

**Vision Tuesday BCM Panel Discussion**

**Rob Nicholes, Billy Judge, Raj Aluri; Speakers**

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**Columbia Metro Baptist Association at** [**CMBA@ColumbiaMetro.org**](mailto:CMBA@ColumbiaMetro.org)

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Host for this week's episode are George Bullard, the Executive Director of the Columbia Metro Baptist Association. And I'm Chris Reinolds, certified church consultant and Lead Pastor at Killian Baptist Church.

Well, welcome to our final special podcast, focusing in on the Christ-centered work that is taking place at our very own Baptist Collegiate Ministry here in Columbia, South Carolina. All week we featured the BCM in an attempt to draw attention to the great kingdom work that is taking place in our area, and to help you see the need to get involved in that work.

For today's podcast, we're going to hear from three special guests as they discuss their work among college students. Let's listen in as Jamie Rogers sits down with Billy Judge, Rob Nicholes, and Raj Aluri.

Jamie Rogers: What I want to do really quick, I want to ask my friends to come up. I want to ask Raj and Billy and Rob, if you guys would come up. And I'm going to have these guys just share about who they are, really quick, and about what they're trying to do as far as reaching college students.

I'm going to ask them some questions. And then at the very end, we normally do every month we'll give you guys an opportunity to ask some questions. What we're going to do is, we're going to give these guys just a few minutes to go through and kind of talk about what they're doing with collegiate ministry, and I'm going to kind of ask them some questions to let them respond to that. We'll have you guys ask them questions as well.

Rob, First Baptist student ministry. Would you give us an introduction, tell us about yourself?

Rob Nicholes: Yeah. I'm from Columbia, married, three kids. Seven, three and a half, and two tomorrow, I think. What's today? Yeah. And been at First Baptist about two years, and are really loving serving with the church there and reaching college students. We're a traditional church downtown. We've got lots of students moving in and around us. The same thing with young professionals and it's a great time just to seek to minister to them, and disciple them, and to engage them with the Gospel.

Billy Judge: Billy Judge, Shandon Baptist College minister. I grew up on Long Island in New York, so Jamie and I have bonded over pizza and bagels and lostness. But I was saved out of a Catholic background, a week before coming to the University of South Carolina for college. And the first people I met on campus were from Shandon Baptist.

And so I did undergrad and grad school here at Carolina. I was baptized at Shandon, was discipled by David, my college pastor who's now our missions pastor. Graduated and moved to Cleveland, Ohio, with my wife Sarah, where we were part of a church plant team. Moved Back to Columbia in 2013. Was serving in David's college ministry here, while I was teaching public school. And about three years ago, the Lord opened up the door for me to be on staff at Shandon as the College Pastor.

Raj Aluri: Raj Aluri, I've been in Colombia for 43 years, and I did three graduate degrees from USC, and I've been in full-time ministry with the internationals since 1981, that's a combination of 38 years. The greatest joy I have had being on the campus is ministering to international students.

We have about 2000 international students, representing about 100 countries in the downtown Columbia setting, and they spend a hundred million dollars to study here per year, economic impact. God is giving us the greatest opportunity for the church. I say, "There is no greater opportunity for any church in this area, in the world missions other than reaching out to internationals that God brought to us." They spend their money to come here, they speak our language, they go to our schools, the live in our neighborhoods, and they need us in their lives.

Jamie spoke really well about everything I need to say. I believe we need a thousand or more Christians locally to get involved in the lives of international ministries, people to people. We need people, and I don't think we're even touching 10% of the total international population on the campus effectively. My goal is to help the churches help you out to reach out to these internationals.

Jamie Rogers: Yeah. Some of you guys know the international festival here in town and Raj is actually over that. And I've been telling some of my friends, that's really just a front for evangelism as well. And that's his heart. And it's been good for me to get to know all three of these guys. Two of these guys are actually on our advisory board, and I've gotten to know them, but it's been really good, too, for me to be able to spend some time with Raj and just to hear their heartbeat for students, for people, for lost people.

And I just want to ask them some questions. And then, like I said, if you have any questions, man, write these questions down. We might ask some of those as we're, as I'm going along too. You're going to scratch it off of your paper, but just save those for the end and we'll give you a chance to ask your questions here at the end as well.

Our theme today... And some of them know these questions, some of them don't. Our theme today is transforming the world through collegiate ministry. In what ways do you guys think this statement is possible? In our immediate context, here reaching the college students in Columbia, South Carolina.

Billy Judge: College students come to the college campus for four years, from all over the world, all over the US, all over our state for a four-year period to be educated, to be sent out again. And as we think about the opportunity before us, it really is amazing. We, this week, all of us will get to celebrate our seniors who are graduating. Most of them, at least at Shandon, are not staying in Columbia. They're going to the northeast, they're going to the northwest some are going internationally. And we view this as training ground, but we view it as preparation for a lifelong mission trip after college.

Raj Aluri: God is bringing the best and the brightest future leaders of our world to our city. And we have an opportunity to impact at least 100 countries for the kingdom's sake, without any cost to us financially. All we're looking for is people who are available, and willing to take a little time off, out of their lives to be a friend. These people need friends. Most of them request us, "Hey, I want an American friend," and we cannot give them one because we don't have enough Americans, who want to be American friends to them.

I know we have at least four or five people right now waiting. They want an American friend. But I don't have any American who is ready to take them as a friend. It's a sad story, really.

Rob Nicholes: And the only thing else that I would add is, seeing the time…a lot of time we talk about college...you’ve got lots of people in your church that are college age, maybe not enrolled in colleges. It's the same time period in their lives where they have more free time than they'll ever have again. And it's an opportunity to get into their lives. And as we talk, I think that's the biggest takeaway is we just need more people.

I've got people that are engaged with us that I don't have enough mentors to disciple them, and we do the best we can, but that's my prayer every day, every week to raise up laborers within our own church for that to happen on you, for the campus for anywhere as we seek exactly what Billy and Raj said to send them wherever they're going, equipped and ready to share the Gospel, to walk with people. But we need to be the people that walk with them now, and we need more people.

Jamie Rogers: Hey, how are you guys equipping your students, the ones who are believers? How are you equipping them to reach the world? Billy, I know you talked about sending yours. I know both of you guys, know your stories. This is not on the question guide, but how are you guys doing that right now? And then in what ways can the churches of the CMBA be involved in that, and doing that on the Collegiate campus as well.

Billy Judge: We always want to be about the things that Jesus is about. And Jesus has always been about lostness. He's for lost people. And the biggest thing we do to equip college students to live out the mission is to get them out the door. Just like Jamie was saying. We hold our student leaders accountable to lost friendships, we make them share with us who they're living in friendship with. Where on campus are they leading outside of the church. We want our campus to be saturated with Christian student leaders. And just putting those opportunities before students and casting a vision bigger than themselves for them has been huge for us.

Jamie Rogers: Rob, in what ways are you guys doing that?

Rob Nicholes: Yeah, in a lot of the same ways. I think one of the things as we seek to kind of send them out, one thing I add is, I think a lot of times for students they're looking to belong for folks that are believers. What they're looking for a lot of times, when they come in is they're looking for shelter. And a lot of us can provide that better. But the reason why they kind of gather is to equip them, or to get them in a relationship and help them understand what community looks like.

So that, as they're going out and bringing other people right into that family, as they're discipling them, as they're walking with them, that they know what that looks like. Many of us, for our students, let's say just the Christian students have not been walked with. And as they're... They need to be learning how to do it, but as they're doing it, we need to be walking with them as well.

As Jesus sends out his 12, as he sends out his 70 by twos, he's walked with them a while. And he calls them, there's no excuse for us not sending them out. There's no excuse for us keeping them in and gathering a crowd. But we've got to walk with them, and we ourselves have to be doing that as well so that they have something to emulate, they have something to model. They see a Christianity that's something other than just being a good church member.

And because that's not something that they're really striving for, is just to kind of sit in church.

Jamie Rogers: Raj, I know in particular, you and I have talked about even this day as well. Raj was actually not supposed to be here today. He was supposed to be a heading internationally himself. And through getting sick, actually it was, it turned out to be able to be here. One of his staff members is going to help fill in for him today.

Raj, I know there are some other ways in particular that you want to speak into the CMBA churches, to be able to begin partnering with you, helping reach international students. Do you want to, I want to give you an opportunity to talk about, some of the other ways outside of the Thursday lunch and partnering with us. What are some other ways they can help you guys?

Raj Aluri: Okay. One of the main things I always thought of is we don't have enough of you to get involved. Because that's where the true ministry is. We're talking about equipping and discipling people; I have people in the ministry who do the Skype discipleship. They're here, they're gone, but they keep the contact going on. And then people have been gone for years. We still keep in touch with them faithfully keeping up with them.

But I think what my goal is that we want to educate people in your congregations to what is around us, for them to minister. And also encourage them to get involved, and equip them, train them how to minister to internationals. It doesn't take much just being yourself, but just basic tips and also engage them. That's where we really want is engaging people into the ministry.

My goal is to help you people, help your churches, help anybody who's interested in the ministry with internationals. I say, "Without churches we have no ministry." It is the ministry of the local church, always believed in that. When people are here, people are gone, the ministry is still in the local church. That's what my goal is to help the local church.

Jamie Rogers: And one other opportunity that you guys would want to hear about is every Friday night at Raj's ministry, they actually host a Friday night meal. And not only do they host a meal, but they actually have classes for international students as well, and they're looking for churches to partner with them. Do you want to speak to that?

Raj Aluri: Thank you. We have completed 38 years of Friday night dinners. I started in my apartment on Blossom Street with six people, 1981 January. Friday's come. A lot of people go to have other parties and do other things and they didn't have an alternative. I thought one good way to bring, to have a Christian alternatives is bring them to a location, where we have a meal together. People come spend two, three hours at a minimum with us. It's not eat and run.

They will come get to meet you, get to know each other. And then we have a program that includes the spiritual content, language, some people work to improve their English, and some topical discussion groups. People are coming to spend time because at the end of the week they're tired of studying. They want to do something different, and we always need the churches. And this is where we really can come and make a contact.

You can see what God is doing in Columbia. I believe I said before, we are way long ways to go in terms of reaching out to whom God is bringing to us. We just need a lot of us, at least a thousand of us to be more in this ministry. That's my goal. I was talking, I've been talking to Jamie since we got to know each other, how we can get a thousand people to come around. The website he gave you, that's the best place to sign up.

And I know we will have enough people. As many Americans, we can easily bring that many internationals to match you up. Shandon, First Baptist, whatever other church.

Jamie Rogers: I told Raj, I told Robbie and Ryan as well who do international ministry work too. That if I can, if I leave here in 30 years, and I have partnered churches together, and I've gotten the churches involved in the great commission in fulfilling the great commission. Then I'll be able to stand before the Lord and say, "God, I did all I could do. I did all I can do." And you can hear his heart on that.

Let's shift focus just a little bit. Let's just go to college ministry, college students, that kind of thing as well. What does it mean to reach a college student? What does that mean?

Rob Nicholes: I think, that's probably the most important question, because all of us define that word differently. In our own lives this is what it means to reach a person. And in our churches, that's what it means as a church for us to reach them. What I think it means to reach somebody, is to bring them into your family. What I mean by that is, as Paul says in Colossians, "Where we proclaim him in admonishing, every man teaching, teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ for this purpose. Our labor, striving according to his power, which mightily works within me." And he's talking about this idea that we are seeking to engage them, right, in teaching them how to be on my team. To be a disciple, or not just somebody that follows me around as a good church member. But somebody that is engaging the world with me.

And I think we in lots of different ways, and I'm absolutely guilty of this, is that I'm not striving many times in our plans to do that. And I think that's I think that's a mistake. And I think to reach them, we really have got to engage them fully for them to, for them, for us to seek to know them and to walk with them as long as they'll walk with us in college. No more, no less.

Billy Judge: We recognize, and I hope we all do, that we can't convert anyone. That's God's job. And he does that in his timing as he's drawing all people to himself. I would say that reaching a college student simply means that they belong, sort of like Rob said, they belong in our midst before they believe a certain thing or behave a certain way. And as lost people are hanging out with us, and they see John 13:35 on display that, "By this, the world will know that you're my disciples by the way you love one another." We trust that as they see us interact as they're part of the family of God without yet being converted is they're hanging out in our mist that we've reached them.

An example I'd give, is a girl named Samantha who's on the track team who's been hanging out with us. I met with her a few weeks ago and she said, "I've always been the Jewish girl in my friend group, but I don't feel that way when I'm with Shandon." And we feel like we've reached her. She's in our midst, we're her social hub right now, and we're praying for her. And we're praying that God would convert her, that she would come to saving faith and he would be her Messiah. But she belongs at Shandon before she believes certain things and behaves a certain way.

Raj Aluri: I agree both of what they said. I think making ourselves available, let them get deeper into our life and see what we're like. I give one quick example. There's a girl that came from Japan. Japan is one of the hardest mission fields and Japanese are the most easy to reach in America than back home in Japan. She met a Christian girl, only spent six months and then she went back to Japan. Then she realized, you know what, I would like to have the same kind of life that my Christian friend had whom I met in America. She called her back on the phone. She said, "Help me out. I want to have the same kind of life you have,” and she led her to Christ over the phone.

Our lives impact others. What they see in us they cannot deny, and if more of us do that more people become Christians.

Jamie Rogers: That's the opportunity we all have. We all have this opportunity on campus. Some of us are trying to reach different people which is really kind of a neat thing. Just talking to you guys and knowing what the spheres of influence, and where the Lord is working through your ministries. And then we see where we're working.

And what's…when you think about reaching a college student? It's difficult. It's a difficult field. It's why not everybody's doing college ministry, and not every church wants to put money there. What is so difficult? Can you just describe what the average college students like? I know a lot of these guys, they know the students who were probably in their life. But just general students… Billy, a couple weeks ago I met a student from Long Island and at minutes fair.

And unfortunately, when she came up to me two minutes late, and because there was another campus ministry that was right beside me and I could not, I couldn't tell her, come to BCM. And she came up and she said, "I'm just looking for an evangelical ministry." And then the Lutheran lady right next to me just said, 'Well, there's an episcopal group." And I was like oh man, if you'd have been two minutes earlier because she said, "I'm thinking about being born again," is what she said.

Which in Long Island means a completely different thing than what you and I think. And but it was just so good. Tell us about the average college student. What are you coming into contact with? What makes it so difficult to reach college students? Whoever wants to go first can.

Billy Judge: I think that the thing that makes it so difficult to reach college students, and it really has nothing to do with lostness. God has been saving lost people for thousands of years. What we find is the most difficult thing is cultural Christianity.

That when kids who have grown up in church get plugged in at Shandon, we really have to deconstruct what they learned in student ministry, because for the most part it has been a come and see not a go and tell, let's see how many people we can gather. This is catered for you. There's a menu of ministry options for you to pick from, and we're hyper focused on reaching the lost.

And the hardest thing for us has been deconstructing what Christian students bring into college with them.

Raj Aluri: I think with the internationals, they come from a totally different background, and they come from my Islamic background, or a Hindu background, or a Buddhist background. Our patience with them to understand where they're coming from is a process. It's a time that they need to go through and they also have family pressures and social pressures back home.

And I know one fellow who came from India, became a Christian on the campus and then his support was stopped. He came from a Hindu background. He's still in my church. He's grown tremendously in the faith. But the costs he had to pay a little bit in the beginning, but his family dropped the financial support.

Things can happen, but God will take care of those situations. But I think what we need is people to be able to be patient. Internationals are busy. They're here to study, but give the time necessary for them to process and come to the understanding of the what we believe in as the true faith.

Rob Nicholes: Yeah. Just add a few couple things. Exactly what Billy said, I think is the hardest thing about reaching those that are churched, or come from a church background. For regular college students we liken them to cats, where they kind of skittishly come over and you’ve got to kind of just hang out with them and stuff. And then they just kind of run away. And we laugh trying to make college students from cats into dogs, or where they're loyal, or they understand where home is, where they get what's important in their lives. Because if you think about just people in general that suffer from what society is feeding them, or feed on what society's given them, it's the same at all ages.

But what I think makes college students different is because they have so much time on their hands, that they're filling it with everything. Absolutely everything. And if you don't, if you're not in their lives and aren’t walking with them, they'll join another club. They'll get into another job, they'll have three jobs, four clubs, they'll go to three different churches.

But for the ones, but back to the, just kind of a normal college student. The other thing where we're just used to doing church several generations ago, where it was very effective for us is not anymore, is that they really value authenticity. And they don't have any trust in institutions and the way they once did.

They really, it really matters who is speaking the gospel to them from the stage. It really matters who the person is that's discipling them. And they have just very little tolerance for that in their lives. And you see them coming to church and if somebody, again, if they don't have authentic community, or people have been fake to them, they'll go find try to find it somewhere else.

And I think as we've been talking over and over again, it's about relationships and that's what people want because they lack it. We're connected, but not really having any deep relationships. And that's where people are coming over and over again as they use the examples that's the same examples we have. As people that have come to Christ over the last semester, over the last year, they say over and over again, it's the community that I saw in friends of mine that were Christians. Their lives were different than mine. And that is what draws them in and allows us to share the Gospel with them because they want to know what's different.

Billy Judge: And I would just add something that you all could probably relate to. The average Christian college student is very similar to your average church member in that, the thing that is most important to them is the vision that they have had for their life. They're going to get their degree, they're going to get their job, they're going to marry, they're going to have a few kids. They're going to save up for their 401k.

And if you've read John Piper's, Don't Waste Your Life, he would say, "That is the great tragedy of the American church," is that's what they're living for. And we all feel like it's our job to loose them of their vision, and to kind of pry their fingers off of that so that God could put something greater within their grasp.

Rob Nicholes: Because I think in college, that's that time when that group is the loosest that it will be, after that it just gets tighter and tighter and it's harder as your adult friends, or you yourself struggle with this.

Jamie Rogers: The older a person gets…and that's why in college ministries it's so tough. Collegiate ministry is still important, because if they haven't trusted Christ by the time they're in college, it's almost impossible to see that person come to know the Lord. But once they get out of college, man, if they haven't trusted him, the odds have going way, way, way down. And so it’s very important.

I've asked Billy, he actually he shared this slide at the impact conference when it met here at Shandon a couple, I guess two months ago. And I just asked him to share this, I think this is important for all of you guys to hear, not just in relation to collegiate ministry, but even for your churches and so Billy, you want to describe this.

Billy Judge: You’re talking about the sharks too, right?

Jamie Rogers: Yeah.

Billy Judge: Okay. This will give you good insight into who college students are. This is an article from the Harvard Crimson, which is Harvard's weekly or daily newspaper. This a student who wrote it, and to my knowledge, the student is not a believer. He's from the North. He's probably, definitely not. But he wrote this about college students.

College students are selfish. It's true. Even Christian ones, they're caught up in their lives, and usually their lives only because they can be. And he writes, our activities, even our altruistic ones primarily serve us. And you all are thinking, man, college students are a lot like my church members. They help us grow and develop our conceptions of the good life. The 401k, the Lake House, whatever it might be, and they don't matter in the grand scheme of things.

And it's our job, God has called us. It's our job and it's our privilege to loose them of this selfishness that prevents them from experiencing God's best.

And you all have seen a picture like this before. How many of you still watch shark week? Apparently nobody. Okay. A couple of you. I still watch it, but there's only many times you can watch a great white catapult a seal 40 feet in the air. Anyway, I'm going to talk to you real quick about what our philosophy at Shandon college has been.

This comes out of a book called The Forgotten Ways by Alan Hirsch, and Hircsh ripped this illustration from a business book called Red Water Shift, by a guy named Kim, that was a New York Times bestseller. And here's what the Red Water Shift would say in the business world. It says that, "Entrepreneurs are not all that creative. All they're trying to do is get a very small piece of a much larger market. And when they do, they feel like they've accomplished something significant."

And Kim in his book likens the entrepreneurs to sharks fighting over a carcass. They exert their energy. They fight each other. Some actually don't survive, and some come away injured, all for a little piece of the carcass or the market. And he would say that the best entrepreneurs are the ones who leave the red water that was bloodied and they go into the blue water, which is against the status quo. But here's what we know about the blue water. We know that in blue water there's bigger fish and there's more fish. They just have to find them. This is why Steve Jobs is unlike anyone who's ever walked the face of the earth and the technology world.

Then Hirsch takes this analogy and he brings it back to the church world. And he says that, "Churches are like sharks fighting over a small piece of a large market." And he would say, "That market that churches are fighting over are the 40% of Americans who are down with church." And if we just have the most free pizza, if we just have the best worship event, if we have the most eloquent pastor, the 40% will gravitate towards those churches and churches fight with each other. Some don't survive, and some walk away injured.

But what if churches stopped concentrating and fighting over the 40% who are down with church in America and went after the 60% of people in America who are not down with the church? For most of us, our mission ends when we invite somebody to church and they say, "No, I don't want to go to your church thing." And we go on and you try to find the next person who will come to our church thing. And what we're doing when we do that, as we're actually making the Gospel our ulterior motive and not our ultimate motive.

And the Gospel is our ultimate motive. When we go after that 60% who will never darken our doors. But pursue them beyond just the initial, will you come and when their answer is, "No," we continue on in friendship with them. And at Shandon College, we've been hyper focused on pushing our students away from the 40% of our campus, who's down with the church meaning they'll come to whatever we invite them and we want them really just saturated in the lives of those who will never enter our church. And we don't want Shandon College to be the Christian social hub. We want it to be a place where they come once or twice a week. They're equipped and they're sent out into that 60%.

Jamie Rogers: Will you leave that up?

Billy Judge: Yep.

Jamie Rogers: Just leave it up as we finish here today. Let me ask you, do you guys just a couple more questions and then we'll open it up for questions here and then we'll hear from George, with this testimony as well.

Some of these churches would love to see, they would love to be involved in collegiate ministry, would love to see what's going on, and get involved in what's going on in Columbia around the campuses. What's some advice or counsel that you can give them? When it comes to plugging them in to what's going on on campus, and actually going after some of these students who aren't a part of the church.

Rob Nicholes: Just a real simple strategy. Identify the students that are in your congregation and disciple the sink out of them. And if you are walking and you’re understanding that we are to be outward focused as we learn to walk with Christ that, how do we know that we're in him, that we walk as Jesus walked. And all the ways that he walked in. If we'll start pouring into those folks, and live life with them, they know other college students and they will come with them because they are being fed there and they are being walked with there.

And I think you'll find that would be pretty effective, for reaching them as opposed to as Billy said just doing the same things that we've been doing, hoping that they'll come to us. If we'll take care of the ones we have, if we will to teach them how to live God's life, the life that he has for him, it's way better than the one they're doing.

And they will want others to have that life too, and they'll reach them. We're all of the mind that students reach students, adult reach adults, that you reach your own people. And it's just kind of that missionary thing where it’s said you're reaching the indigenous folks with the people that are there. Don't neglect those that are already with him.

Billy Judge: There's 40,000 college students in our city USC, Columbia College, Benedict, Allen, Midlands, CIU. I did a kind of an estimation and I was pretty generous with it, to make it sound better than it does. I think, and you can speak into this, that if you took all of the students in Columbia, and we estimated which of those are plugged into a Christian organization, whether it be a parachurch or local church, 2000. Maybe 2000 out of 40,000 is not even a dent.

And we need you all. I think it's easy to look at the churches that have full time college pastors and say, "Man, they're getting it done." We're really not. We're literally not making a dent in that 40,000 number. And we can celebrate numbers that we were on all day long, but when we think of 40,000, we need you all.

And the North American Mission Board has identified the 32 most unchurched cities in North America. Most of them are outside of the Bible Belt. New Orleans and Atlanta are the exceptions. But the North American Mission Board has also said that the college campus is the 33rd most unreached city in North America. And we all have several in our backyard. And you all can look at a map. You all can draw the circle, whether it be a five mile radius, or 10 mile radius, if you're more of a go context, and you'll intersect if you're anywhere near Columbia with college students. And you're not excused from college ministry, even if you don't have a full time college guy.

Jamie gave six really, really solid and concrete ways, to engage the campus. You all can prayer walk every single Monday. It doesn't have to be Monday. We can prayer walk, that’s free. And that's budget friendly. But also super important. Luke 10:2 says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.” And we don't have a harvest issue. We have a worker issue. And we really do need you all to engage college students in Columbia.

Raj Aluri: I would like to say that, "Almost all the internationals are in this blue waters."

Rob Nicholes: Yeah. They are.

Raj Aluri: The blue waters, and they ready for us to be their friends. And I know I have seen two good examples. One fellow came from Iran to Columbia became a Christian. He became an engineer and a college professor. He planted a church in Atlanta among the Persian community. Another fellow came to USC, became a Christian when he was doing his PhD in physics. Then he became a Christian during the course of his studies at USC. After that, he went to CIU got his MD. Now he's a pastor at the local church, in Columbia among the Chinese community.

As you meet internationals, they become Christians. They need to grow as leaders wherever they go. They become the church planters wherever they go, they become the missionaries that you want them to be. We have a fellow came here again, became a Christian, went to Japan, now he's a pastor. Those are things we could be sending missionaries to almost a hundred countries just from being in Columbia.

Jamie Rogers: Raj, you were even mentioning to me at one point too about, you mentioned earlier that the best, and the brightest of these countries are coming to the college campuses in America. And I know you've mentioned about, ambassadors, students who gone back and serve as ambassadors at their countries. But just talk about a little bit of that, about the opportunity we have in front of us.

Raj Aluri: Well, in the late 1990s and early '80s, where a fellow from Madagascar came to USC, and then he went back to Madagascar, became a chief economic development officer. Then the last June he came back to this country as his country's ambassador, and he came to visit us. The kind of people we get to meet here, you never know what they would become. I think the estimation that may be in the present, today's world, we might have about 200 world leaders at different levels who were once American educated.

These are the people, I think of the Ethiopian Eunuch who was traveling from Jerusalem to Gaza. And God led Phillip to minister to him. He became a Christian. They say when he went back to Ethiopia, the church that began was through him. These people become... I have friends who, one guy became a foreign secretary for Cameroon, another guy became a cabinet secretary for health and education for his country. You never know how God uses them if they become Christians, they're the most powerful influences. I close with this one.

Raj Aluri: I always think about Fidel Castro, he studied in America. Had he become a Christian, he probably would have went back to Cuba with the same zeal and lived for Christ and made a much different change in Cuba rather than what he did.

Jamie Rogers: What questions do you have, any questions for these guys?

Speaker 6: What other Christian ministries are on campus, here today we got the BCM and Shandon and international ministries. Well, what other Christian ministries are on campus and do you all ever get together for kind of a campus wide, flow out.

Rob Nicholes: There's a lot of Christian organizations and they're all great. They're all really good at a certain thing. And my conviction is that, I'm willing to work with anyone who has like values and convictions. No, we don't work with everyone. We work with a few. There's a lot. There's a lot.

Raj Aluri: Yeah. I have something to say on that one. Most of the parachurch campus ministries are not really actively involved with the local church. That's been my experience being at the campus. My desire when I started the ministry, was to work through the local churches only. I say I have no ministry without the local church involvement. Parachurches do sometimes a great job, but that's all they do on the campus.

My son goes to Furman and he's very involved with the campus ministry. I said, "Son, that doesn't substitute for a church, local church." He needs to be a part of the local church. I keep telling him all the time. But some people will think, oh they did their job during the week on the campus as a campus ministry is over. They're not totally getting them plugged into the local church and let the local church to be the where they grow as Christians and get discipled and then go move on.

Rob Nicholes: Yeah. And just in case if you're aware, the campus organizations know this as well. I've talked with many of them, and they know that their students struggle if they're only involved in a campus ministry when they get done. Because they've been catered to, they have not had to be with other people, work with other people, serve with other people who have just been on the campus. And they've got 15 other adults, to like two students and it's not just what the local church looks like. And they internally like... We've done surveys, I don't know what we're doing, but it's not helping when they get done. And that's just kind of across the board.

Jamie Rogers: Even in your question too about how have you guys served together? You guys serve together every year. You do some activity. I think you’re doing an activity for welcome week. We actually do a couple of activities welcome week together. We do partner with like-minded ministries, people who are out seeking to share the gospel the same way we are, who believe what we do about Jesus. And if we can partner, we would choose to partner if we can.

Billy Judge: And we like that because we need to figure out, what that looks like to work together and get better at it. As you start to do it, it's kind of hard, but this is a lot less…you're sharing resources. And you're, I think communicating something that we want to communicate, but it takes some time.

Speaker 7: Do you feel any dent in your ministry, do you feel any pushback from administration, or other student groups regarding student rights, political correctness, freedom of expression.

Jamie Rogers: I just answered this question to a donating couple. I think the guy graduated in 1962, and he and his wife, he said, "When the last spouse dies, we're going to set up this endowment. And we were just trying to find a ministry to plug into, to support." And he asked me the question, are there any external factors that I can foresee, that would cease our work on campus the way that it does?

And right now, you guys might say something different than I do, but just from me being brand new on campus at USC, it's an unusual campus in that we actually do have an open door from the campus to be able to do ministry. One of the things that we've seen from that. And I think one of the reasons for that right now is, this semester we've had three or four suicides and deaths related to just the campus at USC and the suicide number rates are going up among college students.

There's a lot of depression issues that are arising as well. And I think just even through that, I think our leaders see that, I think because they actually care about students. They might not care about them in the same way, of course, that we do, in order to share Jesus as the only means of hope. But I do think they see that man, there is a need for a spiritual avenue to speak into these students' lives.

And right now I think the mood is pretty good. I think it's welcoming. However, they're getting ready to elect the new president, and we're praying even right now that's going to be a person of peace. Who will continue that, I hope, that trajectory going forward. You guys, have anything else?

Rob Nicholes: No, I think you said it really well. And that's at USC. I haven't found anything different at the other campuses they’re very open.

Raj Aluri: Yeah, you can continue to pray that God would keep the door open for Christian ministries to function, operate freely without any administrative pressures. I know that in the international office arena at one time, they didn't want us to be anywhere near them. Nothing. They didn't. You are a church or a Christian ministry don't come near us.

But God changed everything over the last few years. Now we have an open door. They give us an opportunity to have an orientation, a lunch meal, meet with the students on their turf without any... Pray that God would keep the door open.

Jamie Rogers: I want you to just to give these guys round of applause. Just to thank them for giving their time.

Chris Reinolds: And to all of our listeners, thank you for joining with us. And please be sure to check out the show notes for more detailed information about today’s show. Also, if you found this podcast helpful for you and your ministry, share it with others so we can get the word out about what God is doing. Until next time from all of us in the Columbia Metro Connection. We thank you for listening and urge you to share this podcast with everyone you know. It's the good news about the Good News in the Columbia Metro Baptist Association.