



Meeting new students at UNSW's Welcome Week.

## A Strategic Start

The start of the semester is always significant. Friendships form quickly, routines are set, and spiritual openness is often higher than at any other time of year. We're stepping into these weeks prayerfully and expectantly.

### UNSW – A New Opportunity

For the past year and a half at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), we've helped run an English Corner alongside a Chinese student ministry and a church partner. Through this, we've met many students looking for connection as they adjust to life in Australia.

There is a clear opportunity to help make Christ known among the 35,000 international students at UNSW, and we want to be a part of reaching even more of these students who come from many countries around the world. We recently took steps to launch an official student club where we could focus on reaching a broader international student context.

Unfortunately, the university just denied our application to become an official student club. Please pray for wisdom and favor as we look to apply again. The good news, however, is that this doesn't stop us from connecting with students on campus.

We are praying that God would raise up Christian students at UNSW who have a heart for international students and a desire to build a disciple-making movement. Long-term impact will come through students reaching students.

This year our team is using a discipleship curriculum called *MyFriends*. During orientation, I

met James, Lyndon, and Josh—new students who are Christians from East Asia. They have agreed to meet weekly to explore the life of Jesus and grow in His missional lifestyle. Our first step was to walk around campus and pray for students we saw, and then simply spend time together, following Jesus' example of investing in close relationships.

After one meeting, Lyndon texted our group: *"Hi buddies, it was really nice to meet up with you guys again. I'm really glad we've got this special period to settle down our hearts and dig into God's Word."*

Pray that God would continue to work in the lives of James, Lyndon, and Josh as we meet together, and that he would give them opportunities to build into the lives of others.

### University of Sydney - South Asian Ministry

Welcome Week is a strategic time for **Chai and Chat**, our South Asian community at USYD. We met many new students by holding a sign that read, *"Bollywood + Aussie Trivia = Free Snacks."* After a quick trivia question, we invited them to our welcome party.

Our hope this year is to identify 20 spiritually open students—especially from Hindu backgrounds—and walk patiently with them toward Jesus. With growing numbers of South Asian students in Australia and little gospel work among them, the opportunity is significant. Last year three Indian students indicated trust in Jesus, and we are praying for continued fruit.



Weekly Dinner and a Story with South Asian students.

One of those new believers, Raj, has been attending my church each week and recently agreed to meet for an extra hour of discipleship directly after the church service. He texted me, *“I would be happy to talk about my growing relationship with God... yes... definitely I am so excited to talk more about Jesus.”*

It's been an encouraging start to the year. Our weekly **Chai and Chat** gathering is averaging around 40 students, most from Hindu backgrounds. We also invite students to explore Jesus at **Dinner and a Story**, a weekly gathering where we share a Bible story, discuss it together, and enjoy a meal in a home setting.

Amri, a new student from northern India, shared, *“To meet such amazing people who listen and share stories—I felt really connected.”*

These gatherings have opened the door for meaningful spiritual conversations and growing friendships. As we engage South Asian students with the gospel, dependence on the Lord through prayer is critical. We would love to invite you to pray with us by receiving our weekly prayer updates.

Join our [Sydney South Asian Prayer WhatsApp Group!](#) by scanning this QR code.



### Family Update & Prayer

We're grateful that our family is doing well. The summer (end of December and January) was refreshing, especially attending our Power to Change staff conference—a meaningful time with the Lord and our team. The kids especially loved the camp program!

Elijah has started kindergarten and is enjoying his teacher and new friends.

Nathaniel is settling into the year remarkably well, which has been a real answer to prayer—thank you for praying for him! Addie turned two and is officially a toddler! Emily's back and migraines also seem to be slowly improving, and we would appreciate continued prayer for her health.

One important prayer request: our current visa expires in July. We recently received government approval to apply for a visa that would allow us to stay another 2–4 years. As we've prayed about whether to return to the U.S. or continue in Sydney, we both sense the Lord leading us to stay.

Thank you for partnering with us in reaching international students with the good news of Jesus. We're very grateful.

*Blake & Emily Ackerson*



Raj visited India over the summer and returned with many gifts for our entire family!

### Prayer Requests

- **Pray for wisdom and favor** as we seek to become an official student club at UNSW and interact with the university administration.
- **Pray for James, Lyndon, and Josh** as we meet weekly for discipleship—that the Lord would shape their lives around His priorities as we study the life of Jesus together.
- **Pray for our Explore Group at UNSW.** Five students interested in learning about Jesus met for the first time this week. Pray also that God would raise up volunteers to lead investigative Bible studies.
- **Pray for our South Asian friends to encounter Jesus** in a powerful way, and that He would draw them to Himself as we seek to make Him known.
- **Pray for Raj** to grow in his relationship with Jesus and for protection from the enemy.
- **Pray for our Easter outreach plans.** Across our Sydney campuses, we will be matching students with host families through [friendsfordinner.com.au](http://friendsfordinner.com.au). Please also pray for a special Easter outreach with our South Asian friends, where they will hear the message of the gospel.
- **Pray for our visa application process.** The goal is to get everything submitted by June.