, annual donor had not sent his usual gift in December. He was a good friend (*and it was a significant amount !*) so she emailed him about it. Just because it's a bit sensitive doesn't mean you can't find a comfortable way to ask a donor why they have stopped giving. Do not wait very long to deal with this. It gets more uncomfortable the longer you wait.

*“Dear Wes,*

*You have been a partner with me for a number of years. I noticed that your annual gift in December was missing. I’m wondering if your interests in ministry have changed, or if there is some other reason you have ceased to support me. Please tell me if there is something I should know. I’d rather ask than wonder and drive myself nuts.”*

The donor’s response:

*“Thanks for reminding me, Judy and I were on a cruise during December and then flew to Japan to be with our son for two weeks, returning mid January. We didn’t take care of our end-of-the-year giving checks before we left. Completely forgot. Your note reminded me, so thanks for asking. I’ve written them all today. No, I haven’t changed my mind about you. I’ll let you know if I ever do.”*

### **Turning a One-Time Gift into a Regular Monthly Donation**

*“Dear Mr. and Mrs. Anderson,*

*I want to thank you for the gift you made a few months ago to help support us in our ministry with ISI. We deeply appreciate your generosity and your partnership with us.*

*Your gift was a great encouragement. It means so much to have our friends endorse what we are doing in following our call from the Lord and to participate with us as partners.*

*We are presently working to add to our regular support team so that we can continue in full-time ministry. We understand that your gift was on a ‘one-time’ basis. We want to ask at this time if you would consider becoming a regular monthly supporter. We would like to call you in a few days to see how God is leading you.*

*May God bless you as you serve Him.”*

### **To Churches: Getting an Appointment to Speak to the Pastor or Missions Chair**

*“Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Have you ever wondered if the international students who study in America have any impact on their own countries when they return home?*

*‘Economic and military aid alone did not create a democratic Taiwan. That was largely due to American universities educating Taiwanese graduate students. The*

*best examples are President Lee (a Cornell Ph.D.), Prime Minister Lien (a University of Chicago Ph.D.), and the majority of cabinet ministers, who also have advanced degrees from the United States. These leaders, together with tens of thousands of U.S. educated civilians have brought real democracy to Taiwan.' (National Geographic, March 1994)*

*As I read that quote, I thought of the many Taiwanese students I come into contact with on a weekly basis. Phil was one of them. He came here to earn a Master's degree in Computer Information Systems. We studied the Bible together for a year. When we began our study, Phil told me he didn't care what happened to him after he died; it just didn't matter. After having studied what the Bible says, he realized the importance of turning away from his sins and trusting in Christ. He did put his trust in Christ. Now he has returned to Taiwan prepared to strengthen the political and economic freedom his country enjoys and to share with his countrymen the true spiritual freedom that comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. By reaching students like Phil with the Gospel while they are here, we can have an impact on the spiritual destiny of an entire country. Taiwan is only one of over 100 nations represented by international students studying right here in the \_\_\_\_\_ area.*

*There are over 6,000 students, scholars and their family members in our community. The dream of International Students, Inc. (ISI) is that each of these students would have a Christian friend while they are here in the United States. God has given great opportunities and many open doors to share the Gospel with people from all over the world.*

*I am writing to ask for the opportunity to take you to lunch someday soon, to share with you the ministry vision of ISI, and to talk about how \_\_\_\_\_ Church could have a vital role in this strategic ministry. I will call you in the next two weeks to see if there is a convenient time when we can get together.*

*I am enclosing some information about our ministry. Thank you for your time. I am looking forward to speaking with you soon.*

*Sincerely,"*

### **Letter to Pastors**

*Pastor's Name~ Church Name~ Address~ City, State Zip~*

*"Dear*

*The Lord has given us a tremendous opportunity to reach key people from the 10/40 Window without ever leaving our community. How has He done this? He's brought many international students here to study at the University of \_\_\_\_\_, Eastern \_\_\_\_\_ University, and \_\_\_\_\_ Community College. The school year has just begun and I've*

*already met a medical doctor and computer scientist from China, a Muslim architect from Indonesia, economics students from Thailand, business students from Taiwan, industrial technology students from India, and a Japanese woman working on a degree in psychology.*

*Many of these students will be the future leaders of their countries when they return home. They are eager to become friends with Americans. Many are also interested in learning about Jesus. We have an open door of opportunity to influence tomorrow's leaders with the love of Christ today.*

*I would appreciate an opportunity to sit down with you over lunch someday soon to discuss the ministry opportunities God has given us among international students. We would like to begin a partnership with you and the people of \_\_\_\_\_ Church.*

*Would you please take the time to read through the booklet I have included with this letter? It will give you a good idea of what we do and what folks in \_\_\_\_\_ could be doing to reach the 10/40 window for Christ right here in \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Thanks for your time. I will be contacting you soon to see if we can get together to discuss a ministry partnership.*

*Sincerely,"*

## *Perspectives of the Bible on Partnership Development*

Following are some Scriptures that will help you think through the partnership development process. For each of the following passages, ask yourself:

☐ What does it say?

☐ What does it mean?

☐ What does it mean to me?

Make notes to remind yourself of your insights, reactions, and responses to what the Lord is saying to you.

### **God's Attitude toward Us**

1. Genesis 1 and 2 (especially 1:26-2:10, 15-25) show how carefully God created a world in which all of our needs would be met: abundance, variety, beauty, meaningful work, creativity, discipline, personal meaning and significance, companionship, family, and society. He declared that it was "very good" (1:31). God demonstrated His loving generosity and powerful reliability toward us from the very beginning.

Prior to Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall, how did God satisfy their needs?

2. This is the basis for Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the generosity and reliability of God on our behalf (Matthew 6:7-11, 25, 32-33).

"When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need..." (Matthew 6:7-11).

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ...These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need" (Matthew 6:25, 32-33).

How do your feelings about partnership development relate to what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount regarding the generosity and reliability of God and our attitude toward Him as provider of our material needs? What about Paul's teachings in Philippians 4:6-7, 11-13, 19? (See also Hebrews 13:5)

## **Our Attitude toward God**

1. Read Genesis 3:1-13. The sin of Adam and Eve was essentially due to their doubting the generosity and reliability of God in spite of all they had seen and heard.
2. The generosity and reliability of God is the basis of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount regarding what our attitude should be toward God (Matthew 6:19-34).

*“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven... Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.... No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink... Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow...” (Matthew 6:19-21, 24-25, 33-34).*

Comments and observations?

## **Our Status in Partnership Development**

1. Read Numbers 18:21-24. Unlike all the other tribes of Israel, God did not give the Levites any land as an inheritance. The Levites did not raise food for themselves on the land. Instead, the other Israelites gave their tithes and offerings from the land to God, and He gave these gifts to the Levites as their livelihood. God organized the nation of Israel in this way so that He could set aside (call) the Levites to special religious service, to care for the arrangements needed to enable the Israelites to worship Him. The Levites did not receive their livelihood from their fellow Israelites. Rather, their brothers and sisters gave to God, and GOD gave to the Levites.

2. Paul recognized that his status was similar to the Levites.

☐ In 1 Corinthians 9, he claims that pastors and evangelists such as himself have the right to receive their livelihood from the gifts of the Lord's people. It is these gifts that enable pastors and evangelists to devote their time to ministry.

*“For the law of Moses says, ‘You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain. ...it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest. Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink? If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? ...Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it” (1 Corinthians 9:9-14).*

☒ In Philippians 4:18, Paul makes it clear that there is no “linkage” between the gifts of the Lord’s people to God, and God’s use of those gifts for the livelihood of His specially-called servants like Paul.

*“At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God,”* Philippians 4:18.

Comments and Observations?

## **Our Attitude in Partnership Development**

1. Read Romans 15:23-27.

Paul was not afraid to ask for support for himself and others (See also 1 Corinthians 16:1-6, 10-11).

*“But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can provide for my journey. But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially”* (Romans 15:23-27).

2. Paul refrained from asking for support from people if he believed they would not understand. Sometimes he supported himself as a tentmaker, but at times he received support from other churches when ministering.

☒ The Corinthian church: Acts 18:3; 1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 10:7; 11:7-9; 12:14-18.

☒ The Thessalonian church: 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Philippians 4:16.

☒ The Ephesian church: Acts 20:33-35.

3. Paul considered partnership development an important means of blessing potential donors.

☒ 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 invites and encourages donors to receive God’s gift of a generous heart and the opportunity to act upon it (See also Philippians 4:10).

*“Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I*

*can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.... So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. Since you excel in so many ways...I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 6-7).*

What should be the motivation(s) of believers for giving money and other resources?

What is meant by Paul's phrase "this grace of giving"?

How can you help your potential donors to have this motivation?

☒ 2 Corinthians 9:5-8 encourages donors to allow the gift of wholehearted generosity to extend into and facilitate many other good works besides financial giving. (Note also that Paul used careful planning in his support-raising.)

*"So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly. Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others" (2 Corinthians 9:5-8).*

☒ 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 encourages donors regarding the transforming work of the Spirit of Christ through obedience, especially in their attitude of thanksgiving and in their righteousness as a result of their obedience. (See also Philippians 4:17.)

*"For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God" (2 Corinthians 9:10-11).*

Comments and Observations?

☒ 2 Corinthians 9:12-15 makes the generosity of God more visible, and the Gospel more credible. This encourages believers to praise God, pray for one another (including donors), and practice generosity themselves. This also attracts nonbelievers to God. (See also Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Peter 2:12.)

What is the "indescribable gift" for which Paul thanks God in the final verse (9:15)?

*"So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words," 2 Corinthians 9:12-15.*

Comments and Observations?

4. Read **Philippians 4:18**.

According to Paul, the gifts sent by the Philippian Christians were really given to whom? Then, from whom did Paul actually receive the gifts? How does this arrangement of support for Paul compare with that for the Levites? In what way(s) does this affect your feelings about raising support?

5. Read **Luke 8:1-3**.

How were the material needs of Jesus and His disciples met?

6. **Matthew 10:5-14**

When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to do ministry, how were their material needs to be met?

## *Do's and Don'ts of Using Social Media in Support Raising*

By Steve Shadrach

Email, Websites, Cell Phones, My Space, Facebook, Texting, YouTube, Blogging, Skyping, Tweeting, Smart Phones, Linked In, Mail Chimp, etc, etc. Where does it end? Where are we going? How can I possibly keep up? It can seem like a runaway freight train overloaded with complex technology!

If you are hanging on for dear life when it comes to understanding (much less using!) all the social media options available to us, you're not alone. Yes, those of you under 25 might feel like the proverbial kid in the candy store, but the rest of us old timers may liken it more to being in the middle of a Kansas tornado!

Netpop Research's surveys claim 18 to 34-year-olds make up 82% of all the social media users; women in their 30's are the heaviest contributors, while older males the least. If you're not engaging in social media today, you're not a communicator; every individual has an online brand, says Marcus Messner, a journalism professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. How about you? Have you embraced the social media tsunami, or have you stuck your head in a hole, hoping it will pass?

If you're in Christian ministry and raising your support, I encourage you to dip your toe in the water and start to experiment with different tools that could connect you and your work with your financial partners. But, before you dive headlong into the deep end, let's take stock for a moment and list a few do's and don'ts of using social media in your support raising:

**1. Do your homework and explore the different options available.** You're probably already on Facebook (now the 3rd largest country in the world!), but spread your wings and check out YouTube or Vimeo to send clips of your ministry activities to your supporters. Experiment opening a Twitter account, asking your supporters to follow you for a verse of the day in 142 characters or less!

**2. Don't think social media is the secret to get you to full support.** It's great to initially contact someone or to keep them informed and involved in your life and ministry along the way, but for those who are building long-term support teams, nothing ever substitutes the face-to-face ask when you're first inviting someone to partner with you. In this high-tech age, there are some times we must still insist on being high touch! "Though I have many things to write you, I do not want to use paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak **face to face**" (2 John 1:12, *paraphrased*).

**3. Do consider utilizing social media for short-term projects or trips.** Yes, there is a place for putting a 'Donate Here' link on a Facebook Cause page, blog, or tweet. Quick and easy, you may get a burst of small gifts that put you over the \$3250 figure you need to get you to those Haitian orphans this summer.

**4. Don't abuse your supporters by *over* communicating.** You can swamp your ministry partners if they are constantly getting poked by you via email, phone, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, etc, etc, ad nauseam. Get started developing a social media *strategy*, but don't let it morph into a social media *circus*!

**5. Do use social media in your individual support appointments.** Instead of spending ten minutes droning on about how great your ministry is, why not pull your iPhone out and punch a one-minute video testimony of a young person whose life has been transformed by Christ through your ministry? Or click to your ministry's Facebook page, and let them see posts left by various students who are being turned upside down. We live in a very visual, story-telling world, and if you can *show* them (rather than just *tell* them!) what kind of eternal ROI (Return on Investment) they'll be receiving, I think you will see people jump on your support team!

*Used with permission.*

(For additional helpful articles, see [www.supportraisingsolutions.org](http://www.supportraisingsolutions.org).)

## *Writing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Reader*

Christian workers and missionaries who use a letter as a means of communicating to many people at once use the terms 'prayer letter' and 'newsletter' to mean the same thing. They are not the same thing. More importantly, neither one qualifies as 'the partnership discovery letter,' the type of letter you will be writing as you raise your support. These definitions of the types of letters have been the standard in ISI for many years.

A **Newsletter** is generic. Its focus is news of the ministry. It can have photos, graphics, and may contain multiple pages. It can look like a brochure. It can be posted on a website. It can be written in narrative form like a formal letter or have columns and articles. It can be designed for your local constituency with announcements of upcoming activities and reports of those that have already taken place. This can be sent to pastors, volunteers, the city mailing list, and your entire PCL. The newsletter is not a support-raising tool. If a newsletter is produced by your local ministry it can be useful as an enclosure in your personalized letter, but never as a substitute for it.

A **Prayer Letter** focuses on prayer and praise items. Period. It is current. It does not go to your entire mailing list, but only to the prayer team you have recruited. It is very specific. It is brief. It can be an email message sent out to your entire prayer group at once. Prayer partners understand they are functioning in a team with you and a lot of other people. It can be sent monthly or more often—an as-needed tool to keep people praying about your needs. It can mention your financial needs, because that is a legitimate need. However, keep in mind that these people may have told you they cannot support you financially, only pray. Be sure your mention of finances is a genuine prayer request and your expectation is that they will pray. The prayer letter is not a newsletter and it is not used as a tool to raise support. Do not go on at length about what is happening in the ministry. If you think "brief," you will keep this communication focused on prayer. The prayer letter has only one job—to get people to pray. Write it and then ask yourself: *Is this going to do the work of stimulating people to pray? Will it help them pray intelligently?*

The **Personalized Letter** is the fundraising tool. It is always addressed to individuals, **never** to "Dear Friends" or "Dear Partners." It is on your letterhead and should go out first class in an ISI logo envelope with your name on it. Yes, it is perfectly acceptable to send this letter via email using the same process of personalizing each one. The disadvantage to email is that you cannot enclose an envelope, but you may use this method when an envelope is not required. It is the letter that works for you in raising new or additional support, thanking your donors, nurturing new friendships, and developing relationships. These letters are all personalized (see section below on how to do that easily for your entire PCL). Do not use terms like "some of you," "all of you," or "many of you." These letters will demonstrate your interest in each individual as you nurture your friendship and stimulate their interest in what you are doing. The letter will invite people to support you financially. Send these out monthly (or at least ten times per year). This letter informs your friends of what you are doing. You decide when and how often to include an "ask." The

personalized (PD) letter can address the above areas as they pertain to each recipient. No generic newsletter or prayer letter can do that. The personal letter may include a newsletter or a prayer letter as an enclosure. Neither of these can substitute for the personal letter.

### ***Where did we learn how to write missionary letters?***

We learned by reading what others wrote. The mass mailing was standard. “Dear Friends” letters never were very successful in raising support. They are even less so now. Christians of the new century who support their churches and missions are pressed on every side. Many others are coming to them for support.

People are not generic. We are individuals and like to be treated as such. We all get too much mail. Few of us read anything that is sent third class or that looks third class in its presentation. Mail often gets sorted directly into the garbage can. In the past, those of us needing to write many people thought of our convenience—what we could do fast and cheap. We couldn’t imagine addressing individuals when we had a mailing list of 250 or 700 people. So we wrote generic letters, scribbled a personal note on the bottom, and decided that was good enough. That doesn’t work with today’s Christian. If you’re hoping you can do it that way, you will waste time, energy, and money.

We also recall receiving letters from missionaries three or four times per year so we thought that was enough. That’s all they could handle, and even that was a big chore on a manual typewriter and mimeograph machine. Their mission board required them to write that often. We require that you write a minimum of ten times per year, especially when you are in the initial stages of raising support. It can be reduced to six times per year after you are at 100%, but if your support drops, consider that people may need to hear from you more often. All of our staff have computers, printers, and email. Requiring that you send personalized letters is not a hardship.

### ***A System for Personalizing Your Letters in a Minimum of Time***

Personalizing a letter to everyone on your mailing list can be done in minimal time, even to hundreds of people. With a computer and a good printer, envelopes can be printing while you are personalizing a standard letter. Printed labels are a convenience, but they shout “Whatever is in this envelope went to a lot of other people too.” Laser printed envelopes say “This letter is for me alone.” We recommend the laser printed envelope. If necessary, have them done for you at a local print shop.

#### ***The Letter***

- First Class? Yes. No two letters will be identical so you can’t use a permit. Take the trouble to get the newest commemorative stamps. Use different ones every month. Your friends will begin to notice.

- Expensive? Yes. But a first-class stamp helps get the envelope opened and the letter read, which is the first hurdle to get past in letter writing. One significant donation will more than pay the postage for 300 letters. First-class postage is a very good investment.
- Email? Of course. This is the 21st century. Email is okay and much cheaper. Many of our friends and donors (even the elderly ones) are telling us they prefer email. It works the same way as the first-class letter. You personalize each one, including a heading of “Dear John and Mary,” to make it look more like a traditional letter. An obvious shortcoming is you can’t enclose a donor envelope. When that is important, use a first-class letter or insert a link to your website where they may give online. Provide “how to give” information at the bottom of the email.
- Time consuming? Yes. It may take you two days per month to process a letter to a PCL of 300, and that is with help from volunteers who match letters to the right envelope, add the second page, fold, stuff, seal, and stamp the envelopes. Honor volunteers with the joy of helping with that. (Emails will be much easier for those on your list for whom you have an email address.) Bringing in your support is your highest priority until you reach 100%. Schedule the letters during prime partnership discovery time, not when you are tired.
- Website? Yes. But do not begin to depend on everyone going to your website. You could lose touch with many people by making that assumption.

### ***How Many Versions of the Letter Do You Need?***

Maybe just two, but perhaps four or five versions are needed. Some common ones are:

- Donors —with a special paragraph to thank them.
- Potential donors—with a special paragraph to ask them to support you. You will include an return envelope in this letter. A “no ask” version to people who did not respond to the first ‘ask.’ You have decided not to ask again for a while but keep them informed. This would include new people just added to your PCL.

### ***Doing Them Well, Doing Them Fast***

Begin with your envelopes. If they were printed in alphabetical order, sort them into as many versions as you are using for this month’s letter. (If your PCL may be sorted electronically, that will be a real time-saver.) Create a basic letter. Leave three lines for an opening paragraph to personalize each one. It isn’t necessary to use the full name, address, and salutation. You can just put in the date and begin “Dear Jim and Mary.” The body of the letter is the same for everyone but address each person with personal comments in the first paragraph. This is far better than the handwritten note at the bottom of a letter. The samples below will show how this letter will be seen immediately as a truly personal letter.

(The handwritten note is recognized as a device to make a generic letter look personal when it really isn't. It fools no one.)

The last paragraph will be different for each version. One will have a 'thank you' statement for their partnership (if they are a donor) or for prayer, etc. Or it may have an 'ask' if it is to someone with whom you've been developing a relationship and will now ask for support. You may have a group to whom you are going to address something else specifically (e.g. people you go to church with or who live in your town). That's why you presort by your printed envelopes each time. Doing letters in groups this way saves time.

Make sure the letter will fit on one page with room to sign at the bottom. This is important because you are then going to make several copies of it on ONE document in the computer. You copy the first one, (before you have personalized it) then you have two, copy those to get four, and in five strokes you will have 32 copies all of the same version of the letter and all on one long document. (Only make as many copies as you need for each version.) When you have enough for one version, view on 'preprint' to see that the last lines do not run over onto the second page. Then you are ready to begin.

With the sorted envelopes in front of you begin at the "Dear" and add the first name(s). Compose as many as you need for that version before printing. (Preview again before printing). It is much more efficient for your printer to print fifty letters at a time.

While it is printing that first long document of many letters, you are creating the second version of the letter, changing the last paragraph to what is appropriate. The first paragraph can be kept to three lines. These samples show how easy this is.

*"Dear Jim and Ginny,*

*Has Jim recovered from that bonk on the head at the golf course in Wheaton?  
When are you coming down to visit? I've heard that the Thousand Hills Golf  
Course here is an interesting challenge."*

*"Dear John and May,*

*I haven't heard from you for a while so I expect you may still be in Pakistan with  
Doug and his family. They must be thrilled to have a visit from Mom and Dad.  
Will you be home by Christmas?"*

*"Dear Mary,*

*I know you're missing him. It does get better, my dear friend. Don't be in a hurry  
to make decisions about his books and all his stuff. You may decide you want some  
of it around. I kept my husband's watch, wallet, and a moldy old leather cap he  
loved and I hated."*

*“Dear Harry and Grace,*

*So you’re moving back to Colorado! Grandchildren are a strong pull when you’re retired. I hope you didn’t sell the snow shovel and galoshes when you moved to Florida. Harry, maybe you can get one of those kids to do the shoveling for you this winter.”*

**Your second page** can be generic, the same for everyone. It can have photos, graphics, and whatever you want. You’ve accomplished your purpose in getting them to read your letter by personalizing the first page.

If you have a greater familiarity with computer software, such as Microsoft Word and Excel, you may also use the “merge” function to combine your standard letter with your database (build salutations into your database). Then simply scroll through the merged document of letters to personalize the first paragraph of each one.

### ***How NOT to Write a Letter***

*“Dear praying friends,  
We encountered more rain and road construction on our trip than we have ever had before, but it didn’t interfere too much in our schedule. God was gracious, and we missed two major storms in areas where we traveled. Marlene started out with a severe scalp infection, which bothered her some, but praise God it cleared up by the fourth day.*

*We had some wonderful fellowship with several of the folks on our support team. It was a blessing to be able to share with them what God has been doing in our ministry and to hear what He has done in their lives.*

*The Lord gave us an exciting time with old friends. We enjoyed sitting in on the Sunday School class of high school boys that Zhong teaches at one of the largest Chinese churches in the U.S.*

*We also had a good visit with friends in Cleveland. They took us through the museum at the university, which we enjoyed very much. They invited a Muslim student to have dinner with us, and we had a good time talking about God and how we need Him in every area of our lives.*

*The school year has gotten off to an exciting start. I have been going to the university to meet with the students. I’ve been encouraged by the increased opportunities I’ve had for in-depth conversations with quite a few of the students about career planning, family relationships, and spiritual growth. Mary is still meeting with quite a few of the wives each week. She’s excited about that. Attendance at the Friday night bible study is still fluctuating from week to week. Several new students have come recently, and we’re trusting that God’s Word will work in their hearts and draw them to salvation. Thanks for your support. It is what allows us to continue in this ministry.”*

### ***Think About These Questions***

- Did the letter hold your interest?
- As a donor, did it address anything of a personal nature that made you feel this couple cared about you? Do you feel thanked?
- As a potential donor receiving this letter, what would prompt you to begin to give to this couple?

### ***The Critique***

This letter doesn't actually make you die. It does sedate you, much like an anesthetic. It is not our purpose to numb people into unconsciousness with our prose. What exactly did they mean by '*wonderful fellowship*'? What made it wonderful? What happened? Who said what? How about "*It was a blessing to be able to share with them what God has been doing...*" Like what? "*We had a good time talking about the Christian life.*" Did someone ask a good question? What exactly happened in that discussion?

This is lazy writing—all "tell" and no "show." It uses summary words when the reader might have been interested in the details. The result is a flat letter. There is nothing to hold the interest or take the reader past the first sentence. Start with a sentence that says something. In our first draft, we hardly ever actually say anything until about the third or fourth paragraph. It is usually safe to delete the first half of the page when you are writing the second draft. With the first draft you were just priming the pump to get started writing. Think of it as drivel. (Better you see it than your reader.)

### ***The Holy Spirit does not need to draft. We do.***

Consider the ways in which your own writing may be as uninformative and boring as that sample letter. Check over your own paragraphs and decide which of them says nothing and are just a collection of empty words taking up space.

Most of us sit down at the computer, punch out a letter, check it for typos and spelling errors, print it off, and mail it out. But it takes time to write a good letter.

We have a standard of excellence in ISI and would prefer that you take the time to write good letters. A good letter begins with remembering that the first thing that comes out of your head is generally inferior. But that first writing is necessary to prime the pump. The real writing begins when you start rewriting. Edit and rewrite until you are communicating effectively. Writing a great letter is hard work. It doesn't happen in a first draft, but it does get easier with practice.

## ***The Rewrite***

The sample letter above was a first and last draft. The author thought his first effort was his best effort. If he had taken the trouble to rewrite, he would have deleted the first three paragraphs. He should have looked for one good idea to salvage from the first draft and expanded on it. The fourth and fifth paragraphs both have possibilities. Thinking back on that evening with those friends in Cleveland, perhaps the writer could have come up with something to draw the reader into what they experienced.

*“Dear Joe and Sandi,*

*I’m remembering that ‘64 Mustang you bought when we were in college. How proud you were of that thing—beat up as it was! How many lawns did you mow in high school saving to buy that car? You courted Sandi in that car and she thought you were hot!*

*I’m remembering it because on a recent trip back east to visit some of our support team, we had dinner one night with John and Sue, who had invited a student from Saudi Arabia to join us. As I was waiting for someone to pass me the fried chicken, Mahmud said to John, “I will buy a car next week. Will you help me? I also need to learn to drive.” Ha! John quickly picked up on the opportunity to serve this student and set a day to begin driving lessons and to start looking for a car. When we told Mahmud he would need insurance, without any of us planning it, the discussion suddenly got into eternal issues. Mahmud said,…”*

The opening sentence grabs Joe and Sandi’s interest. They will read on. You are beginning to develop a scene, drawing the reader into what happened. You can end this letter by making any number of points. An obvious one is to demonstrate how easy it is to get into discussions about spiritual issues in the course of normal conversation.

## ***The Opening Sentence***

Nothing you say in your letter is more important than the first sentence. That is what draws the reader on to read the second. Never waste the first sentence on the weather (unless a tornado has struck your home) or an apology for not having written earlier. Never. The first paragraph should be full of “you,” referring to the person you are addressing in the letter. Keep the “me’ and “I” out of it. They will read on.

Paul O’Neil, who wrote for *LIFE* magazine for many years said, “Always grab the reader by the throat in the first paragraph, sink your thumbs into his windpipe in the second, and hold him against the wall until the tag line.” Look at the first lines of books by your favorite authors. Good writers apply this principle.

It isn’t hard to write like that, it just takes some thought and an unwillingness to accept the first thing you write as your best effort. This letter began with a quote (after the first paragraph, which is always addressed to the recipient). Begin with a quote, something a

student said, the way they said it, and then follow up on that.

*“Dear Paul and Pam,*

*You...*

*‘Teach me about God. I know nothing. I am growing up with no talking of God.’*

*Given an invitation like that, what is the very first thing you would want to tell an inquirer about God? I didn’t have to think about it very long before I decided that Mei Ling needed to know that God loves her. She was stunned. ‘He loves me?’*

*‘Why? How do you know this?’ I put the Bible in front of her and let her read the verses herself. I wish you could have seen the look on her face.”*

Now you’ve drawn the reader right into your living room and allowed him to see what happened there. You’ve drawn a picture of a moment that was precious in the life of a student and was special for you. Your financial and prayer partners weren’t there. They need these word pictures to keep them inspired to work with you. Share those moments with well-chosen words. How much less interesting the above would have been if you had written,

*“The other night I had a wonderful opportunity to tell a student that God loves her.”*

### **Aspire to Brevity and Clarity**

Jesus gave one rather long sermon, (it took maybe twenty minutes) but it was concise. The points were made with a great economy of words. Many people didn’t like what He said, but if they had ‘ears to hear,’ they understood Him. We tend to think that the longer we go on about something, the better we’ve said it. Not so. It is much harder to write a short letter that says something, than to write a long one that doesn’t. Letters don’t have to be long. One page is best.

Good writing is tight, stripped of all unnecessary, irrelevant, redundant words, even though the writer may have found poetry in them and felt they were needed to make his point. Good writing has seen the self-editor deleting, wiping out all the fluff and surplus verbiage, and paring the text down to bare essentials. To illustrate, how many words can be removed from **this** paragraph to make the point more effectively?

Good writing is tight, stripped of all unnecessary words and phrases. (From 53 to 11. But they were lovely words, weren’t they?)

Brevity means never using two words where one would do. Economy means never wasting a word. Clarity means using the right word.

“The difference between the right word and the wrong word is the difference between ‘lightning’ and ‘the lightning bug.’” —Mark Twain

## ***What a Letter Will Do for You—And What It Won't***

Our letters are a very big part of our partnership development toolkit. They must do a lot of work or they are not worth the time, effort, and postage.

A well-written letter can cause people to weep with sorrow over the lost that you describe...or weep with joy over a particularly touching conversion story...or laugh with you over a funny thing that happened...or blush with you as you describe a recent blunder.

We want our friends to look forward to our letters, to save them, quote from them, ask your permission to post them at their church, copy them for a Sunday School class, or even publish them as an article. Our goal is to *communicate effectively*.

- You say you can't write like that? Do you want to learn? You don't get to that kind of writing in a first draft or even a second. **You must believe that letters are an extremely important means of communicating your vision and ultimately, your needs.** Even a bad letter takes a while to write. If you make a decision to invest more time and prayer in each letter, you will see the results in the responses you get from them.
- **Letters must show people what is happening.** "We had a wonderful time," is not informative.
- **Letters can instruct, give insight; create a great "Aha!"** They can educate our friends about different cultures, the hardships students face, causing them to think about how hard it must be to believe in a very different God than they've believed in before.
- Our **letters can inspire people to the point of moving them to action**—prayer, financial support, personal involvement—even to the point of recruiting them as staff.
- They **can keep donors and prayer warriors encouraged with what God is doing** in the ministry.
- They **can keep you in close touch with many people** in between phone calls and personal visits.

A letter will *not* forever substitute for voice contact, or personal contact. Many people in Christian ministry know they are better "talkers" than writers. They struggle getting started with a letter because they can't think of anything to say. These are the same people who can walk up to a total stranger and in three minutes know what country they are from, what they are studying, as well as their name, address, phone number, birth order, grocery

list and that their appendix was removed years ago. They have mind-boggling stories to tell but don't recognize them as such when it comes to writing them down on a piece of paper. These people need a friend who will get them talking and then say, "*Aha! There is your next letter. Write what you just told me!*" This is for you.

## **Ideas for Letters**

Take one part of the mission statement of ISI and enlarge on it. For instance “...that every international student....” But first engage the reader with one student.

*“I first met Anggara, when she was a teenager, the daughter of a graduate student at the university. When they returned to Indonesia, her father became the Minister of Public Works. Now she’s back in the U.S. doing graduate work herself. Her family was open spiritually back then. Anggara is still open. ‘I think someday I will probably be a Christian, but right now I am too busy,’ she told me after a bible study the other night.*

*There are 5,000 international students in my city. Anggara is just one. Our whole team together has only met 1,200, and we have some activity with maybe 300 of those. What am I to do about the other 4,700?”*

Write about an everyday occurrence, such as going to your mailbox and finding a letter from a former student, a new student, Friendship Partner®, or donor. What did they say? If you are sure they will not mind, use some of their sentences and take off on your thoughts.

*“The stamp was from Finland, and I knew right away who the letter was from (and that I’d have to surrender the stamp to my son as soon as he saw it). Kari had brought me to the brink of despair as I had tried to share Christ with her years ago. She wrote, ‘I know you and Tom will be very happy about what I am going to tell you. You said you would be praying for me, and now I will tell you about my journey to God.’”*

Then let Kari tell the story herself, from her letter. Your comments and reflections will finish it off.

Recall an event from your childhood that is relevant to an issue of today.

*“When I was growing up, the only people who ever joined us for a meal in our home were relatives. The meal was always meat and potatoes. I don’t think I ever had French bread or lo mein until I went away to college. I thought of that last night as I watched my husband and seven Japanese students prepare sukiyaki and tempura. What a mess they were making, using every utensil I had! As I put the chopsticks on the table, I wondered what my Dad would have thought of this.”*

Personal growth issues demonstrate openness and vulnerability. Even those who cannot do so themselves, appreciate this trait in others. Talk about what happened in your heart as you meditated on a verse of scripture. Don’t begin with the scripture verse or it will sound like you are going to preach a sermon. Bring that in at an appropriate place. How did it bless you, convict you, or challenge you? Avoid sounding preachy by keeping it very personal. For example, if God is dealing with you regarding pride, (selfishness, my shyness,

my fear of failure), you might write:

*“The other day I was out taking a walk trying to unwind from a hectic week. I was so tired I didn’t want to talk to God...or to pray...or to even think.”*

Already the reader is interested in what you are going to say next.

In the following excerpt, the writer drew on his Army experiences many years prior. He wrote about his thoughts as he led a bible study about the peace Jesus brings. In this paragraph, he paints a picture and also thanks his donor. See if you wouldn’t go on to the second sentence after reading the first.

*“I’m thinking about war and peace. I’m in a bible study with three Russians and three Chinese, all seekers after truth. These are two of the enemy groups I was trained to fight and destroy when I was in the Army. Now we are gathered around the cross of Jesus Christ, studying the Word of God together. ‘Peace’ is a word strongly associated with Jesus. It is one of the reasons God sent Him. My heart is once again filled with gratitude to you, John and Mary, for helping make it possible for me to be able to prepare bible studies and spend my time meeting internationals. When I am alone with a student or a small group of students, God often reminds me of you. Though you are not present in the room with us, you are my partner in sharing the Good News. Bless you.”*

If you’ve started with something that sounds ‘flat’ even to you, before tossing it to look for something else, think about what actually happened and see if there is a story there.

**Original:** *“We had a great time canoeing, fishing, and enjoying a bonfire roast with country music band and all. On Sunday, we had a special worship service with students sharing testimonies.”*

What happened on that canoe trip? Did a Friendship Partner® or a student say anything funny or searching, sentimental or sad? Try capturing some special moment and using some related dialogue. Quote someone. Don’t be worried if it isn’t exactly what they said; capture the gist. Use poor English if that is how they spoke. Instead of using summary words like “we had a great time,” dig into what actually happened and take the time to show why it was great.

Here’s another way you could have written this letter:

*“It wasn’t our intention to get Shoji into our bible study by nearly drowning him. But we smile now when we see him there every Friday night.*

*‘When I was under the water with no air and want to get to the boat, I cried to God. I was so scared I was going to die and what will happen me when I die. I don’t know. I think I come to your bible study to know more about God.’*

*Shoji was standing in the canoe taking photographs when he toppled over the side. Three of us dove in to rescue him, but his lifejacket bobbed him back up to the surface quickly. It must have seemed like a much longer time to Shoji!"*

Did you notice the stories in the letters above? We all love to read stories. Jesus told stories to illustrate life. Our stories will be real life too. They must have a point. They must challenge, move, inspire, or touch us in some way.

Get in the habit of keeping a daily journal, describing briefly what you saw or heard—a snatch of conversation or anything that triggered an idea for you. It may be something very unlikely, but capture it anyway. You may be able to use it someday.

Here's a snatch of a conversation a staff member had with a mechanic who was installing a new battery in her car. When she complained that it had died without any warning the mechanic explained, *"It gave you six months more than its five-year warranty. It don't warn you, Ma'am. It gives you all the juice it's got starting your engine for the last time, and then it's done. That's why they call it a Die Hard."* That tumbled around in her brain for a while and a few days later she had occasion to use it. Mrs. Krayner, a faithful volunteer, had been coming to the student fellowship every week for 19 years. The previous Friday, she was there with her casserole and hot peach cobbler. She died on Sunday. The following week the international student leadership group allowed a time to discuss how to use the time her family had allotted them during the memorial service. The staff member determined that would be the theme of her next letter, honoring all the volunteers, especially Mrs. Krayner. She was a "Die Hard."

Listen to your writing. Read it out loud. You will find things like this: *"I fought the temptation to be discouraged and have a pity-party with praise."* You may not see awkwardness when writing because you know what you mean, but you'll hear it in reading. Awkward sentences sound awkward when read aloud. They may be "smilemailakers," smile-makers, but get them out for the sake of clarity.

Let it cool off. Any writing can be improved if left alone for a time. Like fudge, you can cut it better when it has cooled.

Read it like your readers read it. Print out a copy on letterhead, fold it as normal, put it in an envelope, and take it to where you usually read your mail. Open it and read it as your friends will read it. Read it out loud. You need to hear how the words sound.

Look for dull words. The top of the list of dull words is 'excited.' 'Very' and 'really' are also on the list of dead words. People will skim over these words without seeing them anyway so don't give them space in your letters.

Avoid unnecessary modifiers. *"The day was very hot."* 'Hot' is a strong word. It doesn't need a modifier.

Clichés are tired. *"God is faithful, He will provide"* has almost become a cliché. Are you

trying to say that you have faith in God? *How* does God provide? What are you expecting? “*Please don’t hesitate to ask*” and “*Please feel free to call*” are worn out phrases. If you’ve heard an expression over and over again, give it a rest.

When you begin a letter with scripture it can look like you are going to sermonize. Use a portion of a verse to emphasize a point. Use it where it shows up in the context of the letter, not at the beginning.

Use periods to avoid overlong sentences. Don’t splice sentences with a comma. Here are some other rules we easily forget and that plague our writing as soon as our college English texts are sold at many garage sales:

- Parentheses enclose things. (Think of them as whispers.)
- Dashes set off things—they SHOUT!
- If there is a phrase enclosed in parentheses in a sentence, the period goes outside. If the entire sentence is enclosed within parentheses, the period goes inside.

*My mother said she would never forget that day, (but obviously she did).*

*My mother said she would never forget that day. (Obviously she did.)*

### ***Eliciting an Emotional Response***

A shopping list can be cut and dried. We don’t need to work up any emotional BTU’s on carrots, dog food, and laundry detergent. But we dare not write our letters like that. All of our writing, whether a personal letter to our PCL, a newsletter, a prayer letter, or a thank you note, needs to elicit some kind of an emotional response. If it does not, our communication has failed.

Our writing must make people think, question, smile, weep with us, or laugh with us. We want them to identify with our vision, our passion, and even our weaknesses. We want people to feel something as they read our letters. God put a passion in you for this work. Don’t be reluctant to let it show. You caught a glimpse of what God could do through you. Pass it on to others. Find the words to express what you feel, and you will draw out a response in others. People love to emote. Look what happens in a theatre or a sports stadium. Give them reason.

What do you want them to feel when they put your letter down? Grateful that God has called you to this work? Glad they know you because of what they are learning from you? Challenged to act in some way? Will they call you to pray with you over something you mentioned, or to say that God has moved on their heart urging them to become a Friendship Partner® or financial partner? Maybe they will tell you they identify with the way you feel about something...or that you made them laugh...that they shared your letter with their prayer group or sent it to their mom and dad.

There is enough in each person's day to depress, irritate, or bring him or her down. Envision your friends snatching your letter out of the mailbox and smiling, anticipating reading it and knowing they are going to be blessed by it. They like the unique way you express yourself, the funny admission they know is going to be there or the little story that may bring a tear... The anticipation they feel before they open your letter is the beginning of an emotional response.

*"I dragged home after an eleven-hour day and saw your letter in my mailbox. I couldn't wait to get into something comfortable, sit down in my favorite chair with a cup of Earl Grey tea, and read it. I knew it would make me laugh and cry. And I needed both. Thanks."*

That person is a real partner in what we do. If we can keep a picture of him or her in mind as we write our letters, they will be better letters. Our letters are so important they deserve some focused prayer before we begin. Ask God to help you *bless* people in the things you share—to touch something in them or to minister to a need they are feeling. Ask for wisdom as to what to write about, how to write it, and for objectivity to see the finished product as your friends will see it. The finished product will be an instrument God can use.