

Missionary Transitions

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Preface

Bonnie (my wife) and I have spent many hours facilitating two-day reentry retreats with hundreds of missionaries returning to their passport countries from their years of service in other cultures. We have also met with scores of others as individuals or couples in one-day debriefing sessions. As a result of doing this we have written several books about the reentry transition, books to help missionaries prepare for their transition and to become a part of their passport cultures again, as well as books for children and their parents and for people who have served short-term.

We have been part of orientation programs for hundreds of missionaries as they prepared for the transition from their passport culture to their host culture. We have visited and talked with hundreds of other missionaries ranging from those serving in countries that are open to the gospel to those serving in countries where they can never use the word “missionary.” We have also talked with missionaries who have returned to their passport country to work there or to retire there. In all these situations, we have found that missionaries repeatedly go through transition after transition. As a result of these experiences, I have written many short brochures about these transitions.

This book contains material from, and references to, these books and brochures as well as new material written specifically for this book. I strongly recommend reading the introduction first. After that, the chapters may be read in any order because each one stands alone. The book is written in the order missionaries face transitions through their lives, but each chapter is independent of the others.

Of course, everyone goes through transitions in life, but missionaries have major specific transitions added to the general ones that everyone experiences. Leaving one’s passport culture and living in a different host culture for several years, perhaps indefinitely, brings major changes in all areas of life. Leaving that host culture and returning to one’s passport culture makes more changes, some unexpected. A glance at the contents shows that this book is primarily organized around changing cultures. Then its secondary organization is about smaller transitions within these major ones of changing cultures.

Short-term missionaries and people who work for mission agencies while living in their passport culture are welcome to read the book if they wish. However, most short-term missions are not transitions between cultures but more like intermissions between parts of a continuing life. Many people on short-term mission trips never get out of vacation mode and never fully enter another culture. Of course, sometimes a short-term trip leads to beginning the transition into becoming a long-term missionary.

The material in this book is most relevant for long-term missionaries, but people serving short-term may find some things helpful to them.

I want to acknowledge the invaluable help of two people editing this book. Art Nonneman gave excellent suggestions chapter by chapter related to the content of the book, and Yvonne Moulton did the final editing, making sure that my grammar, punctuation, and so forth were corrected.

Introduction: Endings and Beginnings

People usually think of beginnings as occurring before endings. That seems to be logical because something has to begin before it ends. However, in transitions one thing may need to end before something else can begin.

Which comes first?

The Old Testament begins with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).” The last chapter of the New Testament includes the Lord saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:12).” Thus the Bible is not silent about beginnings and endings. Between this ultimate beginning and ultimate ending it talks about many much smaller beginnings and endings, and often the end of one period must come before the next one begins.

For example, Jesus spoke about the end of the world occurring at the “end of the age” in both the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:39) and in the parable of the net (Matthew 13:49) rather early in his ministry. Near the end of his ministry his disciples asked him when the “end of the age” would come and what the signs would be. Jesus gave a detailed answer to their question (Matthew 24-25) telling them many things that would happen, and then “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear...They will see the Son of Man coming on the

clouds of the sky, with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30). He assured them that he would be with them “to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28: 20). This age has to end before the next age will begin.

Jesus himself went through some transitions similar to the major transitions missionaries experience. He was present at creation and with God throughout the events that occurred during the Old Testament. Then his transitions began.

- Transition from heaven to earth to save the lost as described at the beginnings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- Transition from earth to heaven as described at the end of the gospels and the beginning of Acts
- Transition from heaven to earth someday as described in Revelation and several other prophecies

Through the rest of this book we will note similarities between those that Jesus made and the one he will make when he returns at the Second Coming.

Modern Transition Models

More than a third of a century ago William Bridges wrote his classic book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. Published in 1980 by Perseus Books in Cambridge, MA, this book has sold more than half a million copies. Bridges emphasized that transitions begin with endings, and they end with beginnings. The three chapters describing the transition process were:

- Chapter 4: Endings
- Chapter 5: The Neutral Zone
- Chapter 6: Making a Beginning

Bridges went on to write several more books about transition, selling a total of more than a million copies.

Also in 1980 David Pollock and his family returned to the USA after serving in Kenya. Then Pollock became Executive Director of Interaction International which focused on third culture kids and their expatriate families.

(<http://www.interactionintl.org/whoisdavepollock.asp>). By the early 1990s he had developed a transition model similar to Bridges' model. Because Pollock was serving people transitioning from one culture to another, his model went from the time people were involved in one culture to the time when they were fully involved in the next one. Pollock's "stages" were:

- Involvement
- Leaving
- Transition
- Entering
- Re-Engagement

Pollock and Ruth Van Reken wrote *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* which was published in 1999 by Intercultural Press. Chapter 15, Dealing with Transition, presented his model.

A glance at the table of contents of this book shows that it is a combination of the both models. Some transitions are about moving from one culture to another, and other transitions are ones that involve making changes while within a culture, either one's passport culture or host culture.

People who take a quick glance at the chapter titles or stages may get the impression that these changes occur in chronological order. That is, readers may think that someone spends two months ending, then two days in transit, then three months beginning. That is not the case except in rare circumstances. Usually people get their visas and make arrangements for housing (beginning) at the same time they are selling their vehicles and purchasing their plane tickets (ending). Events in chapters overlap in time, but it is easier to discuss those events separately than to try to talk about all of them at once.

What is the difference between changes and transitions?

Change means that our situation has become different. Change is inevitable in life. Babies are born, and people die. When a baby is born, it is obviously different for the baby who has come out of the womb, but things are also different for the parents as well—a major change. When a person dies, it is also a change for friends and relatives—especially for a spouse. Marriage is change, and the end of marriage is change. Getting a job is a change, and losing a job is a change. Going as a missionary is a change, and returning from the field is another change.

Some changes come from the actions of others, such as getting a promotion—or getting fired. Other changes come from natural disasters, such as a tornado destroying your home—or heavy rain ending a drought. Still other changes occur because of a person's own actions, such as going as a missionary—or going to jail. Some changes just occur as a natural part of everyday life, such as puberty among teenagers—or cancer striking at any age.

Some people use "change" and "transition" as synonyms, but they should not. Note that Bridges titled his book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. Transitions are how we adjust to the changes that occur in life. Transitions include the processes of letting go of the way things used to be and accepting the way things are after the change. Missionaries may travel from their passport countries to their host countries in 24 hours, so changes may take only one day. However the adjustments to the new country, transitions, may take months or years. An accident may end a missionary's life in seconds (change), but the adjustment of his wife to being a widow and his children to not having a father (transition) may take years.

People may get stuck in their transitions at any of the three major phases.

- Endings: Missionaries may have trouble letting go of the old, adjusting to not having familiar things or persons. They may spend more time on Skype and Facebook than they do talking with people in their host country.
- Neutral Zone: Missionaries may dislike the confusion and embarrassment of not being able to successfully do the everyday tasks of life. They may withdraw, spending more time with fellow missionaries than with nationals.
- Beginnings: Missionaries may resist the risks of making new beginnings. They may send selected nationals who speak the language to do everyday tasks the missionaries should be learning.

When driving past a cemetery and seeing a man kneeling over a grave, I commented that his wife must have died recently. People in the car said that they had moved there two years before, and the man had been there every day since then. Of course, the loss of a spouse is a great transition, but the man had still not made that transition. Third Culture Kids (TCKs) sometimes return to their passport countries for higher education and still not have made the transition “home.” They may then return to their host countries where they can feel at home because they cannot make the transition back to their passport countries.

Organization of the book

This book is divided into five parts, each with three chapters.

Part 1 contains three chapters of transitions that occur before people actually leave for long-term service. These include transitions that must be made:

- From not going to going.
- From secular employment to a mission agency.
- From receiving a salary to raising funds.

Part 2 contains three chapters related to going from the passport culture to the host culture: Endings (Leaving), In Transit, and Beginnings (Entering).

Part 3 contains three chapters about transitions while one is serving in the host culture:

- Transitions within the family, such as having a baby.
- Transitions from one ministry to another within the agency.
- Transitions from one field to another within the agency or from one agency to another.

Part 4 contains three chapters related to going from the host culture to the passport culture: Endings (Leaving), In Transit, and Beginnings (Reentering).

Part 5 contains three chapters about transitions that may occur after one has returned. These are related to such things as preparing for another term, retiring from all paying employment, and the final transition of death (and resurrection).

This book is about transitions that are primarily made by missionaries or transitions that are more dramatic for missionaries than for others. For example, having a “call” to missions is an important factor on the attrition of missionaries, but few secular or even religious employers today seem to think a call is important. Another example is that children of missionaries may blame God for many things that happen to their parents or for making repeated moves necessary. They may do this rather than blaming an employer.

Part One

Before One Goes

Prior to considering anything about missions other than giving to the mission agency at church and praying for missionaries, most people are in the stage of involvement in Pollock's model. They are usually part of several groups at work, at school, in the community, at church, and so forth. They know how they fit in these groups and feel some commitment to other members of the groups. They often have a smaller group of friends with whom they feel even more comfortable, and they feel free to confide in those friends and want to listen to what those friends have to say. They feel affirmed, secure, confident, and safe.

Then something occurs to them, their spouse, or their parents, and they find themselves at least thinking about becoming involved in missions in new ways. Transitions that occur during this time are from staying to going, from place of work to agency, and from drawing a salary to raising funds.

Chapter 1

Transition to Going

Until the late eighteenth century, most people interpreted the "great commission" in the final chapters of Matthew and Mark as being given to the apostles who heard it and carried it out. That command was for them alone and did not apply to anyone since then.

It was William Carey and other English Baptists who began to reinterpret these passages in the 1780s. On May 12, 1792, his radical book, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, was advertised in the *Leicester Herald*. In that book he asked whether or not the Great Commission was still binding, surveyed the book of Acts, presented detailed data on the state of the world relative to the gospel, and countered objections to the missionary enterprise. That book and William Carey's life brought about major changes in the way Christians viewed people in other countries who were not likeminded.

I'm called

During the last 200 years people around the globe have come to talk about having a missionary call in which individuals feel they must go into another culture and tell the

Good News. This chapter deals with several states in which a person can be relative to a call to missionary service.

Who is called?

This question has had a broad spectrum of answers during the last two centuries.

- No one. The Great Commission was given to the people who were there when Jesus spoke, and it applied only to them.
- Everyone. The Great Commission applies to everyone, even people today. Thus, everyone is responsible to spread the Good News to every people group.
- Only people who receive some kind of “call” from God. People who receive this special summons from God are to leave their culture and to spread the Good News as God has directed. Other people remain in their passport cultures as supporters.

What does the Bible say about a call?

The Bible does not mention a specific “missionary call” as such, but it is helpful to consider how the first people to serve cross-culturally in the book of Acts came to do so.

- An angel told Philip to go to a particular road (Acts 8:26).
- While Philip was on his way, the Spirit directed him to the chariot (Acts 8:29).
- As Saul (Paul) was traveling along a road, a light flashed around him, and Jesus told him to go into the city (Acts 9:3-6).
- In a vision the Lord told Ananias that he had chosen Saul (Paul) to go to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).
- While they were worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit told the church in Antioch to set Saul (Paul) and Barnabas apart for the work to which God had called them (Acts 13:2).

- During the night Paul had a vision of a man who begged him to come and help (Acts 16:9).

Note the variety of times of day, settings, people involved, spiritual beings involved, senses involved, and so forth. God does not “call” people in any one way. He does so through many different means.

How are people called today?

Since there is disagreement about who is called and God calls in such a variety of ways, there is no generally accepted definition of how people are called. However, the following are often found in descriptions of one’s call.

- Following some crisis experience some people have an inner persuasion that God has chosen them for some particular purpose they feel compelled to fulfill.
- Church leaders, mentors, mission leaders, and peers who know persons well verify that these individuals are people God is likely to call into service, often considering the attributes listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- Often individuals can point to particular passages of Scripture that support their calls into cross-cultural ministry. God uses Scripture to affirm the call and guide them in decisions made after the call.
- Called people have ongoing ministries in the local church in evangelism, discipleship, education, counseling, or other such areas. People who do not do these things within their own culture are not likely to do them in another culture. The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.
- Preachers preach, teachers teach, and the called person has some idea of how he or she as a missionary will “mish.” They will know what they are to do.
- Called people are eager to prepare in terms of education and experience to fulfill their call. Paul went to Arabia for three years of preparation after his call and before his active ministry.

- Called people have a great concern over others being lost in sin. Though humanitarian service is good, the essence of missions is the salvation of the lost.
- Called people usually are called to some particular task, people group, place, and so forth rather than just seeing great needs in other places.

Of course, no one is perfect in all of these respects, but research has shown that people who have definite calls are much more likely to serve for a longer time than those who go for other reasons.

Are there false “calls”?

People have a variety of reasons for thinking they should become missionaries, and some mistake these for a “call.” Here are some of those reasons.

- Earning God’s love. People who believe that they are not loved may think that sacrificing to become a missionary will win God’s approval.
- Penance. People feel guilty and try to pay for their sin by serving in difficult or dangerous places.
- Family pressure. Parents who feel guilty for not obeying their call may encourage their children to become missionaries.
- Travel. People who want to see the world or have adventures may seek these through missionary work.
- Going home. People who grew up overseas may be looking for a way to get “home” and find it through missions.
- Quotas. Some churches or mission agencies set goals to send a certain number of missionaries in the next year, and people may go to meet that “quota.”
- Meeting needs. Some people are concerned about meeting needs of poor people overseas and go on the basis of a purely humanitarian motive.

The list can go on and on, but people who go for these reasons often do not last long on the field. Many return home,

but others remain and become “high maintenance,” taking up the time of those really called.

I’m not called, but I’m willing

May the “call” become a marriage issue?

It is not an issue if neither spouse is called or if both spouses are called because everyone is the same. However, if or when one spouse feels called to leave the passport country to spread the Good News and the other sees no reason to leave home, this becomes an issue. If they stay at home, the first spouse is frustrated because he or she may feel guilty for not obeying God. If they go to another culture, the second spouse may resent it when he or she gets beyond “vacation mode” to the time when culture shock and the stress of living in another culture set in.

What can a couple do?

Making sure that both husband and wife have genuine calls before beginning missionary service is a good way to avoid this conflict and stress in their marriage. It may also prevent their causing problems in the missionary community in which they work.

Two misunderstandings are possible. First, the one who feels called may have a “false” call, and after a brief period of time may become a casualty. Second, the one who does not feel called may have a genuine call and become an effective missionary. Thus, couples need to consider both of these.

The couple should examine carefully the “call” of the person who claims to have it. People who have the false calls such as those mentioned above are not evil people trying to sabotage the missionary enterprise. Many of them are sincere in their desire to serve. They really do want to please God, to atone for their sins, to please their parents, and so forth down

the list. However, when difficult times occur, their lack of a genuine call makes it impossible for them to weather the storm. Then they have problems themselves and/or become problems to others.

Likewise, people who do not believe they have a call may really have one and not recognize it. These people may have heard missionaries tell of their dramatic call to service or have read in Scripture about the calls of Philip or Paul. Though they may have prayed for missionaries and given to missions, they have never seen a vision, heard from an angel, or been blinded by a light and heard from Jesus as they traveled down the road. Their burden for the lost and compassion for those who have never heard may be part of God's call.

Since people may not be conscious of some of their motives, talking with a counselor who knows about God's call on people's lives may be helpful. Talking with an understanding missionary who can help sort things out may be even more helpful. In no case should they go until both have the same call or one has a specific call to service and the other is called to serve wherever his or her spouse is called.

A person may become a trailing spouse.

The year did not turn out like Tom expected. He had thought that taking time off and living in a developing country while his wife taught in an international school would be a welcome relief from the stress of working as a senior pastor. However, he soon got bored with mowing the school lawn, sweeping floors, painting walls, doing laundry, and trying to find fresh meat at the market.

He felt little satisfaction with what he was doing after just a couple of weeks and was looking forward to getting home and back to work using his talents. However, Mary felt fulfilled and loved what she was doing, and now she wanted to stay at least another year, maybe permanently.

At first these differences led to tension in their home, and they avoided discussing them. However, as tension increased and they talked more about the differences, their discussions began to become disagreements that were never really settled.

Tom was what many people call a "trailing spouse," a husband or wife following a marriage partner who takes a job in another place. Being a trailing spouse may mean leaving behind a deeply satisfying place of work and service to begin again, somewhere else in the world. The challenge of finding such a place in foreign locations without support networks and knowledge of the local situation may be difficult, frustrating, and time consuming. Consider how this has happened in history, what makes it an issue, and what can be done about it.

Did this happen in Bible times?

This has happened since the Book of Genesis. God told Abram (later Abraham) to leave his country and his extended family. If he did this, Abram's descendents would be a great nation. Abram took his wife Sarai (later Sarah) and his nephew Lot and followed God's direction to Canaan, to Egypt, and back to Canaan (Genesis 12-13).

The agreement was between God and Abram, and when it was renewed, it was again between the two of them (Genesis 15). Both Abram and Sarai came up with "schemes" for the other to do, schemes indicating that they did see her as a part of the agreement.

- Abram was afraid that the Egyptians would harm him, so he asked her to tell them she was his sister rather than his wife. She did it, and Abram raised no objection even when Pharaoh took Sarai to live in his palace (Genesis 12).
- Sarai apparently saw her role as a trailing spouse whose major part in this was to bear Abraham's child. Still without children a decade later Sarai had reached the point where she did not even think she had to be the one to bear

the child—She offered Abram her Egyptian maid as the one to bear the child (Genesis 16). After all, the agreement was with Abraham, not with her; perhaps her part was to be rearing the child.

Finally, more than another decade later, when He again confirmed his agreement with Abraham, God changed Sarai's name to Sarah and included her in the agreement, saying that "she will become the mother of nations; kings of people will come from her" (Genesis 17:16).

This issue affected the marriage relationship even after God said Sarah had an important role in his plan. Here is how it unfolded chronologically after God made the agreement with Abram in Genesis 12.

- 10 years after the agreement: Sarai told Abram that it was his fault that she was suffering (Genesis 16:5).
- 25 years after the agreement: Sarah told Abraham to get rid of the maid when Ishmael teased Isaac (Genesis 21:9-10).

This issue was a quarter of a century old. Both times they tried to resolve the issue by sending the maid out into the desert.

Has this happened in modern missions?

It has been a part of modern missions from the beginning. Dorothy Carey, wife of the "father of modern missions," was a trailing spouse. When she married William, he was a young shoemaker who inherited the business a couple years after their wedding. The two of them served Christ in their village, and William even began preaching in local churches.

However, over the next decade William became increasingly concerned about the lost in other cultures. He volunteered to go to India as a missionary, intending to take Dorothy and their children. Though Dorothy did not want to go, under great pressure she reluctantly agreed.

Dorothy never really joined William in ministering to others. The first few years she cared for their children, but within a couple of years she was totally incapacitated by her mental illness and incapable of even caring for them.

In contrast, William's second wife, Charlotte, was not a trailing spouse. She had come to India on her own, learned Bengali so she could minister to nationals, and joined William in ministry. Her particular interest was the education of Hindu girls.

Of course, most trailing spouses do not become mentally ill, but many of them are very unhappy and may become at least a contributing cause of the family leaving the field.

What is the issue?

The basic problem is that, like Tom, spouses who have been involved in fulfilling occupations of service to others suddenly find themselves doing "trivial" tasks that anyone could do. Lack of meaningful work, culture shock, and loneliness may leave the spouse miserable. Marital problems and even premature departure may finally result.

Trailing spouses experience the following:

- Frustration & resentment
- Loss of identity & self-esteem
- Loss of self-confidence
- Feeling empty & lost
- Sleep problems & unhappiness
- Anxiety & Depression
- Physical illness

The list could go on and on, but with about 80% of the spouses having a college degree and about 65% having left careers at home, it is not surprising that about 40% of overseas assignments are cut short because of failure of spousal or family adjustment. The overwhelming majority of the trailing spouses are women, but men have the same symptoms, perhaps even

more pronounced since they so often find their identity in their work.

What can agencies do?

Agencies concerned about their personnel and the problem of attrition can take some steps to help:

- Involve spouses in the selection process. Remember you are moving a family, not just a person.
- Involve spouses in decisions about the move from the beginning. The more they feel a part of the move, the less they feel like they are just “trailing.”
- Continue communication about the move with spouses throughout. Remember that the spouse may be really the backbone of the moving process, and if they do not receive the messages, they may get unhappy surprises.
- Send both husband and wife on a familiarization trip so that they can make decisions together about housing, schools, and so forth.
- Allow for some flexibility in policies when something concerns the spouse. The spouse’s attitude may be far more important than a policy.
- If spouses are interested in either full- or part-time employment, find a place in your agency if possible, or use resources there to help find work locally.
- Do whatever you can to encourage spouses to take “ownership” of the move too.

What can trailing spouses do?

Here are things spouses can do:

- Realize that contentment is a choice, a choice they can make. If they choose to be content, it will color their whole experience. Paul, an early missionary, said that he had learned to be content in any and every situation, whatever his circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13).

- Learn about their new home through books, the Internet, or people who have lived there. Of course, people who had a bad experience need to be taken with a grain of salt because they may view things through rust colored glasses.
- Take this experience as an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their lives. This may be the time to rethink and regroup.
- With email, skype, and the Internet they may be able to continue their work in another country—or develop a new line of work that they can do back “home” or anywhere else for that matter.
- The spouses need to talk with each other often and throughout their move and settling time realizing that being expats means repeated compromise.
- Take this as a time to develop a new “hobby” that is both enjoyable and meaningful.
- Continue their education in the context of a new culture to get a different viewpoint.
- Find a new ministry with children in the neighborhood.

Finally, rather than remaining a trailing spouse, become a prevailing spouse. Eleanor Roosevelt could have faded into the background as a trailing spouse, but she chose to make an effective and satisfying life for herself. Even after the death of her husband she continued to be an internationally prominent author, speaker, politician, and activist. She is remembered today for what she did, not just that she was a “first lady.”

Taking these steps may result in a trailing spouse becoming a prevailing spouse, one that gets a whole new lease on life.

I don’t want to go!

Dorothy Carey is a prime example of a spouse who did not want to go as a missionary. She told her husband she did not want to go. She told the agency she did not want to go. She told a prospective teammate she did not want to go. She refused

to go repeatedly over a four-month period—even when William and their oldest son left for the field without her and the younger children. She finally consented to go after repeated meetings and essentially being threatened by another member of the team.

What happened?

As one might expect, Dorothy did not have a good experience as a missionary and tried to sabotage the work William was doing. She and William obviously did not have a happy marriage and a nurturing home for their children while they served on the mission field.

Another missionary couple was present during some of their disagreements, and the visiting husband wrote, “She has uttered the most blasphemous and bitter imprecations against him, . . . seizing him by the hair of his head, and one time at the breakfast table held up a knife and said, ‘Curse you. I could cut your throat . . . you rascal . . . God almighty damn you.’” Before she was confined, she followed William through the streets raving and railing against him.

Of course, Dorothy was an extreme case in that she became mentally ill and had to be confined most of the later years of her life. She even tried to kill William a couple of times while serving in India.

Could such a situation happen today?

Of course, it could (Never say “never.”), but it is much less likely today than it was 200 years ago. Several factors are in place to prevent such a scenario today.

- Many agencies have developed criteria for screening people with mental problems.
- Such agencies also would refuse to send someone who did not want to go.

- Member care departments provide counsel and medication to those who are mentally ill. They also provide marital counseling to couples who have conflict.
- Many cultures have a very different view of mental illness and people in them would take a dim view of such lengthy confinement.

However, even with these safeguards, similar problems do occur, and some are unnecessary tragedies.

How could it happen?

Though it is unlikely that a spouse would be told that her family would be “dispersed and divided forever” if he or she did not go, more subtle pressures often exist. Knowing that their families and supporting churches have invested time and money in them, spouses who do not want to go may still feel great pressure to do so anyway. Although this can happen in any situation, it is more likely in the following ones.

- New agencies. As was the case with Dorothy, many new agencies do not have policy manuals that would prohibit such overt pressure on a spouse to go.
- Agencies emphasizing goals. Although most agencies set some target goals, some take the position that such goals must be met. If their goal is 50 new missionaries during the next year, they may accept people who they probably would not take under other circumstances and exert pressure on prospective missionaries to go.
- Churches. Although some mega-churches may support many missionaries and have member care for their missionaries, other smaller churches sponsor two or three couples overseas without any of the “infrastructure” needed to care for them.
- Independent missionaries. Some people are so determined to go that they just go on their own, pressuring their spouse to go with them. Though they may have several “supporting churches” who give to their own personal tax-

exempt organization, they may have no one to turn to when things go bad.

Could it happen later in life?

Dorothy had never served as a missionary, and she did not want to become one. We do not know exactly why, but we can surely make some educated guesses when we realize that she had three children, was pregnant, and was about to begin a five-month sea voyage. People today also may not want to go for similar reasons. However, even people who have served as missionaries may not want to return.

- Those who have served as a married couple may not want to go back after they have children because of living conditions, educational systems, and so forth.
- Those who have older children may not want to return and leave their children in college in their passport country.
- Those who have grandchildren may not want to return and leave their grandchildren.
- Those who have aging parents may want to remain where they can spend time with or care for those parents before the parents die.

Could it happen to other family members?

Such differences between husbands and wives obviously have an impact on their marriage. However, even when both of them want to go, their offspring may say, “I don’t want to go!”

- Elementary children. Thinking about leaving their friends, changing schools, leaving their pets, leaving their rooms, and so forth, many children do not want to go. If parents handle this right, most children (even those who do not want to go) readily adjust to the new situation—and then do not want to return to their passport countries.
- Teenagers. Adolescents give similar reasons for not wanting to go, but they are more likely than children to fail

to adjust to the new situation. Adolescents have different cognitive capacities and do not hesitate to argue with their parents—more likely to continue agitating after they go. They tend to do something that will strike at their parents’ ministry. For example, boys tend to break the law and get in trouble with the police while girls tend to act out sexually and may become pregnant.

What if the person doesn’t say so?

Sometimes people do not say they do not want to go, but they use all kinds of passive resistance to hinder going, behaviors commonly called being passive-aggressive. Rather than openly refusing to do something, they just hinder getting the job done. Here are a few of their traits.

- Resistant to suggestions
- Critical of authority
- Repeated failure of simple tasks
- Forgetting obligations
- Resentfully stubborn
- Sullen sarcasm
- Sulking sabotage
- Complaining procrastination
- Willful incompetence
- Intentional inefficiency

These people may be aware of what they are doing and do it purposely. However, they may not realize what they are doing or why. Any of us are less excited about participating in something we really do not want to do.

What can we do about it?

The best solution to a difference between husband and wife is for them to talk and pray together, alone and perhaps with a counselor, until they can come to some agreement.

However, they may not be able to reach an agreement that is acceptable to both. Then they are left with four options.

- Both stay. One option is that they serve a mission agency in some capacity in their passport country, with neither of them going to serve in another culture. This enables them to be involved in missions without the stress of cross-cultural living. The problem may be that the one wanting to go may resent having to stay at home and the one not wanting to go may feel guilty for keeping the other home.
- One goes and the other stays. This was the option that Dorothy and William first chose to do, but they could not do so because of the war prohibiting travel. This allows both of them to live where they wish, but it results in separation of the couple for long periods of time. For a relationship to flourish, people must spend time together.
- Both go. This is what Dorothy and William did with Dorothy feeling forced to go. The problem with this solution is that the one forced to go may continue to balk at every step and may greatly resent the pressure.
- Both stay and then go. If the problem with going is related to something that will change over time, perhaps a delay in leaving will resolve the problem. For example, if the problem is that one feels responsible for dying parents, the couple may be able to take care of the parents for a few years, then go to another culture.
- Promote the positive. When children do not want to go, emphasize getting things they (not you) want. For example, talk about the new friends, good food, etc. (not another visa in their passport, learning the geography of a country, etc.)
- Leave one behind. Sometimes teenagers prefer to remain in their passport country with the family of a friend. For example, they may not want to leave close friends or may want to graduate from their hometown high school.

Whatever you do, keep talking, negotiating, and compromising until everyone involved can live with your

solution. God does not require you to sacrifice your marriage or your family to serve him in another culture.

Chapter 2

Transition to Agency

The transition from most places of work to a mission agency usually involves some different criteria that are very important. Those who feel a “call” to missionary service may ask, “Isn’t a call enough?”

If God has called a person to a missionary task, are other criteria set by humans necessary? If the call is really from God, such selection criteria may not be necessary, but “calls” may come from a variety of sources. Some people label their desire for travel as a call; others interpret their search for adventure and excitement as a call; still others interpret encouragement from family or friends as indicating a call.

Although many calls are what they seem to be, some may even be delusions. It is important to determine this. Milton Rokeach wrote *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti*, a book about three people in a state hospital who all believed they were Jesus Christ. Likewise, some mentally ill people believe they are called to missions. Certainly no one should be kept from missions because of performance on one psychological test, but if suspected pathology is supported by other tests and interviews, such people should not become missionaries, at least during times of active illness.

Today’s individualistic missionary “calls” seem to be quite different from the call to a worshipping, fasting church in

Acts 13:1-3. To this church the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” After further prayer and fasting by the church, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned and sent on their mission. The call was to the church as well as to the individuals.

The ReMAP Studies

Many studies have confirmed that the attrition rate is very high. Missionaries today tend to drop out before the end of their first term or do not return for a second term. Of course, some of this attrition cannot be prevented. For example, some missionaries do not return because they died while serving. Others do not return because they reached retirement age. Still others do not return because they married someone outside the agency or completed their contracted assignment. Nothing can be done about this kind of attrition.

However, other attrition is preventable. Even more people leave because of problems in their marriage, because of family problems, or because of problems with their agency, their team, their culture—or because of the catch-all category of “personal reasons.” Two of the largest research studies ever done in member care were to study this problem of preventable attrition.

ReMAP I

In 1995 The World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission began what came to be called ReMAP I (Reducing Missionary Attrition Project). This study included data from more than 400 agencies with a total of nearly 20,000 missionaries from 14 sending countries. The final report, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, was published in 1997, and contains nearly 400 pages of valuable information (edited by William D. Taylor).

Choosing who should go as a missionary to another culture and who should be kept from going is a major factor in preventing people from quitting. This book has 26 chapters, and four of them are about selection and screening. Pages 205-206 have an appendix which is helpful to agencies deciding whether or not people are likely to succeed in becoming a long-term missionary. The list is intended to help agencies decide who to accept and who to reject, but it is also useful to individuals who are trying to decide whether or not to become missionaries. If all of the following 20 statements are clearly characteristic of a person, that person is likely to succeed. If any of the following statements are clearly not characteristic, the person should seek help for them before serving in another culture.

SUGGESTED CHECK LIST FOR THE SELECTION OF MISSIONARY CANDIDATES

SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Gives a clear testimony of personal conversion
- Regularly practices the foundational disciplines of prayer, Bible study, etc.
- Has a clear conviction concerning a personal call to missionary ministry
- Demonstrates objective evidence confirming a call to missions
- Shows evidence of a firm understanding regarding basic Christian doctrines

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

- Clearly manifests a life of mature Christian character and discipline
- Manifests joy and humility while serving others
- Has a teachable spirit and good reputation with coworkers and leaders
- Is considered to be trustworthy in all relationships

- Has a reputation of honesty in all financial matters

MINISTRY SKILLS

- Has completed a recognized course of biblical studies
- Demonstrates a proven record of effective ministry and service at various levels
- Is trained and experienced in effective leadership activities
- Demonstrates an eagerness to serve others within his or her abilities
- Has experienced fruitful cross-cultural service

RELATIONAL PATTERNS

- Is known for the harmony and integrity in his or her family relationships
- Understands and practices the role of servant leadership
- Is committed to involvement with the life and ministry of a local church
- Shows evidence of ability to work harmoniously with others in service and ministry
- Demonstrates a willingness to be accountable to leadership

ReMAP II

ReMAP II, *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives of Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, began in 2003 and results were published in 2007. This study by Rob Hay, Valerie Lim, Detlef Blocher, Jaap Ketelaar and, Sarah Hay, included data from 600 agencies with 40,000 missionaries from 22 countries, and it contains more than 400 pages of valuable information.

This book has 35 chapters, and three of them are about selection and screening. Pages 69-70 have a list of 16 factors which is helpful to agency staff deciding whether or not people are likely to succeed in becoming long-term missionaries. The list is intended to help agencies decide who to accept and who to reject, but it is also useful to people trying to decide whether or not to become missionaries.

- Expresses a clear calling to missionary service

- Agrees with the agency's doctrinal statement
- Knows and is committed to the agency's principles and practices
- Demonstrates mature Christian character and discipline
- Has good character references
- Has committed endorsement from his/her pastor/local church for missionary service
- Has the blessing of his or her family
- Has ministry experience in a local church
- Has demonstrated ability to cope well with stress & negative events
- Meets health criteria determined by a physical examination
- Meets health criteria determined through a psychological assessment
- Exhibits contentment with present marital status (single or married)
- Has good potential for financial support

These lists are given here for people thinking about becoming missionaries so that they will know if they have a good chance of becoming long-term missionaries, and they will not be surprised when mission agencies ask about them. Note that these lists include many characteristics that are not considered for employment in one's passport country.

Psychological Testing

As a missionary, especially if you are a missionary candidate, you may wonder about psychological testing. When asked to take such tests, you may ask some of the following: Why do I have to take these tests? Isn't a call enough? What tests will I have to take? What will I learn from them? What will happen to me as a result of taking them? What if I refuse? Considering some of these questions is valuable.

Why psychological tests?

Psychological tests may be used with missionaries for many purposes. Some tests may be used in the selection process to screen out people from being missionaries. Others are used to help place people in the positions where they will be most effective. Others are used to give missionaries insights into their own personality traits and the traits of others with whom they work so that they can better work together. Still others may be used to evaluate difficulties children are having with their work in school. Thus mission agencies use psychological tests for a wide variety of purposes.

What tests will be used?

A wide variety of tests may be used depending on the purpose of the assessment. The best way to find out about which tests will be given and why they will be given is to ask your agency. The tests used should be reliable, valid, and standardized.

- Reliable tests are those that consistently give the same results. A good test will not say that you are a strong extrovert one day and say that you are an introvert the next.
- Valid tests are those which measure what they say they are measuring. For example, if a test claims to measure intelligence, it should be related to academic performance.
- Standardized tests are those given to everyone under the same conditions so that your results can be compared to results of others who have taken the test. For example, a score on a depression scale of a test might indicate that a person checked more of the items indicating depression than 90% of the general population.

Agencies request many different types of tests. They may want to know about a person's cognitive ability, most commonly in the form of some intelligence test. Aptitude tests give some indication of a person's potential to learn something,

such as another language. Achievement tests measure what has been learned.

To help place people in positions where they will be happiest and most effective, agencies may request tests of interests, personality characteristics, abilities, skills, and work values.

To learn what people are like, agencies may request personality tests. These are the tests that seem to produce the most anxiety among missionaries.

- **MBTI:** The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was developed from Carl Jung's personality theory and is widely given within mission agencies. Someone with minimal training can administer it. Its goal is to help people understand themselves and others along four dimensions, such as introversion-extraversion.
- **16PF:** The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire was developed by a sophisticated statistical procedure which groups information into categories, in this case 16 categories of personality traits such as warmth, dominance, and tension. Persons interpreting the 16PF need more training than is necessary with the MBTI.
- **MMPI:** The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory was developed to diagnose psychological disorders, so some of its scales were originally labeled with terms such as Depression and Paranoia. However, it has been further revised and standardized on normal populations from which hundreds of normal personality scales have been developed. It is very widely used, gives a broad range of information ranging from disorders to normal personality traits. Only someone with extensive training should interpret it, especially as it relates to people in ministry.

The MBTI, 16PF, and MMPI are each more than half a century old, and each has been the subject of thousands of research studies. When interpreted by someone familiar with people in ministry, these tests and others like them can be a good source of information to help facilitate your personal

growth. They may also help prevent your being placed in situations where you are likely to have difficulty.

What will I learn from the tests?

What you learn depends on the purpose of the testing, the tests used, what kind of professional administers the tests, and what agreement you made before taking them.

When psychologists administer tests, their ethical standards require that "an explanation of the results is provided using language that is reasonably understandable to the person assessed or to another legally authorized person (such as a parent of a child) on behalf of the client." That is, you are entitled to an explanation of the results in terms you can understand. Of course, educators, counselors, social workers, etc. also give tests, and what they tell you depends on their own ethical codes.

If the mission agency has hired a professional to give the tests, the agency may ask that the results be given only to itself, and not to you. If you have agreed to that, you will not receive any of the results directly. In such a case what you do learn from the tests will depend on what the agency wants to share with you.

What will happen to me?

What happens depends on the purpose of the tests and the tests given. Nothing should happen on the basis of one test alone. However, if several reliable, valid tests and follow-up interviews indicate reason for concern, several things may happen.

- **Rejection.** One fear candidates may have is that they will be rejected by the agency. That seldom happens, but it may. A person having delusions and hallucinations should not be a missionary, at least not at that time. The person

may recover in the future and then serve God in missions, but not everyone recovers from such disorders.

- **Delay.** Another fear candidates may have is that a problem will be discovered that will have to be solved before they become missionaries. For example, people with poor interpersonal skills may need to learn more about relating to others. Rather than being feared, this should be seen as an opportunity to improve one's effectiveness in missions.
- **Placement.** The results of the tests may result in your being placed in particular places or positions. For example, a depressed person may become suicidal when put under the additional stress caused by living in another culture. A person with a personality disorder may seriously disrupt an entire team on the field. Such individuals may be given home assignments.
- **Growth.** Many personality, cognitive, or vocational interest tests lead to insight into your own traits, abilities, and interests. They can help you develop your potential in missions to its greatest extent.

What if I refuse?

If you refuse to take the tests, what happens depends on the policy of your mission agency. Probably the most important question to ask yourself is why you would want to refuse. If you are trying to hide something, it is probably better to get it out into the open and discuss it with someone in the mission. If you are afraid of what you might find out about yourself, you may be better off learning about it—and discovering that you had nothing to fear or that it can be changed.

Psychological tests are not given to harm people, but to help them. Gaining insight into yourself and being placed in the right position in the organization lead to personal growth and to more effective work in the kingdom.

Chapter 3

Transition to Raising Funds

This chapter is written for those joining agencies which require raising funds. When joining any agency, it is vital for people to make sure that they understand what is expected of them and what the agency will provide for them. Before getting into specifics about fund raising, consider what does the Bible have to say about it?

What Does the Bible Say?

Paul, an early cross-cultural worker, wrote much about fund raising when he wrote to the Corinthian church in Greece (1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9). Some of the things Paul mentioned as he raised funds are relevant.

- He specifically asked for funds and even gave suggestions about how to raise them (1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 9:5).
- He encouraged people to give as much as they could (2 Corinthians 8:10-15, 9:6-7).
- He urged keeping the highest ethical standards (1 Corinthians 16:3-4, 2 Corinthians 8:20-21).
- He even compared some churches to others (2 Corinthians 8:1-8, 9:2-4).

Paul was not reticent about raising funds. Missionaries today need not hesitate about asking for money either.

Different Meanings

The same words are used when receiving a salary, but the meanings and the implications may be quite different when raising funds. When transitioning from receiving a salary, missionary candidates must remember these implications.

“Good Salary”

A “good salary” or an “adequate salary” may mean one thing in the passport country and something quite different in the host country. Whatever it means when missionary candidates begin to raise funds, it may mean something quite different when those candidates actually leave for their host countries. Two major variables may bring unexpected changes.

- Exchange rate. The exchange rates between countries often change over time depending on financial conditions throughout the world, and these can occur very quickly.
- Inflation. Inflation may occur in the passport country so that the funds raised no longer cover expenses in the host country.

Changes made in these two variables may reach frightening speed. We have been in locations where inflation was so bad that we did not exchange money from our passport country until we were ready to buy something!

Of course, prospective missionaries must remember that the larger their salary, the more money they have to raise.

“Great Benefits”

These may include a variety of benefits, but usually at least the following two.

- Medical insurance. Many missionaries today make frequent rather long “visits” back to their passport country, so they need coverage in both their host country and their passport

country. This adds to the cost. They may be serving in a country where medical coverage is provided by their host country, but they want to have the option of going to private hospitals. If that is the case, the increased cost is something they have to raise.

- Education for children. Children may be able to attend national schools free, but if missionaries want their children in a Christian or international school, they have to raise funds for tuition. Agencies may have provisions for saving for TCKs college education, but missionaries need to remember that means they have to raise that money.

“Nice Raise”

Getting a raise sounds great, but it may mean that missionary service is delayed or interrupted. The board of one agency gave all of their missionaries a “nice raise.” However, because missionaries have to raise their funds, some new missionaries were unable to leave when scheduled. Other missionaries already serving overseas had to leave their work there and return to their passport country to “raise funds” for their “nice raise.”

“Comfortable Retirement”

Some mission agencies have pensions or retirement plans such as a 401(k), and these are very good to have. Missionaries have to remember that the “better” the plan, the more money they are going to have to raise in support.

“Generous Donor”

Having a church or an individual pledge a large portion of the needed support sounds wonderful, and it can be. However, the problem comes when something happens that stops the support. Churches change pastors or mission

emphases, individuals die, retire, or go bankrupt, and this may mean the new missionary cannot leave when scheduled or the missionary serving on the field has to come home to raise funds. We know one couple that had a church provide 85% of their funds for a decade, and then it quit. We know of another couple that had an individual donate 50% of their funds for nearly three decades, and then he stopped.

Multiple Accounts

When working for a salary or hourly wage a person or a couple often has control over all the funds that come in. They often have their money in a single account, or at most one for each person. However, when they transition to raising funds, they usually have several accounts for the money donated to or through them. Here are some possible accounts they may have.

Personal Salary Account

This is the account that most individuals and couples had when being paid a salary or an hourly wage. This is their money to care for food, clothing, shelter, and other expenses found in living anywhere. Like other people, missionaries need to remember that they are stewards of this money God has given them.

With our Western emphasis on individualism and private property, we tend to think that the money paid to us for our work is “ours,” that we are responsible to no one for how we spend it. However, we must remember that everything belongs to God, and we are stewards of whatever we have here on earth. We do have control of it, but as stewards managing the money he has given to us.

Like the stewards in Matthew 25, we are all given different amounts of money to manage. Some of us have enough to meet our needs and much left over to spend in other ways. Others of us have barely enough to live on. God expects all of us to be good stewards of whatever he has given us

whether ours is twice what others have, or ours is half of what others have.

Certainly we are to use the money to care for ourselves and those in our family. We are to use it for the needs of our family, including the need for recreation and leisure. God does ask us to give at least a tithe of this money to him, but he also appreciates an offering as well. We must remember that God counts money quite differently from the way we do. When Jesus commented on the woman who gave two small coins out of her poverty, he said that she had given more than those who had given large amounts of money out of their wealth. God looks at how much people have left. The question is not how much of our money we give to God, but how much of God’s money we keep for ourselves.

For many years R. G. LeTourneau (founder of LeTourneau University) lived on ten percent of his income and gave away ninety percent to Christian work, especially missionary efforts in Africa and South America. We may comment that we could do that with his income, but even when his business was in financial jeopardy, he continued giving his sacrificial pledges to Christ's work.

Ministry Expense Accounts

Most agencies have an account in which the funds are available for missionaries to use for projects and people they serve. Each missionary is responsible for how the money in that expense account is used. This is analogous to the wealthy man described in Luke 19. In that passage each person was given money to manage and was held personally accountable for the results.

We often refer to this as “stewardship” in which the steward is the manager of money. A steward is literally a sty-ward, the ward (keeper) of the sty (pen) of someone else’s animals—the wealth of people in Biblical times. He was the one to manage the wealth of another.

Missionaries today should understand this with little difficulty because many people living outside of their passport cultures for several years at a time give someone else power of attorney. This person (steward) can then do such things as deposit money, write checks, manage financial portfolios (if they have investments) while the missionaries are out of the country.

Although most people do not do it formally, Stanley Tam, Founder and President of U.S. Plastic Corporation, formally and legally made God the owner of his business. In 1955 while in Columbia he sensed that God wanted him to be an employee, so he now works for God and receives a salary like any other employee. Millions of dollars of profits have been administered by a foundation whose purpose is to establish churches in third world countries.

Though you may not legally become an employee of God, you are, in fact, the steward of the money given for his work as you invest it in people and projects in countries other than your own. You should always keep that attitude, an attitude of managing God's money.

Personal Gifts

Some agencies have the provision for donors to send personal gifts through the agency to the missionary. These gifts then go directly to the missionary. However, the agency may still take out their administrative charge (usually around 15%), and some may reduce the missionary's personal salary as well. Of course, supporters may give money to missionaries without going through the agency. However, some agencies require that such gifts be reported and may make deductions for them.

You may be thinking that certainly personal gifts given to us are ours, not God's. There is no indication in the Bible that this is the case. We are stewards of whatever we have whether it is given to us because of our work or whether someone gives it to us as a gift. The same principles apply.

From the beginning human beings have been stewards of God's property. In the early chapters of Genesis Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden to till and keep it. All of creation was God's and they were to care for it.

Agency Funds: Designated

When people have donated money for a particular project, such as building a hospital or student scholarships, there should be no question. The only ethical thing to do is to spend all of that money on the project for which it was given. Anything else is dishonest.

When missionaries are serving on particular projects, some of these funds may be put into their accounts to be used for those projects only.

Agency Funds: Undesignated

Sometimes the home office sends funds to a group serving in another country and tells that group to use the money where needed most. If the home office specifies one person to make decisions about the funds, he or she is the one to make those decisions. However, the home office often leaves it up to a committee or even everyone serving in that country to decide how the money should be used. Then everyone is responsible for the decisions made. When this is the case a variety of things may occur, such as

- Competition for funds
- Pet projects promoted
- Personal power used
- Interpersonal problems

When this is the case those present must develop a way to make decisions between such things as

- Saving versus borrowing
- Faith versus presumption
- Cost versus quality

- Simplicity versus luxury
- Spending versus investing

People have different values on such things, and many hold those values dear. Some people may become quite angry when the group as a whole makes decisions that violate their values.

The best way to make such decisions is to come to a consensus through extended discussion and prayer. However, if such consensus is not reached, each agency should have a way of making group decisions, such as *Roberts Rules of Order* (older editions available online). Though the procedure of making motions, seconding them, discussing them, and then voting on them may seem tedious, this formal procedure is often needed. Then when the decision is finally reached, everyone must abide by the decision and not grumble or agitate.

Marriage Issues

Sometimes transitioning to raising funds results in some adjustments in how husbands and wives manage their money. Imagine these two plausible vignettes. Which one would occur is a matter of timing.

Vignette 1: Following a devastating flood in a nearby slum he often drove through, John went to the bank to get money from their account to provide relief for flood victims. He was shocked to find that nearly all the money had been withdrawn a few days before.

When he asked Mary what had happened to the money, she told him she had used it to buy a prom dress for their daughter Julie. He said, “You spent it on WHAT? It could have helped many flood victims. Now it will just be worn once and then packed away.”

Vignette 2: (You can see this coming.). Near the end of the school year Mary went to the bank to get money from their account to buy Julie a prom dress. She was shocked to find that nearly all of the money had been withdrawn a few days before.

When she asked John what had happened to the money, he told her he had used it to provide relief for the flood victims. She said, “You spent it on WHAT? We had been saving that for months for Julie. Now she will have nothing new to wear to her last big social event at school.”

The use of money is a major source of disagreement in many marriages. This may occur even more in missionary marriages, especially if poverty is more noticeable than in a couple’s passport culture.

What does the Bible say?

Though it is not in the context of marriage, the Bible deals specifically with the “You spent it on WHAT?” question. Look at the implications of these dramatic events in Jesus life as recorded in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12. While eating dinner in Bethany, a woman came and poured a bottle of very expensive perfume on Jesus. Note the difference between his followers’ reactions and the reactions of Jesus himself.

First, his followers’ reactions:

- They were indignant, furious.
- They asked, “Why this waste?”
- They said, “Sell it for a year’s wages.”
- They suggested, “Give the money to the poor.”
- They generally criticized what she did.

Second, Jesus’ reactions:

- Aware of their actions, Jesus intervened.
- Jesus said, “Why are you bothering her?”
- Jesus praised her for her actions.
- He went on, “You’ll always have the poor, but not me.”
- He concluded, “What she has done will always be remembered with admiration.”

We must remember that God may count offerings very differently. The disciples saw the woman’s offering as wasted, but Jesus saw it as wonderful. Remember when he saw the poor

widow put in two small coins. He noted that she had put in more than anyone else, even those who had put in large amounts of money (Mark 12, Luke 21). Now consider some things that couples can do to reduce the conflict over how money is spent.

Plan your spending.

Most people refer to this plan as a budget. Budgets for missionaries vary widely depending on where they live since the cost of living varies from country to country. People living in a jungle village will probably have smaller amounts and different categories of expenses than those living in major metropolitan areas. Make a list of your necessities, including at least the following, plus other categories relevant to where you live.

- Food
- Clothing
- Shelter
- Tithe and offerings
- Transportation “home”
- Other anticipated expenses and savings.

Most of these are obvious, but some need explanation. Malachi 3 cautions not to rob God. If you do not include at least your tithes in the budget, you are unlikely to have any “leftover money” for these, not to say anything about an offering. In marriage two become one financially, and your offerings are part of your stewardship together.

People remaining in their passport countries do not have to budget money to go home. However, expats often return to their passport country every year or two, and they need to plan for that large expense.

Agree on a limit.

Husband and wife should agree on a limit as to how much money each can spend without discussing it with the other. This is to prevent problems, such as, “You spent it on WHAT?” If both of them have similar views of money, setting a limit may be easy.

However if they have different views, this may require considerable negotiation. The “spender” (shop-a-holic) may want the limit set at \$200—while the “saver” (control freak) may want to set it at \$10. This couple needs to talk, listen, negotiate, and compromise to reach an amount they are comfortable with, at least one they can live with.

The budget and the limit may be revised at any time, but it should be reconsidered at least annually. Other things need to be discussed more often, perhaps monthly.

Have money meetings.

The budget is a plan, and it is rather theoretical. After the rent and utilities are paid, groceries are purchased, clothes are bought, money given at church, etc., then the couple is faced with what to do with the money left (if any). This is “where the rubber meets the road.” It is no longer theory, but reality!

What is left is your discretionary income, and you can choose how this is spent. It will be different for each couple. One person wants the latest electronic gadget while the other wants cable TV. One wants to buy books while the other wants to buy the latest DVDs. One wants a flat screen TV while the other wants to go out to more movies. One wants to go on a cruise while the other wants to hire a guide to hunt. Of course, do not forget about setting aside some savings. All of these require discussion and compromise.

One couple may want to cut back on “necessities” by moving to a smaller house, eating at restaurants less, or wearing

old clothes longer. Another couple may want to increase income by taking a second job or the spouse taking a job.

Share the responsibility.

If missionaries lived in their passport countries, many could pay their utilities from the comfort of their homes by mailing a check, calling in their credit card number, via online access to their bank accounts, or even having them automatically deducted from their accounts each month. They can buy groceries for the whole week at the local supermarket in an hour.

However, in their host country, paying utility bills may take many hours spread over several days, and buying food may be a daily task of going to the market and negotiating prices with vendor after vendor. In these cases it is best for husband and wife to share these time consuming money tasks.

Avoid credit card debt.

Missionaries today face a temptation not available before 1950, credit card debt. Credit cards are very convenient and help avoid carrying much cash, but they may become a problem for some people. If you charge so much that you are unable to pay the card off in full at the end of each month, you are living beyond your means.

Credit card interest is nearly always higher than interest from a secured loan. Therefore, not being able to pay off the card is not only a first warning that you are headed for trouble but also it means that you are taking on higher interest—interest that may be raised at any time by the credit card company.

It is little wonder that Romans 13:8 cautions, “Let no debt remain outstanding.” If you cannot pay the card off a second month, you begin paying interest on the interest added at the end of the first month. That first month is the warning. If

no action is taken, the compounding of interest tends to become a vicious cycle.

Find the problem.

Conflicts about money are often over other issues, and it helps to uncover these deeper issues. Here are some examples.

- “Spender vs saver:” “Let’s do... vs. No, that costs too much”
- “Now vs later” “We need a new...vs. Why, our old one is OK for a while”
- Control
- Independence
- Security
- Freedom

To each his and her own

Last, but not least—and probably MOST important. Each person needs some “No questions asked” money. This is an agreed upon amount that is literally given to each person each pay period, and neither one has to account to the other for how it is spent, or not spent. Savers can save it. Spenders can spend it. Givers can give it. Procrastinators can hide it under their mattress until they decide what they want to do with it. If they want to do random acts of kindness, they can walk along the street and give it to anyone they meet.

The amount is not nearly as important as the fact that the money is just that person’s. He or she does not have to ask for it. Neither is there need to justify it. Each is the full steward of it, responsible to no one but God as to how it is spent.

Money is a leading cause of marital conflict, but it can also be a part of marital satisfaction. Talking about money and agreeing together how to use it can improve your marriage relationship.

Stages of Missionary Life

The course of initial fund raising varies, but the following one is common.

- **Much.** At the beginning family and friends pledge support so that the beginning missionaries will not be discouraged, often responding within days of the first mailing.
- **Little.** After the initial “deluge,” funds tend to trickle in. People are not “sure” individuals will raise enough to go, so they may wait to see if the missionary is going to make it. Missionaries take meetings wherever they can, and the balance in their account rises only slowly or even declines.
- **Much.** After the long drought, when it becomes clear that enough funds will come in, people begin to get on the “band wagon,” perhaps wanting to be the ones who put the missionaries over the top.

Missionary candidates must remember that this is only one course of raising funds. Many others may occur, but very few of them are a constant flow like receiving a salary. One month may result in \$20,000 in pledges of support, and the next month may result in only \$100 in pledges.

A spouse who has difficulty tolerating uncertainty may become quite anxious during a long stage when few funds are coming in. As the fear of failure rises, he or she may say things like, “This is what I was afraid of. What do we do if we don’t get enough by the deadline?”

One spouse may begin to question whether or not God has really called them to be missionaries. This is especially likely if one has had a stronger sense of “call” than the other. As a result, tension may rise between the spouses.

- **On The Field:** No matter what the reason, couples may no longer have enough support for both husband and wife to remain on the field. This results in many very difficult decisions that need to be made by the couple.
- **Home Ministry Assignment:** Missionaries may find support dropping when they return to their passport countries.

Continually having to justify their worth to supporters when doing what God has called them to do may discourage one spouse more than the other.

- **Retirement:** Financial issues at this stage of life may be the same as for people who were not missionaries—or fund raising may have to continue for life. Those who need to continue to raise funds may find that people do not understand why they do.

Finally, missionaries who raise support need to remember that their agencies take a percentage of the money they raise to “pay” for the support the agency gives to the missionaries. That means that the missionary has to raise whatever that percentage is, commonly about 15%, but it can be more or less.

Several brochures and one book on related topics are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com.

- A brochure about contentment at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_contentment.htm
- A brochure about comparison and envy at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_comparison_envy.htm
- A brochure about expectations at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_expectations.htm
- A book about what missionaries ought to know at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#ought_to_know

Part Two

Between Cultures: Passport to Host

The Introduction mentioned that Jesus experienced many of the transitions that missionaries do. His first transition was from heaven to earth to save the lost. The angel told Joseph to name Mary's baby "Jesus" because he would save his people from their sins and this was to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy made centuries earlier (Matthew 1:21-23). Although missionaries today go for a variety of reasons to help people, the primary purpose is to bring people to Christ who can save them from their sins. The Bible also notes that Jesus gave up many things when he made the transition to earth. In fact, he temporarily gave up equality with God the Father in heaven and became human as well, becoming a servant obedient to death (Philippians 2:6-8). Many missionaries today also give up much in terms of family, friends, and finances to serve those in another culture who do not know Christ.

Part 1 presented three transitions that take place in the lives of prospective missionaries before they actually go to another culture to begin their missionary service. While they are making these transitions, they are still at "home" among

friends. They still know where they fit in their community, neighborhood, church, and other groups to which they belong.

They have friends in whom they can confide and those friends listen to them with understanding. They feel commitment to friends and family who have helped them. They feel secure, safe and affirmed in this culture where they have lived their lives, and they live each moment to the fullest.

They know that things will change when they actually go to the field. They have gone to orientation with their agency in preparation for what is ahead, but it has always been something in the future. However, now all of this is going to change.

Part 2 contains three chapters about a major transition for them, the transition to another culture. These three chapters are about the three stages of Pollock's model.

- Chapter 4 is about their ending life in their current culture. It is about saying goodbye and separating from what has always been home for them. They disengage from friends, family, and coworkers as they prepare to leave. They are now thinking more about the future than about living in the past or present.
- Chapter 5 is about their moving into an unknown culture where they do not know where they fit and how to do many everyday tasks. They physically move to the other culture in a day or two and unpack their bags as they settle into a strange house, but their minds may not be completely unpacked for months.
- Chapter 6 is about their actually entering into their host country and beginning to feel at home again. During this time they may feel marginalized and uncertain about things and may have difficulty understanding behaviors and social signals. They may feel vulnerable and find it hard to trust people.

The cross-cultural transition is not over until the missionaries feel at "home" among friends and know where they fit into their community, neighborhood, church, and other

groups to which they belong. This will take at least a year, probably much longer.

Some missionaries never do complete the transition into the host culture, and that percentage seems to be growing with the appearance of email, Facebook, Skype, Instagram, Twitter, and so forth. It is so easy to keep in touch with people in their passport country that some missionaries never do fully enter their host culture.

Chapter 4

Endings (Leaving)

An obvious place to look for information about leaving to begin a ministry is to see how it was done in the Bible. The Bible gives several examples, some good and some bad, of people leaving on ministry assignments, some for cross-cultural missions and some for home missions.

Jonah was a very successful cross-cultural missionary whose ministry to people in another culture led to more than 120,000 people turning from their evil ways (Jonah 3:6-9; 4:11). However, Jonah did not leave well when he began his ministry transition.

The first time God called him and told him to go northeast to Nineveh, Jonah went west to Joppa where he boarded a ship to Tarshish to run away from the Lord (Jonah 1:1-3). This was not a good way to leave. However, God gave Jonah a second chance, and that time Jonah obeyed by going to Ninevah (Jonah 3:1-2).

Better examples are found in the New Testament where Jesus sent his disciples on a home missions ministry, and the church at Antioch sent Saul and Barnabas on a cross-cultural ministry.

What did Jesus do?

At the end of Matthew 9 Jesus told his disciples to pray for God to send workers into his harvest field because the harvest was plentiful, but there were few people working in it. Then chapter 10 is about how Jesus went about preparing them to go and sending them out.

- Called (v.1). Jesus called them to a particular task.
- Authority (v. 1). He gave them authority over evil spirits and illness.
- Candidates (vs. 2-4). He listed the names of those going.
- Assignment (vs. 5-6). He told them not to go to any other cultures.
- Instructions (vs. 7-42). He told them the following:
 - What to do (vs. 7-8). They were to preach, heal the sick, and drive out demons.
 - What to take (vs. 9-10). They were to travel light.
 - How to start (vs. 11-16). These were detailed steps to take when entering a town and finding lodging.
 - Warnings (vs. 17-42). This is a long list of things they would face as they ministered. Additional items are found in Matthew 24 and John 16.

What did the church at Antioch do?

The church at Antioch was the first local church to send missionaries to another culture. Several prophets and teachers, including Barnabas and Saul, attended there. Acts 13 describes a day when something new happened at worship as they were worshipping God and fasting (v.2).

- The Holy Spirit told them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for work to which the Lord had called them (v. 2).
- The prophets and teachers fasted more and prayed (v. 3).
- The prophets and teachers placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul (v.3).

- The prophets and teachers sent Barnabas and Saul off (v. 3).
- On their way as they left, Barnabas and Saul took John Mark along as a helper (v. 5).

Note that their call came through the local church. Their call came during times of worship, fasting, and prayer. The departure was sponsored by their church (Acts 13:1-5).

Also note that John Mark was with them through their ministry across Cyprus, and he sailed on to Perga. However, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem rather than traveling on to other cities in Asia Minor (v. 13). That is, a third of the missionaries on that first mission team quit and went home early, a problem that still exists today in the 21st century.

Why do missionaries quit?

The World Evangelical Fellowship sponsored the Reducing Missionary Attrition Project (ReMAP) during the last decade of the 20th century. Between 1994 and 1996 it received surveys from 551 missionaries from 14 sending countries. The results were published in 1997 as a book edited by William Taylor and titled *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. One thing the survey asked was for the missionaries to indicate the seven most important reasons missionaries they knew had left their agencies during the previous five years. Excluding retirement, the top seven reasons for attrition are listed here in order.

- Child(ren): One or more of their children were unable to adapt to new culture, or had needs related to education, health, or behavior.
- Change of job: They had completed an assignment or moved to a new post.
- Health problems: They had issues in mental and/or physical health.
- Lack of home support: They had inadequate financial, prayer, and/or other support from their home country.

- Problems with peers: They had relationship problems with field leaders and/or fellow missionaries
- Personal concerns: They had low self-esteem or were dealing with stress, anger, unrealistic expectations, singleness, loneliness, etc.
- Disagreement with agency: They had disagreements with their missionary sending body over policy, authority, etc.

What have agencies done?

After presenting the survey results the ReMAP report included at least two chapters about each of the following areas.

- Selection: These chapters suggested criteria that were crucial to consider when accepting people for missionary service.
- Pre-field training: These chapters included suggestions for both formal and non-formal training before the recruits went to serve.
- Orientation: These chapters gave suggestions for dealing with such things as cross-cultural differences and language learning before going.
- On-field training and supervision: These chapters included what should be done shortly after the recruits arrive on the field, and who will hold them accountable.
- Missionary member care: Five chapters suggested pastoral care, psychological care, care of third culture kids, etc.

Work on ReMAP II began in 2002, and it gathered data from 22 countries, including 600 mission agencies with a total of nearly 40,000 missionaries. The results were published in 2007 as *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*. ReMap II concentrated on finding out whether or not the suggestions made by ReMAP actually increased retention. It found that mission agencies with at least 50 on-field missionaries and which instituted the suggestions above lost only about 6% of their missionaries each year.

However, smaller agencies which did not follow the suggestions lost missionaries at the alarming rate of 33%.

Building a RAFT

Dave Pollock pointed out that if missionaries wanted to enter right, they had to leave right. The rest of this chapter is about helping missionaries to leave right. To leave right Pollock suggested that they build a RAFT, an acronym for Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewells, and Thinking destination.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation means doing whatever it takes to heal any broken relationships. Although the situation was not one of missionaries leaving for service, Joshua 22 has an excellent example of reconciliation between two groups of people who had a serious misunderstanding.

After entering the Promised Land and after fighting together for it, the two and a half tribes said goodbye and left to go to their land on the other side of the Jordan River. They had grown up together during 40 years of travel and had helped each other get their land. Together they had done all that Moses and Joshua had commanded, and they were parting to go to their new homes with God's blessing (Joshua 22:1-9).

On their way home, the two and a half tribes built an altar to God on the West bank. When the other tribes heard about it they were so angry that they met at Shiloh to go to war against the two and a half tribes. They sent Phinehas and ten men, one from each tribe, to confront the two and a half tribes (Joshua 22:10-14).

Unfortunately, Phineas did not take a good approach to healing a relationship. Rather, he came pointing an accusing finger saying, "How could you? How could you?" It was certainly a critical time for reconciliation. Looking at the reply

by the two and a half tribes (Joshua 22:22-29), we find five things that can lead to reconciliation. The vowels of the English language help us remember what they are.

Acknowledge the Almighty. First, their reply begins with, “The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows!” Beginning with acknowledging that you both serve the same God, that you are both building the same kingdom is very important. This way you establish a common ground for both parties, a point of agreement from which you can rebuild the relationship.

Explain your Excogitations. Yes, “excogitations” really is a word—it begins with “E” and means your thoughts. The second thing you need to do is to explain, clarifying your intentions and motives. Notice how they attempted to do that over and over at the beginning of many verses.

- “No! We did it for fear that...” (v. 24).
- “That is why we said...” (v. 26).
- “On the contrary, it is to be...” (v. 27).
- “And we said...” (v. 28).
- “Far be it from us to rebel...” (v. 29).

Giving these repeated explanations, they were trying to get the other Israelites to understand what they intended while doing what they had done. Of course, at the same time they were trying to understand how the other Israelites interpreted the same things. Likewise, as you explain your intentions when misunderstood, remember to make an effort to understand how the other person perceived them. Paraphrasing them by saying something like, “What I hear you saying is _____” (you say the same thing in different words). Until you understand how they view things, you will not be able to help them understand your thinking.

I-messages on the Issue. The third principle is to speak in first person (“I” if singular and “we” if plural) and concentrate on the issue separating you rather than making personal attacks on other individuals. If you count the words “we,” “us,” “our,” and “ours” in verses 22-29 (NIV), you will

find these first-person pronouns used 22 times in these eight verses, nearly three times per verse. On the contrary, you will find the second-person pronouns “you” and “your” used only five times, less than one per verse. How different this is from the “How could you? How could you?” used by Phineas in earlier verses. Using “I” does not mean that you are self-centered, only that you are talking about things as you see them. If you accuse others by using “you,” they are likely to become defensive and never understand what you are trying to get across.

Open to being the Offender. Fourth, admit that you may be the one in the wrong. You may be the one who has committed the offence. Notice that they tell other Israelites not to spare them “If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the LORD...” (v. 22). They go on asking God to hold them responsible “If we have built our own altar to turn away...” (v. 23). Being open to being in the wrong tends to diffuse emotions and lead to productive discussion.

Understanding before Unanimity. Finally, keep in mind that your goal is understanding on both sides. You are not trying to convince others that your position is the “right” one and to agree that theirs is wrong. You want to understand their viewpoint and help them understand yours. This really happened in Joshua 22. When Phineas and his committee of ten finally understood, “they were pleased” (v. 30). If you do not reach understanding, the problem will surface again and again. People want to know that you understand them. They usually don’t care about how much you know until they know how much you care.

Affirmation

Affirmation is the second step in building a RAFT. It is just a matter of letting others know that you appreciate them. It is saying “Thank you” for being who you are or what you have done. When giving their explanation, Phineas and his

committee noted that, the two and a half tribes had “rescued the Israelites from the LORD’S hand.” In fact, when Phineas returned and explained it to the other Israelites, “They were glad to hear the report and praised God” (v. 33).

Telling others you appreciate them may be difficult. Rather than telling people how much we appreciate them while they are alive, we often wait until they are dead and give the compliment at a memorial service. How much better to say it when they are right there with you! Doing it when we are ending our time at home sets us free to leave, helps others let go, and sets the stage for a warm reunion in the future when we return.

Farewells

Saying your farewells is the third step in building a RAFT. Don’t just leave. Say goodbye to people in an appropriate way to bring closure to your time together. Do it in a setting that is comfortable for all involved. This may be having coffee together in your favorite shop, taking a walk together through a meaningful place, eating lunch together at a familiar restaurant, or having them over to your home for dinner.

In addition to people, say goodbye to special places. Of course, you do not need to do this verbally, but visit those places remembering things that happened there. You may want to visit the university where you graduated, the church where you worshiped, the hospital where you had a child, and so forth. Your children may also want to say goodbye to playgrounds, parks, and their rooms at home.

Goodbyes to pets may be more emotional than you expect. Dogs and cats which have been around your house for years almost become members of the family. Children may become attached to the goldfish they have been feeding for years. As you leave them in someone else’s care, remember the good times you had with them.

Other possessions you have may just be too large to take with you. So you will need to say goodbye to the table you sat around as a family, to the entertainment center where you saw great movies, and to the favorite dresser in your bedroom. As you put these things in storage for when you return, or sell them to fund your going, or give these things away, be thankful you had them and think about what is ahead.

Think Destination

The final step in building your RAFT is to think about your destination. What are your expectations in going to your host country? Just as you have said goodbye to many people, places, pets, and possessions, what do you look forward to saying hello to when you enter your new culture? This is the time to plan for the future.

Just as you are saying goodbye to some people at home, it is time to begin connecting with other people in your host country. Email and Skype in this digital age make it easier to plan when and where you will unite. Begin to plan a schedule to personally greet digital “friends” when you get there.

As you say goodbye to your current position, plan for your new one. What kind of work/study/ministry do you see in the future in your host country? After you have built your RAFT, you are ready for the end of the leaving stage.

Pre-field Training and Orientation

As noted, Jesus oriented his twelve disciples for their first assignment in Matthew 10 where they were called, given authority, listed name by name, given instructions about where to go, what to do, what to take (or not take), how to start the work. Your agency will do all of these for you relative to your work in the 21st century. Your agency will also orient you to the structure of your agency in terms of flow-charts of

administration, history of its ministry, theological positions, and so forth.

We saw that Jesus also warned them about things to expect in verses 17-23. These included the following:

- Handed over to councils
- Flogged
- Taken before governors and kings
- Betrayed by brothers
- Hated by everyone
- Persecuted
- Forced to evacuate

All of these are still relevant today, and you need some instruction about what to do when these things happen to you as you serve in your host country. The more you can learn during your pre-field training and orientation the better for you. In addition to what it provides, your agency may send (or recommend) further training provided by someone else. Mission Training International (MTI) provides excellent month-long pre-departure programs for both adults and children at <https://www.mti.org/programs/> .

Is leaving a new problem?

No, this problem has been around as long as missionaries have. Although this example involves a very early missionary leaving friends on the field, it is the best one in the Bible about leaving. A look at Paul and his relationships with the people of Ephesus shows us some of the problems with leaving people he had been with several times over a period of years.

Paul was apparently in Ephesus only a short time near the end of his second term. After speaking in the synagogue, Paul left a couple in Ephesus to continue the work. People asked him to spend more time there, but he declined, saying he could come back if it was God's will (Acts 18:19-21). He and his co-workers there had to say goodbye.

Near the beginning of his third term, Paul again went to Ephesus for a much longer time. After more than two years of evangelism, discipleship, spiritual warfare, and encouragement Paul again said goodbye and left. He traveled to Macedonia with a multinational team of seven others (Acts 19:1-20:1). Again he and the disciples he left there had to say goodbye.

Near the end of his third term, Paul decided not to stop at Ephesus even though he was passing close by, because he was in a hurry. However, he did stop a few miles south of Ephesus and sent for the elders of the Ephesian church so that he could meet with them briefly. Then they again had to say goodbye. In this instance we are told more about the nature of the goodbye: They wept, embraced, kissed, grieved, and finally tore themselves away (Acts 20:16-21:1). Saying multiple goodbyes to friends as one leaves is nothing new for missionaries.

Pollock's transition model gives a good summary of leaving. As people leave they are separating from people they have known well, bringing closure to this part of their lives. Things such as recognition for what they have done, goodbye parties and saying their goodbyes to people and places all lead to their withdrawal and exclusion from the inner circle. They are disengaging as they relinquish their roles and distancing themselves from old relationships. They may in some ways be in denial and feel grief and sadness at their losses, rejection by others, and resentment that those others are continuing as part of the in-group. However, they realize that all this is temporary, and they are looking to the future.

Several brochures on related topics are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com.

- A brochure about saying goodbye at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_sayinggoodbye.htm

- A brochure about relationships at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_relationships.htm
- A brochure about reconciliation at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_reconciliation.htm

Chapter 5

In Transit

Transit is defined as the act of passing over, across, or through something. Knowing that they are “in transit” and waiting between flights, passengers often look for the transit lounge as they are passing through the airport. The transit stage of reentry begins when missionaries leave their houses in their passport countries and ends when they unpack their minds, not just their suitcases, in their host countries. It may last only a few hours or days, but it often lasts weeks or even longer.

The amount of time people spend in transit has changed greatly from Bible times to the 21st century. After thousands of years of little change, the last two centuries have seen huge changes in transportation, and this has had an impact on missions. Here is a short history of these changes.

In Transit During Bible Times

During Bible times the two most common forms of getting from one place to the other were walking on land and taking a ship when going by sea. Some people did travel by riding animals or riding in vehicles pulled by animals, but most people went on foot or sailed.

Old Testament

In Egypt God's people were going to a new land, a new culture, one none of them had ever seen or lived in. Although they had heard much about it through oral history

When the people began their transit stage by leaving Rameses (Exodus 12), they had seen God's incredible work in setting them free. Though they were armed for battle, God did not lead them along the shortest route because war was more likely there. God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt" (Exodus 13:17).

Using the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night, God led them to camp near the Red Sea. When the politicians in Egypt realized anew that their labor force was leaving, they pursued them. When the Israelites looked up and saw the Egyptians approaching, they were terrified and asked Moses, "What have you done to us.... Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?' It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Exodus 13:11-12).

The ups and downs continued chapter after chapter. When the Israelites saw God's power in allowing them to cross on dry ground and drowning the Egyptians as they tried to cross, they put their trust in God and Moses again (Exodus 14). Moses and Miriam sang songs of exaltation to God, but three days later the people grumbled against Moses saying, "What are we to drink?" (Exodus 15). God sweetened the water, but then the people complained about food so God gave them quail and manna (Exodus 16). They quarreled and grumbled against Moses about the water, so God had Moses strike a rock at Horeb (Exodus 17). Talk about ups and downs!

In the third month of the transit stage (Exodus 19:1) they camped in front of Mt. Sinai. God had Moses make sure that the people would obey fully, and they said they would. After a special ceremony, he led the people out of the camp to meet with God as God called Moses up to the top of the mountain

where he gave the Ten Commandments inscribed with his finger on two pieces of stone (Exodus 31:18). Talk about a mountain-top experience!

Unfortunately, but true to form, in the next verse the people got so tired of waiting for Moses to come down that they asked Aaron (Moses' brother) to make gods who would go before them. Aaron took their gold and made an idol in the shape of a calf, building an altar in front of the calf. When Moses approached the camp and saw the idol worship, he threw the stone tablets breaking them at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 32). Talk about spiritual ups and downs!

In the fourteenth month of their transit stage (Numbers 10:11) the cloud started moving again, so the Israelites left Sinai. After more ups and downs Moses sent the leaders of each of the twelve tribes to explore the country before taking everyone in. These twelve men spent forty days exploring and came back with a report. At this time the Israelites seemed to be nearing the end of their transit stage.

The leaders began their report by saying that "the land flows with milk and honey" (Numbers 13:27). They were amazed at the prosperity they found and brought back a bunch of grapes that was so large it took two of them to carry it on a pole between them. They brought other fruit as well.

However, they went on to say that the people were powerful and the cities large (Numbers 13:28). They felt overwhelmed by what they saw. Caleb wanted to go in and take over the country, but the others pointed out reasons not to go. The Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron and suggested choosing a leader to go back to Egypt. The whole assembly talked about stoning them. Only Moses' intercession prevented God from striking the people dead immediately (Numbers 14:1-19).

Though God did not do that, he did say that everyone over twenty years of age, except for Joshua and Caleb, would die before the group reached their passport country, and their

children's transit stage would be another forty years, the longest in the Bible.

They did not start to enter in the book of Numbers. Only in the book of Joshua do we find Joshua, one of the men who wanted to go in and take the country, telling his people to get ready, that in three days they would "cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own" (Joshua 1:10). Note that God is giving the land to them, but they have to take possession. At this point they were ready to begin the entering stage.

Jonah, an early cross-cultural missionary prolonged his time in transit by running away from God. He headed down to Joppa on foot and caught a ship that sailed out to sea. Of course, they ran into a storm, and Jonah wound up back on land where he started. When God gave him a second chance, Jonah headed for Nineveh on foot (Jonah 1-2). Note that he used both means of transit, on foot or on a ship.

New Testament

Paul, an early Christian missionary, used both means of transit during his first term of missionary service as noted in Acts 13 and 14.

- On foot from Antioch to Selucia
- By ship from Selucia to Salamis on Cyprus
- On foot across Cyprus to Paphos
- By ship from Paphos to Perga in Pamphilia
- On foot around to several cities in that area and to Attalia
- By ship back to Antioch

Likewise on his second and third terms of service he went both on foot and on ships. There were simply no other means of getting from one place to another for most people.

In Transit During Modern Missions

Little changed between New Testament times and when modern missions began in the 18th century. Basically people still went on foot and rode on ships powered by the wind blowing into the sails. However, changes have occurred during the last few centuries that have greatly shortened the "In Transit" time.

Eighteenth Century

William Carey, the "father of modern missions," and his family left England to go as missionaries to India near the end of the 18th century. Here are some events that occurred during the first half of 1793:

- January 9: William and his friend John were appointed as the agency's first missionaries. William's wife, Dorothy, refused to go.
- February 1: France declared war on Britain.
- April 4: William, John, and 8-year-old Felix departed on a ship to meet up with a convoy for India, but they were delayed six weeks on the Isle of Wight because of the war (Dorothy remained at home).
- About May 3: Dorothy gave birth to a son and named him Jabez (because I bore him in sorrow).
- May 22: Still waiting for the convoy, William and John learned of a Danish ship soon to sail for India. William wanted to see if Dorothy would go.
- May 24: John met with Dorothy and told her that "...her family would be dispersed and divided forever—she would repent of it as long as she lived..." Dorothy agreed to go to India on the condition that her sister come with them too. Dorothy and William then convinced Catharine (Kitty) to go with them, packed, sold other possessions, said goodbye to family and friends, and raised money for travel in less than 24 hours.

- May 25: The whole family, including 3-month-old Jabez left for Dover!

The couple thought they barely had time to catch the ship, but it was more than two weeks late. June 13, 1793, they sailed from England with four children under the age of eight, one of them only six weeks old. They sailed for nearly five months without a single stop in a port and arrived in India on November 11, 1793.

Note that, just as when Israel left Egypt, war delayed missionaries getting to their host country. Also note that the major transportation available to most people was on foot and by sail, so they were still at the mercy of the wind.

Nineteenth Century

However, within a century major changes began to take place. By the end of the 19th century the steam engine had been invented and developed to the place where ships were no longer subject to the whim of the winds and the sea. Rather than having to wait for favorable winds, ships could use engines with propellers to keep moving even when there was no wind. In addition locomotives could rapidly transport both people and goods by rail across continents. In addition, the telephone and telegraph had been developed to the point that communication not only across continents, but across oceans was possible, although not widely available in many parts of the world.

Twentieth Century

During the 20th century changes took place that changed missions greatly. The first half of the century was markedly different from the second half. Members of my own family were missionaries during that time, and I remember some of the changes well.

During the first half of the century missionaries traveled to their fields by ship, either as passengers on freighters or on

passenger ships. Traveling on freighters had the advantage of fewer passengers, usually 12 or less on a given ship. These passengers ate at the Captain's table, and the food was usually very good, better than that on passenger ships. Having fewer people and fewer activities made for a very restful few weeks on the way to their host countries. They had plenty of time to relax, read, and think about their time of service in the near future. Many of them treasured the time of rest away from home responsibilities before beginning their work. Of course the passenger area on the ship was quite small, and that was a major disadvantage.

Travel on passenger ships was usually in economy class for the missionaries. Their part of the ship was partitioned off from the parts of the ship in higher classes, though they usually had a small pool of their own, a library, and recreation facilities. They had more room available to them and their cabins were much nicer than on freighters. They had a variety of fellow passengers that were not missionaries, so there were more people to talk with.

Most missionaries enjoyed the relaxed time of travel. However, those who became sea sick did not. Medications to control such sickness were not yet available, and a trip could mean weeks of nausea and vomiting. Crossing the Pacific generally took about three weeks, so it was a time to relax and prepare for their service ahead.

However, just as in Old Testament times during the exodus, war could still have a profound effect on missionaries reaching their host countries. In March 1941 my Uncle George and his family left the USA on their way to Burundi by going around the southern tip of Africa to avoid the war in Europe. However, their ship was sunk by a German warship, and they had to return to the USA for a couple years before going to Burundi. My cousin Ruby and her husband were on their way to India and they entered Honolulu Harbor the morning of December 7, 1941, just as the Japanese air force was bombing

nearby Pearl Harbor. It took them another three months to reach India. War still has a profound impact on missions.

Finally, by the end of the 20th century airline travel had made it possible for a person to be half way around the world in a single day. We can leave Wilmore, KY and be in Thailand 12 time zones away in 22 hours. The digital revolution made it possible to communicate electronically with people around the world, free of charge, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Offerings could be taken for special needs and instantly transferred to where they were needed nearly anywhere in the world. Today member care has the potential of being instantly available anywhere in the world at any time. Here are some of the possibilities that have implications for member care.

Note that the transit stage lasts until you unpack your mind. Unpacking your mind involves considering the good and difficult things that happened during your time in the other culture, and then fitting these experiences into your life story. After you have done this, you are ready to move on with the next chapter in your life. This may be days or weeks after your suitcases are unpacked. It is certainly longer than the time needed to fly to your passport country and drive to your dwelling there. This travel can usually be done in forty hours or less today.

The transit stage certainly includes travel time and the familiar physical jet-lag which takes anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks, depending on how many time zones are crossed. In addition, it includes the time to unpack our minds, kind of a psychological jet-lag not handled with air travel. From the time Paul, Barnabas, and Silas traveled by ship through the middle of the twentieth century, people usually had several weeks at sea on ships to think and talk about their plans and dreams for serving in their host countries. Today people are on the ground in their host countries in a matter of hours, and they usually “hit the ground running” rather than taking time to process what has happened to them.

The transit stage is a time of emotional high and lows. The Israelites were elated to leave Egypt, and a few days later they wished they were back. They sang songs of exultation to God, and days later they were grumbling and complaining against Moses. One has to be very careful during this time. For example, grumbling and complaining may generalize from people to God and result in your turning your back on him. Or you may be dissatisfied with your housing, think you deserve something better, and wind up buying a house that is way out of your price range.

Pollock’s transition model gives a good summary of people in transit. While in transit people are in the unknown. They have no status anywhere and there seems to be no structure in their world and they feel clueless about what to do. The world about them seems to be in chaos with many problems and things are so ambiguous that they misunderstand things and others misunderstand them. They feel isolated and find that they have to initiate relationships. They are anxious and lose self-esteem as their grief and disappointment grow. Now they are concentrating on the future, waiting for this stage to pass.

Several brochures on related topics are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com.

- A brochure about anxiety at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_anxiety.htm
- A second brochure about anxiety at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/ss_anxiety.htm.

Chapter 6

Beginnings (Entering)

The entering stage begins when your mind is unpacked, and it lasts until you are fully involved again. Just crossing the border into your host country does not mean that you have really entered the culture. It takes time and energy to enter the culture and become a part of social groups there. In the last chapter we saw that the Israelites were to “take possession” of their passport country which “God was giving” them. God was giving it to them, but it was not theirs until they took possession of it. It took them several years to do so.

A Long Entry

In preparing Joshua to help the Israelites enter their host country, God gave him several wonderful promises in the first five verses of the book. He followed these up with several commands.

- Be strong and courageous (v. 6). Be strong and very courageous (v. 7). Be strong and courageous (v. 9).
- Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you (v. 7). Be careful to do everything in it (v. 8).
- Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night (v. 8).
- Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged (v. 9).

The Israelites had seen God’s power displayed as they left Egypt by walking on the dry ground at the bottom of the Red Sea (Exodus 14). They saw it displayed again in a similar way as they entered the country by walking on the dry ground at the bottom of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17). God had them build a memorial from stones taken from the river bottom so that their children would remember it forever (Joshua 4:20-23).

God told Joshua, “I have delivered Jericho into your hands”—and then told Joshua what he had to do for the next seven days to actually take the city (Joshua 6:2). It was a “done deal”—as long as he obeyed. Joshua obeyed and reminded the people about keeping away from the “devoted things” that were to belong only to God, and they had a wonderful victory as they took the city. Unfortunately, Joshua 7 begins with, “But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things.” The ups and downs continue during the entering stage as well.

Of course, the Israelites did not receive a warm welcome when they moved onto the west bank. In fact, most of the people there prepared to go to war with them (Joshua 9:1-3). Likewise, you may be disappointed in the welcome you receive in your host country.

One thing that happened to the Israelites was that a group of people deceived them. Those people pretended to be from far away and spoke favorably about God. The Israelites made a peace treaty with them without consulting the Lord and later realized they had been tricked. You may well be disappointed in people in your host country even if they do not deceive you.

Again and again Joshua comes back to what God told him at the beginning. “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 10:25). This is a great verse to remember as you go through the entering stage yourself.

Entry Today

Though it took the Israelites about seven years to enter their host culture, it usually takes at least a year, a full annual cycle, and many times it takes several years. Of course, things will never be the same as they were in your passport culture, but if you remain long enough, they reach a new state of equilibrium where you may feel “at home” in your host culture.

After the newness wears off and you are no longer operating in “tourist” mode, you may find that being a missionary there is not what you expected. Perhaps you expected help from your field director and you feel like all you got was criticism. Perhaps you expected you would have won at least one person to Christ, but you feel like you are accomplishing little of real importance. Let us look at such expectations, their importance, and the possibilities for doing something about them.

What are expectations?

An expectation is something you believe will occur, any event you anticipate happening in the future. You may expect either good or bad events. Hope is expecting good, and dread is expecting bad. Paul’s famous expectation in Philippians 1:20 was that Christ would be glorified in him.

Expectations are often stated as goals or objectives. We may set these for ourselves, or others may set them for us. In either case we evaluate what actually happens on the basis of the expectations. When our expectations are appropriate, we have feelings of excitement, satisfaction, accomplishment, and success when we reach the goals. If our expectations are slightly high, they may inspire us to work harder and achieve more than we would have with lower expectations. The problem comes when our expectations are too high.

Why are expectations important?

Since we use our expectations to evaluate what happens, the same event may bring opposite reactions in different people. One church planter may be thrilled when 25 people attend because he was expecting 10. Another may be discouraged with 25 because he was expecting 250. Unfulfilled unrealistic expectations may result in many negative emotions.

- Failure. You did not live up to your own expectation.
- Hurt. Your fellow missionaries did not help you as you anticipated they would.
- Confusion. God called you, but it seems like nothing has happened to advance his kingdom as a result of your obedience.
- Frustration. You had such a vision for what could be done on your field, but that vision has not become reality.
- Anger. You have sacrificed to help the national church, but now they have rejected your help and leadership.
- Bitterness. You left a beautiful home and a fruitful ministry, but so few have come to Christ here. If you had stayed home, you probably would have won hundreds to Christ.
- Depression. You begin to think that it was not worth it. In fact, you just feel like giving up, giving up on everything!

All of these feelings, and many more, may be the result of unrealistic expectations. Others may feel excitement and satisfaction when exactly the same events occur if their expectations were more appropriate.

What if I don’t have any expectations?

Impossible! Everyone has expectations. And even if you do not have them for yourself, others have them for you. Expectations come from many different sources.

- Past experience. People with successful ministries are chosen to go, and such people believe they will have good ministries as missionaries. They would not go if they expected to be failures.
- Home church. Your home church is supporting you with prayer and much money. They expect to see some return on their investment.
- Fellow missionaries. They eagerly anticipated your coming to make their load more bearable. The one who wrote your job description seemed so spiritual when he interviewed you, but now you find he is a workaholic and expects you to be one too.
- Administrators at home. They set unattainable goals for you and your field. Those people seem so different now as your bosses than they did when you were a candidate.
- God. He called you to this _____ (field, people, language, country...), and he expects you to produce _____.

Sometimes others do have such expectations; however, at other times you only believe they have them because you misunderstood what they wanted. Likewise, you may have misunderstood God's call. He will not ask more of you than you can actually do. Many times, though not always, the same is true of others in authority over you as well.

How can I set realistic expectations?

Goal-oriented and time-oriented people are most likely to suffer from the effects of unrealistic expectations. Remember that God molds servants, not bosses. Rather than directing others, servants trust the Leader and stay in the background, perhaps washing feet! The fruit of the Spirit, as well as the gifts of the Spirit are found in such servants.

In 1967 the director of Missionary Internship, Fred Renich, suggested six attainable objectives for the first term (EMQ, Summer 1967).

- Learn the language. He noted that the two largest language schools in Latin America (in Costa Rica and Brazil) said that lack of motivation is the real problem in language learning. Most of their students had a good aptitude for language acquisition, but they just did not see the need for taking all that time to do it. This seemed to be less important than saving souls. Renich urged a good foundation in the language, possibly even proficiency. They needed to be able to function well in daily life with people they met as well as in their field of service, such as teaching or speaking in the language.
- Adjust to the field. In addition to learning how to get around, adjusting to the food, live in the climate regardless of the heat or rain, adjust to the noises, and so forth, first-term missionaries need to learn about the history, customs, culture, economics and so forth of the host country. They need to get to know the nationals as people, to relate to them as friends, and to find points of common interests whether or not those nationals are interested in the Gospel.
- Learn about the agency. Of course, flow charts and descriptions are included in orientation, but the new missionaries will learn which people are really the best ones to see about a given situation. They may find that administrative assistants are more likely to know than their bosses. They will learn which means of communication work best with specific people. Some respond best to email others to texts, others to telephone, and yet others want a printed letter. In addition, the new missionary will find how the field applies the vision of the agency to the nationals on the field.
- Understand the field. The new missionaries should gain a broad view of the field where they are serving including both the negative things and the positive things. Seeing

both aspects they can sharpen their ministry goals to fit in with those of the agency. Thus the missionaries can see how their work fits in with that of the overall vision of the agency.

- Find how ministry gifts fit. New missionaries may discover new God-given ministry gifts that will be of use in reaching the goals God has given them. As they see these strengths, they can see where they fit in with God's plan.
- Confirm the missionary call. New missionaries can experience the satisfaction of knowing what God expects of them and that they belong in God's work. They can become inwardly at peace with the whole direction of their lives in God's service.

Notice that none of these objectives say anything about how many souls came to Christ, how many sermons were preached, how many classes were taught, and so forth. These things are often in the expectancies of their agency or their supporters, but they are much more important.

These may not seem like much to accomplish in several years, but it is plenty. Here are several suggestions to keep your expectations reasonable.

- Ask others. You are not the only person involved in missions—ask those who are in the positions you anticipate filling. When you get answers about what to expect, do not think it will necessarily be different for you.
- Develop a long-term view. Remember that we all stand somewhere between the first three chapters of Genesis and the last three chapters of Revelation. God has been working on his plan of redemption for thousands of years, and you will not accomplish the redemption of the world alone in one lifetime.
- Remember that everything takes much time. Learning a language and culture are long term projects never really completed. Relationships are important and take time. The hassles of daily living in many cultures take time. Paper

work is necessary and takes time. Contact with supporters takes time.

- Learn interdependence, not independence. Rather than trying to do things yourself, realize that you really do depend on other people, and they depend on you.
- If you must set time frames and goals, be sure to set sub-times and sub-goals as tiny steps to get to the larger ones. Estimate how long it will take you to reach the goal; then at least double the time and triple the cost; then feel successful if you achieve that.

What if I still discover I have unrealistic expectations?

That is almost sure to happen. Since we are often not consciously aware of our expectations until they are not met, we are likely to have some unrealistic ones. When you realize that you have them, taking the preventive steps mentioned above may also help eliminate those that discourage you.

You may find yourself in conflict with others about what is realistic and what is not. In such cases you will need to use some conflict management skills.

Of course, God may give you some very high expectations in your call to missions, and be careful not to dismiss God's call as a human miscalculation. Likewise, remember that you are in a spiritual battle, and Satan may give you unrealistic expectations to discourage your work for God's kingdom. Spiritual discernment is necessary to make these kinds of decisions.

Models and Mentors

One of the best ways to achieve the objectives of the first term of missionary service is for new missionaries to have models and mentors. Bonnie and I have done that during several transitions in our lives. When we retired, we asked Harry and Ann to have lunch with us every couple weeks for a year so that

we could ask questions and hear their advice. We did not want to be like the couple in which the wife told her newly retired husband, “I married you for better or for worse, but not for lunch” when he was too hovering over her too much.

Some people think of mentors as teachers but mentoring is more than the delivering of facts. Mentors are really more like coaches who not only deliver facts, but are available to watch how the facts are applied, are available to answer questions, and are available to walk through the activity with the person giving advice and evaluation.

In 2008, about 40 years after Fred Renich suggested first-term goals, John DeValve suggested a good way to help reach those goals. He titled his article “Mentoring new missionaries: A neglected ministry” (*EMQ*, January 2009). He suggested that the mentor needs to have proficiency in the language, experience living in the country, and knowledge about the history and customs of both the country and the agency work there. The mentor must be willing to spend the necessary time with the new missionary dealing with “simple” things like rudimentary language and filling out forms, and listening to the frustrations of a new person without becoming critical. Finally, the mentor needs to live near the new missionary so that they can do things together.

DeValve went on to suggest that mentors should do six things. Over time, and a little at any time, mentors should do the following, and note how these compare to the goals.

- Procedures. They need to orient the new missionary on how to do routine things both in the agency and in the culture. Each agency has written and unwritten procedures about how to file reports, get reimbursements, write support letters, and so forth. Each culture has procedures to follow to pay due bills, file accident reports, get vehicles repaired, and so forth.
- History. Every country and every people group have histories of their own. New missionaries need to know why nationals celebrate on May 5 or why the square in the

middle of the city is named Plaza 24 de Septiembre. These new missionaries need to know the history of the local church and the basics of the indigenous church.

- Practical. New missionaries need to know how to get the basic necessities of life. What water is safe to drink? What does one do about all the sand that blows in everywhere during the dry season? What does one do when the power goes out? How does one hire someone to clean the house, care for the children, or care for the yard?
- Information and practice. Even more than acquiring information the new missionaries need someone to show them how to put it into practice and observe them patiently as they do so. This often takes much time and effort on the part of the mentor.
- Accountability. New missionaries and their mentors need to meet periodically, at least weekly if possible at first, so that the new missionary is held accountable in terms of not only their work, but of maintaining their spiritual and relational lives.
- Advice and direction. New missionaries need to be open to advice from their mentors. They need to know how things are done differently in their host cultures and how to do those things even if it seems so odd or even “dumb.” They need to seek direction and accept it graciously even if they do not understand.

Of course, the relationship between new missionaries is crucial. Sometimes new missionaries seem to be “randomly” paired with mentors, and one or both do not like the situation. When this is the case, it is usually best to allow them to switch as soon as possible.

Pollock’s transition model gives a good summary of people in the entry stage. While entering, people are marginal and feel uncertain about what they are to do and only tentatively accepted. Relationships are often temporary, and the new missionary may misinterpret behaviors and signals. They are more often observing than doing, and may respond

inappropriately. They often feel vulnerable, fearful, depressed, and ambivalent. But with time they will become more confident and more affirmed and secure.

Several brochures on related topics are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com.

- A brochure about depression at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_depression.htm
- A second brochure about depression at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/ss_depression.htm
- A brochure about stress at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/ss_stress.htm

Part Three

While One Is There

The Gospels tell us that when here on earth as a human being, Jesus did many of the things that missionaries do today.

- He preached to the crowds.
- He taught people in large and small groups.
- He healed the sick.
- He confronted the indigenous religion.
- He disciplined the twelve.
- He fed the hungry.

When he sent out the twelve disciples to their own people, he told them to do some of these things (Matthew 10). Then he sent the eleven disciples to all nations. He told them to do other things (Matthew 28). They were to follow up on what he did by doing more, making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey his commands.

Part One presented three transitions that took place before the missionaries actually went to another culture to begin missionary service. They made the decision to go; then they actually transitioned to the agency; then they transitioned to raising funds.

Part Two presented three parts of the very large transition from their passport countries to their host countries. They went through their endings (leaving), were in transit, and then went through their beginnings (entering).

In addition to the very large transition from a missionary's passport culture to his or her host culture, missionaries usually make other transitions while they are serving there on the field. Some of these transitions are large, such as getting married, and some are smaller, such as moving to a different field of service in the same agency.

Part Three considers three categories of transitions that are commonly faced by missionaries: Family transitions, ministry transitions, and transitions to a different field in the same agency or to another agency. The family transitions are the same ones made by people remaining in their passport country. Although these "same" transitions sound like the ones the people back home make making these transitions in another culture often raises different issues.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the transitions that missionaries make, but it includes many of the most common ones.

Chapter 7

Family Transitions

Although some missionaries remain single throughout their lives, the majority of them go through a variety of transitions during the usual family life cycle. This chapter deals with a variety of such transitions those missionaries experience.

- First, the transition to being married
- Second, the transition to being parents of children
- Third, the transition to being parents of adolescents
- Fourth the transition to the empty nest

During this family life cycle many people in Western cultures experience changes in marital satisfaction and in general life satisfaction. Boyd Rollins and Herald Feldman studied marital satisfaction over the family life cycle in the 1960s. Rather than grouping people by their chronological age, they defined the stage of the life cycle by the ages of their children as follows:

1. No children
2. Oldest child 0-2
3. Oldest child 3-5
4. Oldest child 6-12
5. Oldest child 13-21
6. First child gone to last child gone
7. Empty nest to retirement

8. Retirement to death of first spouse

Rollins and Feldman asked 852 American couples living in Syracuse, NY, at different stages how satisfying their present stage of the lifecycle was. They found that both husbands and wives were most satisfied with their marriage during stage 1 (no children). Then their satisfaction declined through stage 4 (oldest child 6-12), and finally it started to increase again, rising to about that of stage 1 after they retired.

Fortunately, they also asked people if their present stage of life was “very satisfying” in general, not just in their marriage. As shown below they found that at stages 1 and 2 (no children or oldest 2 or less) about 70% of both husbands and wives reported that it was “very satisfying.” After that there was a constant decline in satisfaction until only about 10% found stage 6 (when children were leaving) “very satisfying.” The percentage then doubled for stage 7 (empty nest), and it rose back up to about 70% in stage 8 (retirement to death of spouse). (Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1970, February, pp20-28.)



Thus, similar changes in life satisfaction occur in people who are not missionaries during the same ages it occurred in missionaries, and changes in marital satisfaction parallel changes in life satisfaction. One question remains, and that is whether this change in dissatisfaction occurs only in Americans or does it occur in other cultures as well?

This question was answered recently when Hannes Schwandt at Princeton University conducted a study of life satisfaction in Germany during 2013, researching a European population. He surveyed 23,161 Germans between the ages of 17 and 85, asking them to rate their life satisfaction. He found the highest satisfaction at age 23, the lowest satisfaction at 55, and it peaked again at age 69. His study was published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics at (<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1229.pdf>). Thus, people in Western cultures experience an interval of much dissatisfaction in the middle of life whether they are missionaries or not.

As noted earlier, some missionaries remain single for life so they do not make the transitions discussed in the rest of this chapter. Of course, they do face many different issues, and those are discussed in *Missionary Singles Issues* available at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#singles>. However, missionaries who marry and have families make the transitions mentioned earlier, transitions to marriage, to parenting children, to parenting adolescents, to the empty nest as follows.

FIRST: TRANSITION TO MARRIAGE

The transition from being single to being married is a major transition in anyone’s life, but that transition may be complicated by several factors in the lives of missionaries serving in other cultures. This section considers the implications of beginning marriage on the field, marrying a national, and marriage competing with the ministry of both husband and wife.

This is no honeymoon!

Even though agencies try to create realistic expectations during orientation, some missionary candidates think that their missionary service will be like a wonderful “honeymoon.” Though that may be the case for a short time, reality soon sets in.

Honeymoon Stage

During the early days or months of living in another culture, while still in “vacation mode,” a person experiences interest, fascination, joy, and enthusiasm living in another culture. This may last for days, weeks, or even months.

However, when the inevitable difficulties with language, people, housing, and food arise, people may become critical, frustrated, resentful, and angry. Simple tasks become daunting challenges, and disillusionment sets in. This post vacation mode time is very hard on marriage relationships, resulting in lower satisfaction in marriages.

Though thousands of missionaries have experienced this over the last couple of centuries, it was not until the end of the twentieth century that Christopher Rosik and Jelena Pandzic at Link Care studied this change in marital satisfaction systematically (Rosik, C. H. & Pandzic, J. 2008. Marital satisfaction among Christian missionaries: A longitudinal analysis from candidacy to second furlough. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 27, 3-15). Over a twenty year period he gave couples the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) three times:

- First, while they were candidates (before serving as missionaries),
- Second, four years later, after their first term of service in another culture,

- Third, an additional four years later, after their second term of service.

They analyzed the data comparing gender, length of marriage, and ages of children (if they had any). The MSI has a measure of overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the marriage. Rosik and Pandzic found that satisfaction with their marriage declined significantly during the four years between the first and second times they took the test (during the first term), and it remained lower four years later the third time (during their second term). The missionaries in Rosik and Pandzic’s study were all in age categories during which satisfaction is declining, so all ages reported increasing dissatisfaction during their first term.

Just Married!

Of course, a similar phenomenon occurs in any marriage. During the early days or months after the wedding, while still in the “honeymoon stage,” a person experiences interest, fascination, joy, and enthusiasm for married life. This may last for days, weeks, or even months.

However, when the inevitable difficulties from different expectations, different backgrounds, and daily “drudgery” tasks of living arise, newly-weds may also become critical, frustrated, resentful, and angry. Maintaining the relationship may become a daunting challenge, and disillusionment may set in. This post-honeymoon time may be hard on a marriage.

If a couple marries and leaves very soon to serve in another culture, the early days may be wonderful. Then if the two “honeymoons” end simultaneously, the following days may be dreadful. The couple may confuse cultural adjustments and marriage adjustments. The resulting disillusionment may cause them to leave the field, perhaps even the marriage. Even if they do not leave the marriage, their marriage may be damaged.

Married, no children

In addition to the general overall measure of satisfaction, the MSI has nine measures of satisfaction for specific areas of marriage. Rosik and Pandzic found the same pattern of declining satisfaction during the first term of service and continued lower satisfaction during the second term in three areas.

- Affective communication: The amount of affection and understanding expressed by their spouse.
- Sexual dissatisfaction: The frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity.
- Role orientation: Traditional vs. nontraditional orientations toward marital and parental gender roles.

That is, missionaries became more dissatisfied with the affection, understanding, sexual activity, and roles they were expected to play during their first term of service, and that dissatisfaction remained through their second term. This would be expected because Rollins and Feldman had similar findings half a century earlier when they studied middle class residents of Syracuse, NY, in 1960 (Rollins, B. C. & Feldman, H. 1970. Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, pp. 20-28).

A decade earlier Steve Sweatman studied first term missionaries, and he found that they also experienced sexual dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction with affective communication. He did not study role orientation.

Gender differences

Wives and husbands had significantly different levels of dissatisfaction in three areas.

- Problem solving communication: general ineffectiveness in resolving differences. Wives were more dissatisfied than husbands each time they took the MSI.

- Time together: the couple's companionship during time shared in leisure activity. Dissatisfaction for both husbands and wives increased significantly, but it increased during the first term for the wives and during the second term for husbands.
- Role orientation (defined above): Wives endorsed more traditional gender and parental roles than their husbands each time they took the MSI.

In his study of first-term missionaries a decade earlier, Sweatman (Sweatman, S. M. 1999, Marital satisfaction, cross-cultural adjustment stress, and the psychological sequelae *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 27, 154-162) also found the greatest area of dissatisfaction was with time together. In addition, he found that that this dissatisfaction was significantly correlated with depression. He did not check to see if there was a difference between husbands and wives relative to the correlation with depression.

What can we do?

Serving as missionaries is often hard on marriages. After a brief honeymoon period the pressures of work and the stress of living in another culture begin to take their toll on marriage relationships. However, to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Since the first term of missionary service can be so difficult, it is a crucial time to take action to protect and preserve marriage. The best general thing to do is to make your marriage a high priority in your lives. Of course, you want to serve others, but you must also care for yourself and your marriage.

Since both studies using the MSI pinpointed several specific areas where missionaries are most likely to be dissatisfied in marriage, those areas are good places to begin.

- Both studies noted that "time together" is a major problem. Begin by scheduling *at least* two hours every week for

“relationship time” as described in the brochure on that topic. If you do not do so, you will probably grow further and further apart regardless of how close you believe you are.

- Both studies noted problems in affective communication, and one noted a lack in problem solving communication. Make it a priority to express your affection and really understand your spouse. Also learn how to resolve your differences so that they do not fester under the surface. Unexpressed and unresolved conflicts tend to explode under stress.
- Both studies noted sexual dissatisfaction. Use your upgraded communication skills to discuss your sexual frustrations. Unresolved conflicts in this area may lead to illicit sexual activity, but this may be prevented by meeting each other’s needs.
- Also use your communication skills to resolve conflicts about child rearing practices. Parents who do not present a united front to their children often wind up with divided families.

Finally, if possible, find a “mentor couple” about ten years ahead of you in their marriage relationship and child rearing. Meet with them on a regular basis to ask questions and listen to their suggestions.

For more specific information please see the article by Christopher Rosik and Jelena Pandzic titled “Marital satisfaction among Christian missionaries: A longitudinal analysis from candidacy to second furlough,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 2008, Vol. 27, No. 1, 3-15.

Marrying a National!

Living as a single person without adequate social support in another culture can be very lonely. It is common for people to marry someone they meet while serving in their host culture, and it has been so for many years. In fact, it happened

in the family of William Carey, the “father of modern missions” in the 18th century. William’s wife Dorothy needed help, so her sister, Kitty, had agreed to help Dorothy with her children in India, but that did not last long.

- November 11, 1793, Kitty arrived in India.
- February 6, 1794, Kitty met Charles Short.
- November 15, 1794, Kitty married Charles.

A year and four days after she arrived in India, she married a man from her passport country, a man she had known for nine months.

Though William Carey’s marriage to Dorothy was undesirable, he remarried soon after her death.

- December 8, 1807, Dorothy died.
- May 8, 1808, William married Charlotte.

Five months after Dorothy’s death, William married a cross-cultural worker from Germany, a woman he had tutored in English eight years earlier while living in India.

Just as singles do marry expats from their passport culture and expats from other cultures, they also marry nationals from their host culture. Such singles have usually lived in the culture for some time and have developed an understanding and appreciation of the host cultures even though they are quite different from their passport cultures. Though the couple realizes they are different because of their cultures, they are “sure” that their love will overcome any problems that arise because they are not from the same culture.

Don’t opposites attract?

People may initially be attracted to others who are different, but in long-term relationships, similarities are much more important. Differences may change from attractive, to tolerated, to annoying, to grating, to destroying a relationship. Understanding and appreciating a culture is quite different from internalizing it. It is easier to adjust to differences between

families in the same culture than it is to adjust to the deeply held values found in different cultures.

Differences that complement each other, such as one person being talkative and the other a listener, are relatively easy to adjust to. However, deeper cultural values, such as male vs. female roles or honesty vs. saving-face may be very difficult to live with. The single woman may be attracted to the macho male in her host culture but may not like the way he treats her after marriage. The single man may be attracted to the way the woman in his host culture avoids hurting anyone but may not like her lying to him to do so after marriage.

What does the Bible say?

The Old Testament forbids cross-cultural marriages for the Israelites.

- Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons (Deuteronomy 7:3).
- You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:25).
- Also see Joshua 23:12 and Ezra 9 (whole chapter) among others.

These prohibitions were for religious reasons, deeply held cultural values. The reasons given were that intermarriage would result in people changing their concepts of and relationships with God and with false gods.

- For they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods Deuteronomy 7:4).
- Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Nehemiah (13:26).

Of course, when marrying a national, people may say that they are both Christians. However, maintaining a marriage relationship when the couple has disagreements between deep cultural values of any kind is often very difficult. Marrying a

national is not sinful, but it makes marriage more difficult. People may be very unhappy in such a marriage and be tempted to look for companionship outside the marriage.

What problems may occur?

Would any of the following disturb either you or your spouse-to-be? Since at least one of you will have to live in a host culture, that one will probably experience some, if not all, of the following.

- Your children do not really know your parents, their grandparents.
- Family members, such as grandparents and cousins, are not able to communicate well with your children.
- You do not celebrate your culture's holidays and observe its traditions.
- You have to explain jokes and/or ask for them to be explained.
- Your children grow up with a different set of cultural assumptions than you have.
- You experience discrimination because of the ethnicity of your spouse.
- Your children grow up with gender roles you do not approve of.
- Etc....

What can we do?

Five things are absolutely necessary.

- Have at least one language in which both you are fluent. Explain a subtle emotion to your spouse-to-be, and ask him or her to explain it back in different words.
- Do not assume anything, especially things you would call "common sense." Remember that you have much less in "common" than couples reared in the same culture.

- Do talk about every aspect of your future life together. Include at least the following aspects: spiritual, financial, marriage and sexual expectations, family, friends, gender roles, children, leisure, communication, and conflict resolution.
- Do not avoid talking about any subject. If your spouse-to-be says it is not important, press for discussion. If he or she refuses to discuss something, treat that as a red flag!
- Remember that what your in-laws think of you is extremely important. In many cultures their opinions may be of great importance to your spouse-to-be.

Are men and women alike?

Men marry national women and women marry national men, just as was the case in the OT cross-cultural marriages. Member care providers have observed that men tend to be more satisfied with their cross-cultural marriage than are women. This may be a result of the roles women are expected to play, especially if they live in their husband's culture. Here are examples.

- A woman may be attracted to a Latin macho man because he seems to be more like a Biblical "head of the house" than do many sensitive men she has met in her passport culture. However, when his attitude turns out to be real machismo with full emphasis on male superiority, she may realize that even in him it is the old male chauvinism she despised in her own culture.
- A woman may believe she would be happy living with the convert she marries in the Middle East. However, when she actually lives there as his wife, she despises having to cover her entire body and being unable to express affection at all outside the privacy of her home.
- Even though a woman married to an African man is not forced to walk ten steps behind her husband, both of them

may feel uncomfortable walking together when all the other women are behind their husbands.

What about TCKs?

Notable exceptions to women not being as satisfied in cross-cultural marriages are Third Culture Kids (TCKs), especially those who have grown up in their husband's culture. If the woman has internalized parts of that culture, she may be comfortable with women's roles there—perhaps more comfortable than with roles in her passport culture.

The same is true of female TCKs who grew up in cultures *similar* to their husbands'. For example, a woman who grew up in one tribe in an African culture may be happy with a similar role expected of her in another African culture. Similarly, one who grew up in one Latin country may be happy in similar Latin American countries.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural marriage adjustments often are more difficult than those in which both husband and wife are from the same culture. These marriages have an extra level of differences to work through.

- All husbands and wives have to work through differences between them as individuals.
- All husbands and wives have to work through differences between their families of origin. One marries a whole set of family traditions and expectations, not just an individual.
- In cross-cultural marriages the couple has to work through not only individual and family differences but also the much deeper cultural differences.

This does not mean it cannot be done, only that it is more difficult, often much more difficult. The cultural assumptions are much more central to our persons than people may expect.

Even more disconcerting are times when previously agreed upon items change.

- You find out that your spouse is more interested in working on a permanent resident card (Green Card in the USA) than on the marriage.
- Your spouse does not want to live in your passport country.
- You find out that you do not want to live permanently in your spouse's country.
- Your spouse does not want to join your agency as agreed upon.

Cross-cultural marriages are difficult, but not impossible. Two people more interested in giving than in receiving are able to make them work. Just be prepared to be the one who gives.

Two excellent books about cross-cultural marriage were published in 2008. G. Shelling and F. Fraser-Smith wrote *In Love but Worlds Apart: Insights, Questions and Tips for the Intercultural Couple* is written by a two Christians who have much cross-cultural experience. Dugan Romano wrote this third edition of *Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls* from a more secular perspective, but with a good chapter on religion. Both books raise many issues any couple considering an intercultural marriage should consider.

Marriage or Ministry

When faced with competing demands and “impossible” schedules, missionaries may feel trapped into making very difficult choices. They may feel like they have to choose one thing over another, often forced to choose one good thing over another. After single missionaries who have been fully dedicated to serving nationals may feel they have to choose between that service and their spouse. Such has also been the case from the very beginning of modern missions.

Marriage or ministry?

On April 4, 1793, William Carey thought that was the choice he had to make as he took his 8-year-old son and boarded a ship to become a missionary to India. He was leaving his pregnant wife, Dorothy, and their other two sons. He did not want to leave his wife and break up his family, but he apparently believed he had to choose between marriage and ministry.

When he could not reach India at that time, he returned home and was able to convince Dorothy to come with him, but his ministry was still more important than his marriage. Things did not go well with his marriage in India.

After Dorothy's death in 1808 William married Charlotte in 1809. By then he realized that he did not have to choose between ministry and marriage but that he had to blend ministry with marriage. William and Charlotte were able to build a loving relationship in ministry. After her death in 1821 William said that his wife's death was the greatest loss a man could live with.

Today probably no church or agency would allow anyone to break up marriage and family to go the field. However, even today some people still believe that the choice has to be between marriage and ministry. If marriage and ministry schedules conflict, some choose ministry over marriage thinking that they must make an “either-or” decision.

What does the Bible say?

Fortunately, the Bible gives us a good example of a husband and wife in cross-cultural ministry together. Priscilla and Aquila always appear together in ministry. Sometimes they are referred to as Aquila and Priscilla, and sometimes as Priscilla and Aquila, but always together (Acts 18, Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Timothy 4).

Aquila was a Jewish TCK growing up in Pontus near the Black Sea on the north side of what is now Turkey. People from Pontus were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Aquila and Priscilla became Christian missionaries to several countries.

- They served in Italy but had to leave when Jews were ordered out (Acts 18:2).

- They then became tentmakers in Corinth, giving hospitality and work to Paul (Acts 18:3) as well as hosting a house church there (1 Corinthians 16:19).
- They later served in Ephesus where they engaged in a discipleship ministry in their home (Acts 18:26).

Thus we see this married couple moving from Jewish to Roman to Greek to Asian cultures. Always serving together in a variety of ministries and viewed as a team with neither one more important than the other, they were a great example of marriage and ministry. For them it was not a question of choosing ministry or marriage, it was a matter of serving together in a “both-and” situation, both marriage and ministry. They were in ministry together, and people viewed them as a team.

Marriage is ministry?

Many missionaries have found that their marriage is a ministry. As one lady put it, “We realized that our students at various levels of theological training were reading our lives more intently than listening to what we taught.” What you do may speak so loud that nationals cannot hear what you say.

Few people in ministry have students or parishioners come up to them years later and tell them how a particular lecture or sermon changed their lives. However, many have had people tell them how observing their actions, their lives, and their marriages had influenced them profoundly.

Missionaries, more than most people, would understand what an ambassador is. Missionaries, like other believers, are Christ’s ambassadors through whom God makes his appeal to people of other cultures (2 Corinthians 5:20). When nationals come into missionary homes, they are entering the residence of God’s ambassadors. The way husbands and wives relate to each other and to their visitors affects God’s appeal to them.

What about ministry and marriage in the early church?

The Bible does not deal specifically with husbands and wives in ministry together as missionaries. However, it does deal with husbands and wives as leaders of churches planted by missionaries.

Timothy grew up as a TCK in the town of Lystra in Lyconia. His mother was a Jewish believer and his father was a Greek (Acts 16). Timothy joined Paul during Paul’s second term of missionary service and traveled with Paul and Silas to many countries, including Greece, Macedonia, and Asia.

One time when Paul, the senior mission administrator, was leaving for Macedonia, he asked Timothy to remain on-site in Ephesus to deal with problems in the national church there (1 Timothy 1:3). Later, probably from Rome, Paul wrote a letter to Timothy instructing him how to deal with several issues including the qualifications of church leaders (1 Timothy 3).

- Church leaders (all men in that church) were to be respectable, self-controlled, hospitable, gentle, not quarrelsome, etc. (1 Timothy 3:2-10).
- Their spouses (wives) were to be respectable, temperate, trustworthy, etc. (1 Timothy 3:11).

Leadership in the church was not only the role of the one designated as leader, but also of the spouse. Though these instructions were for nationals in church leadership rather than for the missionaries themselves, certainly the missionaries overseeing them would have at least as much expected of them, probably more.

Marriage and ministry?

Although God does not make us choose between ministry and marriage, and ideally our marriage is often our ministry, missionaries usually still have to make some difficult choices. So many demands are made on their time that they cannot do everything they want to do in both ministry and marriage. Here are several things to consider when faced with this choice:

First, everyone has 24 hours in each day. People vary greatly in how much money they have, the physical stamina they have, the intellectual prowess they have and so forth. However, everyone has exactly 24 hours each day. Each person is responsible for how they use that time. When people say that there is “no time” to do something, what they mean is that other things are more important. Everyone must be careful not to let the good crowd out the better and the better not crowd out the best.

Second, what you do is more important than what you say. Paul did not need to urge the Corinthians to imitate him. Children imitate their fathers! Of course, before you urge people to imitate you, you must make sure that you “walk the talk.” Paul sent Timothy, the same person he had sent to the Ephesians, to remind the Corinthian church that Paul’s way of life agreed with what he taught “everywhere in every church” (I Corinthians 4: 16-17).

Third, intentionally schedule both marriage and ministry times. Missionaries may come from time-oriented cultures where their agencies and supporters are more interested in “results” than in relationships. Such missionaries are likely to become more involved in doing things that show up in reportable statistics than in maintaining relationships with spouses, children, colleagues, and nationals. Without “relationship time” marriages suffer.

Many years ago my wife and I were invited to a marriage enrichment weekend, but we found out that the leader was going through his second divorce at that time. Would you go? We know a couple who were both marriage counselors, but they had divorced and the husband married a client. Would you go to either of them for counsel about your marriage? What about nationals going to missionaries who are so busy conducting marriage retreats that they have no time for each other?

What did Paul tell an early church he had planted about husbands and wives?

Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, the same one where he had left Timothy, to teach about marriage. Rather than being seen as about the “Christ as the head,” the last part of chapter five has often been interpreted as being about the “Husband as the head” (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Missionaries serving in countries where the macho male already sees himself as vastly superior to his wife must be very careful what they say. Macho men, and even their wives, may quickly pick up the phrase, “wives, submit to your husbands...” and miss the previous verse which says, “Submit to one another...” (v. 21).

Note how often God is mentioned:

- (v. 22) ...as to the Lord...

- (v. 23) ...as Christ is...the Savior...
- (v. 24) ...to Christ, so...
- (v. 25) ...as Christ loved...gave himself up...
- (v. 27) ...to himself as...
- (v. 29) ...as Christ does...
- (v. 32) ...about Christ and...

Just as Jesus said that the two parts of the Great Commandment summarized the Law, the parallel commands here summarize this whole passage: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (v. 25)” and “Each one of you must also love his wife as he loves himself (v. 33).

Relationships are often more important than “results.” Be careful to maintain your marriage as well as your ministry. When you model this in your own lives, it will not only enrich your lives but also nationals will imitate it in theirs.

Of course, missionaries face many other issues in their marriage as well. *Missionary Marriage Issues* is available free of charge at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#marriage>. This book will be helpful to married missionaries regardless of how long they have been married.

SECOND: TRANSITION TO BEING PARENTS OF CHILDREN

The level of marital satisfaction and life satisfaction often remains high for the first couple of years the missionaries have children. However, as time goes on satisfaction levels begin a decline, and that decline does not end for many years.

Just as Rosik & Pandzic and Sweatman found that satisfaction declined during the first term of missionary service, they found that having children just added additional issues. Children in the home resulted in two additional specific areas.

- **Conflict over child rearing:** This was the conflict between spouses about child rearing practices. Again, satisfaction declined during the first term and continued lower during the second term.

- **Dissatisfaction with children:** This included both the relationship between the spouses and children as well as parental concern with the emotional or behavioral well-being of at least one child. This changed little over time for those entering missions when they had been married for five or more years. However, the dissatisfaction increased during both the first and second terms for those married less than five years when they entered missionary service.

In addition, parents who have babies on the field may find themselves not only in disagreement with each other about discipline for their children, but also even if they agree on how to do it, they may find themselves in disagreement with their neighbors.

Finally, if they bring children to the field with them, they may find it difficult to help the children adjust, and they may find themselves having to choose again how make the choice between ministry and parenthood—usually the wife choosing between ministry and motherhood.

How Will We Discipline Them?

Remembering the pain when his father whipped him with a belt, Stan resolved never to use anything but his own hand when punishing his child. He knew that the Bible said that the man who “spares the rod” hates his son, so Stan was “careful to discipline” the son he loved (Proverbs 13:34). He spanked only with his own hand so that he could feel how much pain he was giving.

Remembering that her mother would remind her that “God is love” even when she disobeyed, Beth resolved that no one would ever hit her children. She could not imagine Jesus giving a child a spanking. Her mother had always emphasized that Jesus would forgive her if she just prayed and said she was sorry.

As husband and wife Stan and Beth now have their own small children. They have had many discussions about

differences between the families they grew up in, differences in the way they looked at Scripture, as well as differences they had about disciplining their children. They had come from diverse family and church backgrounds, but after talking with their pastor they finally came to some agreement about disciplining their children. They are glad to have that behind them now that they are planning to serve overseas. Or is it behind them? Will these issues come up again?

Another Culture

In *Families on the Move*, Marion Knell tells the story of a child attending an international school. One day the boy came home from school and told his parents that a teacher had touched his private parts. The distraught parents immediately went to the school to investigate. They found out that touching a small boy’s private parts to discipline him was the cultural norm in their host culture. The teacher could not understand what the fuss was all about—she certainly had no intention of abusing the boy or of harming him in any way.

Just as families differ in their view of punishment, so do cultures. In some cultures the only ones allowed to discipline a child are the child’s own parents. In other cultures any responsible adult present is expected to discipline a misbehaving child. Some cultures use corporal punishment; others use shame or time-outs; and still others use little punishment at all. Even cultures which use physical punishment about equally may differ in the kind of such punishment.

A 2007 comparison of Japanese and USA college students found that about 90% of the students in both cultures reported experiencing physical punishment. However, students in the USA were more likely to report being hit with an object than those in Japan. In addition, USA students were most likely to be hit on the bottom and the hand, but Japanese students were most likely to be hit in the face or on the head.

Thus, as expected, people from families and cultures not using punishment may be appalled at any punishment given to their children. Even people who come from families and cultures which use punishment may be appalled at their children being slapped in the face by relative strangers or having someone touch their children's private parts. These situations are most likely to occur in the context of household help, nearby national neighbors, or nearby expatriates.

Household Help

When wages are much lower in their host countries than in the passport countries, missionaries often hire people on a regular basis to work around their homes. Some of these people are essentially nannies, there to care for the children. Of course, people should be aware of major cultural differences and screen the nannies carefully to find out not only the cultural means of discipline they use but also their family's means of discipline.

In addition, other nationals who are there primarily to cook, clean, do household maintenance, or yard work also come into contact with children. They may also discipline your children, especially when you are not present. All of these individuals will also impart other aspects of their culture to your children, a part of making them TCKs.

As parents it is your responsibility to learn enough about the culture and your household help to assure that what your children learn from them meets with your approval. Since these people are your employees and work in or around your home, you can influence what they do with your children. Even then your spouse and you may disagree on what to do about such discipline.

National Neighbors

Assuming that you live in a "neighborhood" with nationals living all around you (rather than in a "compound"

with only people from your agency), your children will probably play with national children who live nearby. While playing together your children are likely to spend time in homes of these national children where they will encounter parents and other extended family members. These adults are likely to step in and discipline your children; after all, your children are in their homes.

In this situation, you have much less leverage to question the families and much less control over what they do to discipline your children. You can still learn about the culture, but you have to rely on general conversation and observation of everyday behavior to discover their family norms for discipline.

In this case you will need to make judgments about the relative value of your relationship with these people and the influence of their discipline on your children. This may lead to marked disagreement between husband and wife. One spouse may think of broken toys as an indication of lack of respect for another's property, and the other may see those broken toys as evidence of a lack of materialistic influence.

Nearby Expats

Unlike parents in their passport country, people living in a host country have a relatively limited number of people from their own culture to talk with. Some parents live in rather isolated (from other expats) conditions where they have few people with whom they can discuss disciplining their children. In fact, some people live in small villages far from anyone from their passport culture.

Other parents live in urban areas where they have access not only to other parents from their passport culture but also parents from other cultures who speak their language. Having others from back "home" nearby may be a real help, but asking parents from other cultures (even ones who speak the same language) may result in even more confusion since that brings in other cultural differences.

If other families live nearby, children playing together and visiting each others' homes may bring conflict not only between spouses, but with nearby expats about how children should be disciplined. Issues on the value of the relationship with these expats and the morale of the mission community need to be considered.

Other Factors

Here are several things to keep in mind as you discuss disciplining children.

- There is no one best way to discipline children. They grow up and become members of society after being disciplined in a wide variety of ways.
- Parents must present a united front. They need to have core values agreed on before marriage if possible, or with a counselor after marriage if they did not do so before marriage.
- Always intervene in cases of abuse. Do not give your silent approval if you see physical, sexual, or emotional abuse such as name-calling or other damaging activity.
- Be careful of what you do that is motivated by guilt. Some parents try to “atone” for what they have “put their children through” by taking them to live in another culture. Though you may want to be compassionate for a short period of adjustment right after arrival, do not hesitate to discipline when that time is over.
- Agree on the role of children and refine your view of their role as they mature. Are they also “missionaries” while in the host country with you? They may enjoy this role while children but come to resent it as adolescents. Likewise, they may think it is “neat” to sing in the national language to help you raise funds during childhood, but they may despise doing it as teenagers. Allow them to play these roles, but be very careful about force or shame to get them to do so.

- Remember that you are very influential in your children's lives. In a large study of adult TCKs (specifically missionary kids) one question asked was, “Who was most important in your life as you were growing up?” Two-thirds of the respondents named their parents: 32% said father, 28% said both parents, and 6% said mother. The other one-third was distributed among houseparents, teachers, siblings, friends, and others.

What does Bible say?

As noted in the introduction, the Bible mentions a variety of means of discipline, ranging from the rod to love. No one method fits all children at all times. It is clear that even the children of spiritual leaders go bad when not disciplined.

- Sons of Eli, the priest. God told Samuel that he would judge Eli's family because of the sin Eli knew about and “he failed to restrain them” (1 Samuel 3:13).
- Sons of Samuel, the prophet. “But his sons did not walk in his ways (1 Samuel 8:3).
- Adonijah, son of David, the king. Adonijah proclaimed himself king. The Bible says that “His father had never interfered with him by asking, ‘Why do you behave as you do?’” (1 Kings 1:6).

School (Preschool & Primary)

School is a very important part of the children's lives, and you have a broad range of options open to you:

- Local Christian school
- Local international school
- Correspondence courses (traditional or DVD)
- Distance learning (internet or DVD)
- National school (public or private)
- Home school (alone or cooperative)

- Assisted home school (home and other)
- Boarding school (mission or international Christian)
- Satellite school (small or multigrade class)

As you and your children face these choices, remember that no one type of schooling is recommended for all children or even one child over his or her lifetime. Some children flourish in one type of school while other children flourish in another. A child may do well in one school situation when five years old but need a different one when ten years old.

This decision is one that you are likely to revisit several times during a child's life, so do not be reluctant to make changes when such changes will help.

Much has been written about the education of child TCKs, but not as much has been written about their reentry (or entry) into their passport culture. *We're Going Home: Reentry for Elementary Children* is available free of charge at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home. This book is written at a third or fourth grade reading level and contains activities for children. *I Don't Want to Go Home: Parent's Guide for Reentry for Elementary Children* is available free of charge at the same place, and it gives suggestions for the parents of such children.

THIRD: TRANSITION TO BEING PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS

The decline in marital satisfaction and life satisfaction that began while the parents had children continues reaching its lowest point while the adolescents are leaving home.

As their children become adolescents, parents may find themselves in conflict with nationals about what to expect of teenagers. Such parents must remember that adolescence is a relatively new invention of Western culture, and the host culture may not have invented it yet—or may have extended it.

Adolescence

Jesus was a teenager, but never an adolescent. So was Moses. So was Paul. So was George Washington. If you are working among non-Western people, that may be the case with them as well. If you are working in developing countries, you may have noticed that teenagers in the larger cities are adolescents, but those in the rural villages are not. Why is there this difference? What is adolescence? What does the Bible say about it? Should adolescents be treated as adults? What are the major problems of adolescence? How can those problems be prevented? Let's consider some of these questions.

What is adolescence?

Today adolescence is the time of life between puberty and adulthood. That seems simple enough, but it is much more complicated than it appears at first glance because of changes during the last 200 years.

- Puberty. Puberty originally meant, “of ripe age, adult.” That is what it still means in many tribes where children go through rites of passage as teenagers to become full adults in their culture. However, in Western nations the age of sexual maturity has decreased by three or four years, but people do not become adults culturally at that time. Today puberty means only sexual maturity.
- Adulthood. People used to become adults in their early teens, such as Jewish children going through bat or bar mitzvah at 12 or 13. It is not clear when people become adults today in Western countries. They begin paying adult prices in restaurants and theatres at 12, driving at 16, graduating and voting at 18, and buying liquor at 21. We have gone from the bar mitzvah to the bar as the final step to adulthood.

- Adolescence is the time of life after puberty but before adulthood; it did not exist much before the twentieth century and still exists only in Western (or Westernizing) countries.

What causes adolescence?

Culture. More than anyone else, missionaries should recognize the influence of culture. According to one Rabbi in the Talmud, a good man was one who “leads his children in the right path, and marries them just before they attain puberty.” In pioneer America, “a marriage that sometimes united a boy of 16 to a girl of 14 was an occasion of merriment that brought out the whole fort.” For 3000 years the minimum legal age of marriage in the Jewish, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and American cultures (as in most other cultures) was 12 for women and 14 for men. Not everyone married at those ages, but they were adults and could marry if they wanted to, just as people at 18 years of age can today.

What does the Bible say about Adolescence?

Nothing. It had not been invented yet in the Hebrew, Greek, or Roman cultures. In Bible times people were babies, children, grown-ups, men and women, but not adolescents.

Look at some scripture passages.

- Moses: “Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘take this baby and nurse him for me... When the child grew older... One day after Moses had grown up...’” (Exodus, 2:9-11, NIV)
- Paul: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (1 Corinthians 13:11, NIV).

Should we treat adolescents like adults?

You probably think, “Teenagers are so irresponsible, certainly they cannot be expected to act like adults.” Yet

teenagers were treated as adults for thousands of years in most cultures, and they did fine. God trusted the care of his son into the hands of Mary, a teenager. Of course, the difference in Western cultures today is that we do not expect adult behavior from teenagers, and we do not prepare children to act like adults when they pass through puberty. People tend to behave as expected, so when we expect childish behavior from teens, we get it. Most adolescents today cannot be treated as adults because they have never learned to be responsible. Although they have developed adult capacities physically, mentally, and morally, our culture has not prepared them to be adults, as cultures did for thousands of years. Yes, we should treat adolescents as adults; we just need to prepare them to act responsibly. Preparing children and expecting adult behavior from adolescents prevents many teen problems.

What are the major problems of adolescence?

When difficulties occur during the teen years, they often center around our invention of adolescence, and they occur in three major areas: identity, sexuality, and work.

- Identity. Adolescents have problems knowing who they are because we have not yet created a cultural identity for adolescents. They are neither children nor adults. In addition to the loss of family identity by such things as divorce and remarriage, MKs may live much of their lives thousands of miles from their extended families, seeing them only rarely. In addition to the loss of community identity caused by urbanization and bussing, MKs may live in a different “home” each time they come to their “home” country. And in addition to the loss of religious identity due to denominations and independent churches, MKs may be confused by national religions.
- Sexuality. The very definition of adolescence means that teenagers are not able to express their sexuality in a marriage relationship. They cannot legally be married

(without parental consent) for about the first six years of their sexual maturity and cannot financially afford to for about the first ten years. Unfortunately, this is during the young men's time of greatest sexual desire. Of course, we know that most teenagers in Western cultures are not sexually inactive. MKs may grow up in host cultures that are even more sexually permissive than their "home" country as well as in missionary subcultures that are less sexually permissive. This may result in even more difficulty dealing with their sexuality during adolescence.

- Work. Teenagers worked for thousands of years, but full-time work that pays enough to live on was legally prohibited for most people before the age of 18 with the invention of adolescence. Since they could not work, our culture passed laws that adolescents must go to school, although many teens now work part-time. MKs often have even more limited opportunities to work, earn money, and learn how to spend it than teens in sending countries.

Can adolescence be "treated?"

Western culture may someday find that it cannot support adolescence, and gradually decrease it. However, for the present time, we have to live in this culture with adolescence. The only "cure" for adolescence now is to grow older and become an adult.

Can adolescence problems be prevented?

Problems in adolescence can at least be greatly decreased. The major way to help those going through adolescence is to treat them as adults. Expect responsible behavior from them and teach them to be adults. Parents can take many specific actions to help with all three major problem areas. Here are a few examples.

Identity. Help teens develop an identity:

- Family. Have family nights, family outings, family traditions, family jokes, family devotions, family scrapbooks and videos. Study the family history.
- Mission community. Participate in school activities, church activities, dinners, retreats, outings, etc. with others in the mission. Have a positive attitude about it.
- "Home" community. When in the home country, participate in scouts, 4-H, PTO, block parties, etc. Subscribe to the local paper and read about the local history.
- Religious. Adolescents should participate as adults in the choir, ushering, teaching, leading Bible study, participating in board meetings, leading small groups, etc.

Sexuality. Talk with teens about sex.

- Talk about sexuality and adolescence so that the adolescents will realize the problem is with Western culture, not with them as individuals. Begin doing this when they are children.
- Study what the Bible has to say about the various types of sexual activity in which adolescents engage, and look at all the positive things the Bible has to say about sex.
- Begin interacting with the opposite sex in acceptable ways. Dating is a time of becoming friends and developing commitment, not becoming sexual partners.
- Make a commitment during the early teen years about what the teen will do and will not do in terms of sexual behavior (hold hands, embrace, pet, premarital sex, etc.)

Work and Money. Teach teens about finances.

- Everyone given a job to do to help around the house and grounds, without pay.
- Teens work extra jobs to earn their own money to spend as they see fit, to learn how to manage money.
- Give teens the money you would use to buy their own necessities (clothing, toiletries, etc.) as their weekly or monthly pay, just as you are paid. It is then their responsibility to manage that money so they will have new

clothes for school. If they do not have it, let them wear their old ones.

Although there will almost certainly be times of conflict, in general adolescence can be a time of growth for both parents and teenagers.

Much has been written about adolescent TCK education and life. Two books are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com. *Understanding Adolescence* at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#adolescence> was written for parents. *Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations* at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#cultural_creations was written for their TCKs.

FOURTH: TRANSITION TO THE EMPTY NEST

As time passes, adolescents become adults, and they leave home. After the last one leaves home, marital and life satisfaction which have been declining for many years begin to rise during the empty nest years. Both types of satisfaction ultimately rise back to their original levels after retirement.

The empty nest syndrome

When some people think about the last child leaving home, the “empty nest syndrome” immediately comes to mind. They may think of “symptoms” such as unhappiness, depression, lack of purpose, feelings of rejection, stress, or worry about the child’s welfare. They may know parents who seemed to lose their identity and seemed to be lost without any children.

Of course, some parents do have such reactions, but they are usually able to cope with them by keeping contact with their offspring which is relatively easy with email, Skype, Twitter, Instagram, texting, cell phones, and other digital means. They can find new ministries, such as one to children or teens if they

still want to be “parents.” They can develop new interests or pursue some hobby they had to give up when the children came along.

Finally, parents and the rest of society both treat the grown young men or young women as adults, and everyone can interact as adults. As long as the parents treat these new adults for what they are and the new adults behave as responsible adults, all can interact positively.

Satisfaction

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Stage 7 of the life cycle mentions the empty nest, and that may make people wonder about the feelings of grief and loneliness of the empty nest syndrome. It is true that after the last child leaves home, some parents may report depression, loss of purpose, and anxiety. However, far more people find the benefits of having time for each other as well as the freedom and time to do what they have been wanting to do for years. Rollins and Feldman found that during the empty nest years people were twice as likely to find their lives “very satisfying” as they were before the last child left.

Although empty nest parents may miss having their children around, they most often enjoy this period of life and the opportunities they have to try new things. Of course, sometimes missionaries have special concerns because their children are likely to be far away.

Off to college or university

Many TCKs return to their passport countries to continue their education at a college or university. Some missionary parents take an extended home ministry assignment so they can at least be in the country where their offspring are. Of course, this is a good thing to do, but they may find that their

student TCKs have found good groups to help them while away from home at the college or university. Of course, leaving home to go to school is something that is not new to TCKs who have attended boarding schools overseas, often far from home.

Many Christian colleges have special orientation times for TCKs before the other students arrive. These are good times for such students to develop relationships with each other before the majority of students arrive. It is usually best for parents to leave as soon as this orientation begins so that they do not keep their offspring from getting the chance to develop such relationships which will help them in the days ahead throughout the semester. Parents need to encourage their sons and daughters to participate in all of the activities during orientation even though they get tired of playing “silly games.” That time is when all students are new, and they are making friends and forming groups that will be difficult to join later

Likewise, many Christian colleges often have Mu Kappa chapters on campus. Mu Kappa exists to encourage missionary kids, multicultural students, and international students in their cross-cultural transitions to foster meaningful relationships with God, family, and others. Mu Kappa chapters are not formed by the college or university, but they are formed by TCKs for TCKs. They may have a staff sponsor to help them. However, if interest in Mu Kappa wanes, the chapter is just disbanded until a new group of TCKs want to form a chapter. Information about Mu Kappa is available at <http://mukappa.org>.

Secular institutions are less likely to have Mu Kappa, but they often have InterVarsity Christian Fellowship or Cru chapters. The Purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA is to establish and advance at colleges and universities “witnessing communities” of students and faculty who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord <http://www.intervarsity.org/>. Formerly known as Campus Crusade for Christ International, Cru is a worldwide, interdenominational Christian ministry committed to helping take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. Cru began as a

ministry to university students in the USA, but it has expanded to a worldwide ministry at <http://www.cru.org>. Of course, many Christian denominations and other groups may have campus chapters as well. Any of these groups will put TCKs in contact with fellow Christian students, but they are less likely to meet the needs of someone who has grown up between cultures.

End of education

When TCKs finish their education and fully enter adulthood to begin supporting themselves, they may find life much more difficult than they found beginning college or university studies. Missionary parents may not realize this, and they do not take an extended home ministry assignment. Even if they take an extended HMA, there is not much parents can do. It is time for TCKs to find their own way in the world, to finally leave the nest and build their own nest.

During this transition, there are no congenial groups provided for these TCKs. There is no orientation, Mu Kappa, InterVarsity or Cru waiting to help them adjust. They are on their own to find work, a church, a home, and all else that goes with being an adult. Unfortunately, with the rise in “helicopter parents” in many developed countries, such “children” return to their parents’ nest for an extended time.

Of course, many parents do not know what to do because they do not want to “kick them out.” One good thing to do is to require these “children” who have returned to the nest to find work of some kind. They often want to start at the “top” rather than work their way up. However, working even such a temporary job as fast food and paying their parents for room and board will give them many of the skills they need for being adults in society.

Freedoms

When the nest is really empty, the parents are likely to experience freedoms they have not had since before they had children. They are done paying tuition and providing room and board, so they are likely to have more money on hand. They may also have more time to do things that they have wanted to do for years. This available cash and time enables them to travel, volunteer to help others, and do anything that is on their “bucket list” of things they would like. Most people find life satisfaction rising!

Sandwich generation

One other thing that may occur during this time is that the missionaries find that their parents also need their help. If this happens, missionaries find themselves “sandwiched” between the generation before them and the generation behind them. This can be a difficult time. However, with life expectancy rising to where it is today, the need to care for parents is likely to occur long after the nest is empty. Therefore, this topic is found in Chapter 14 about retirement.

Several brochures and books on related topics are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com.

- A brochure about relationship time at <http://www.missionarycare.com/marriage/relationshiptime.htm>
- A brochure about conflict at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_conflict.htm
- A brochure about discipline at <http://www.missionarycare.com/marriage/discipline.htm>
- A brochure about children’s adjustment at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_children_adjustment.htm

- A brochure about books for and about TCKs at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_TCKbooks.htm
- A brochure about generational differences at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_generational_differences.htm
- A brochure about helicopter parents at http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_helicopter_parents.htm

Books:

- A book about singles issues at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#singles>
- A book about marriage issues at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#marriage>
- A book raising resilient MKs at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#resilient_mks
- A book about understanding adolescence at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#adolescence>
- A book about TCKs and adolescence at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#cultural_creations

Chapter 8

Ministry Transitions

Some missionaries serve most of their long-term missionary career in the same ministry. For example, a physician may serve decades in the same hospital, an elementary TCK teacher may serve decades in the same school, or a Bible teacher may serve decades in the same Bible school, seminary, or university. God called them to do a particular thing in a particular place, and they do it all their lives.

Other missionaries change ministries every few years. God called them to a particular country, a particular culture, or a particular agency; and they may stay where God called them but change what they do there, such as a teacher becoming field director. Still others find that God moves them to a different culture, agency, or country from time to time; however, issues arise when they transition from one position to another. Different issues are likely to arise when two types of transitions are made: First, when missionaries transfer to a different ministry at the same level, and second when missionaries transfer to a ministry at a different level.

Transition to a different ministry at the same level

This type of transition is one in which missionaries are involved with service involving primarily things or people that

are not their colleagues. For example, physicians are primarily there to treat nationals, not their missionary colleagues. Of course, they are likely to treat colleagues who become ill. Likewise, Bible teachers in the Bible school or seminary are there primarily to teach Bible to nationals, and they may also teach a Bible lesson in the churches they attend; however, some colleagues may be in those churches.

In the great commission Jesus commands his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptize them, and teach these people to obey what Jesus had commanded (Matthew 28). The Greek word for nations is “ethnos,” literally “ethnic groups,” commonly referred to as “people groups.” Jesus had done this for the Jews, and now he was commanding the Jews he had disciplined to go and do this to other ethnic groups. Of course, the ones they disciplined were expected to go and disciple other ethnic groups until all people groups received the message. Jesus did this so that his disciples would be there to continue when he was no longer available in the flesh.

The apostle Paul’s relationships with Timothy and Titus were good examples of this discipleship passing on. Both Timothy and Titus had Greek backgrounds. They may have come to Christ through Paul’s influence and were apparently disciplined by him. Paul called Timothy his “true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). Paul reminded Titus that “the reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished” (Titus 1:5). Both of these disciples helped Paul many times, and both were pastors to churches where they could disciple others. Paul disciplined others so that they could disciple still others when Paul could no longer be there.

Likewise missionaries today are to make disciples who will remain to disciple others even when the missionaries are no longer able to be there. Essentially they are to “work themselves out of their job” and move on to another people group when they have disciplined nationals who can remain to disciple others as the missionary moves on.

Specific examples of this abound.

- Teachers of elementary or secondary level nationals or TCKs may find their former students returning to teach.
- Likewise, teachers in Bible schools, seminaries or universities may find their former students returning to teach so that the missionary can move on to a different area.
- Physicians who minister to nationals may find that former patients return to serve in health care at the hospital.
- Church planters find that some of their parishioners go out to plant churches themselves.
- Missionaries ministering to people addicted to alcohol or other drugs may find that the addicts they had helped go on to help others.
- Ethnomusicologists may find that the nationals they helped write songs go on to help others to compose more songs.

Sometimes when changing to a different area at the same level, missionaries may find that they need new skills or knowledge. For example, when teachers transition to becoming field treasurers, they may have to sharpen their computer skills and learn new software. Likewise, field treasurers becoming teachers may need to learn new teaching skills and even may need to return to a university to become certified to teach.

Transition to a ministry at a “higher” level

This type of transition means that missionaries who have been involved with serving nationals change to service primarily involving their colleagues. For example, if the Bible professor becomes the field director of his or her field, he or she is now primarily serving his or her colleagues. Likewise, if a missionary who had been a field director for many years transitions to becoming a Bible professor, he or she has transitioned to a different level. These are both transitions to different levels, and they seem to be opposites. However, they may not raise opposite issues.

Most people are familiar with transitions from a “lower” level to a “higher” level when they move from serving nationals to supervising their colleagues such as the following.

- From teacher of nationals and TCKs in the international school to principal of the high school supervising fellow teachers.
- From principal supervising teachers to headmaster supervising principals.
- From physician treating nationals to hospital or clinic director supervising physicians.
- From missionary serving nationals to field director supervising missionaries.
- From field director supervising missionaries to country director.
- From country director to area director at headquarters back “home” supervising country directors

Each of these “promotions” moves the person to a level requiring a different set of skills. New principals who treat their teachers like they did their students are likely to be in for a difficult time. Fortunately, the Bible gives us a great example of how to function in such a situation. Nehemiah led people from his passport country who were living in a country not theirs.

Like nearly all missionaries, at some time or other you may find yourself in a position of leadership: planting churches, directing a work team, or teaching in school (or Sunday school, or English). You may feel pressure from above to reach goals and pressure from below to help those you supervise meet their needs. What are you to do? In such a position of leadership, Nehemiah gives good answers. Who was Nehemiah? What did he do? How did he lead? When did he lead? Why did he lead? Did he succeed? Although not everyone has the same style and uses the same methods, let us consider Nehemiah as one example of Godly leadership.

Who was Nehemiah?

Like missionaries, Nehemiah was living in another culture, working in a position of responsibility there. He was cupbearer to the king. When visitors arrived from his passport country, he inquired about the people back home and about the capitol city.

However, much more important than his occupational title were his personal characteristics. When he heard that the people back home were disgraced and the walls of the city were burned and broken, he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed.

He was:

- Compassionate. He wept and mourned for his people and his country.
- Caring. He fasted, prayed and took action, encouraging the people.
- Committed. He got the job done, cared for his people, and was faithful to God.
- Consistent. Even those he reprimanded could find nothing negative to say about him.
- Courageous. He persevered in the face of threats, ridicule, and opposition from both the outside and inside.

For nearly a century some of his people must have said, “Somebody ought to do something about those walls.” Others must have replied, “Nothing can be done.” Because of his character, Nehemiah felt responsible to take some action.

What did he do?

The most obvious answer to this is that he built the wall. Although little had been accomplished in 90 years, he had the wall completed in only 52 days, less than two months.

More important than building the wall was that, as their leader, he took care of his people. He was concerned about:

- Safety. He directed them in defending themselves from people of other cultures who opposed their work.

- Justice. When people of their passport culture took advantage of them back home by charging exorbitant interest rates, Nehemiah confronted the lenders.
- Spiritual renewal. He saw that someone led his people in hearing God’s word, confession, worship, celebration, and praise.
- Consolidation of his gains. Nehemiah did not leave the capitol city nearly empty but got one in ten of the families to volunteer to live there.
- Forethought. He anticipated needs and drafted plans to avoid pitfalls.

How did he lead?

More important than being cupbearer to the king (who he was) or that he built the wall in 52 days (what he did) is how he did it. He did it all in ways that brought glory to God and a sense of fulfillment to those under his supervision. Here are some of the ways he did it:

- Prayed. After he first heard the bad news and reacted to it, we have recorded his prayer of adoration, confession, reminder of the covenant, and petition for success.
- Overcame his fears. Although he was very much afraid of what the king in the culture where he was living and working would say, he responded when asked about his problem. He knew that the king would probably not be very excited about rebuilding the capitol of a conquered nation—Nehemiah’s passport country.
- Was tactfully open to superiors. He began by appropriately addressing the king and then sharing his problem at the king’s request. He responded to each of the king’s questions by asking more and more from him, including letters of recommendation.
- Shared his vision. After deciding what should be done, he shared his vision with the local leaders in his passport country.

- Gave God the glory. From the beginning he acknowledged that his success was due to God's grace.
- Faced ridicule. When people of other cultures mocked and ridiculed him and the people he was leading, he again affirmed his confidence in God.
- Delegated the work. He assigned people to work on various parts of the wall—often the parts in front of their own houses. What motivation—those who did poor workmanship or did not complete their part of the wall would be the first to suffer the consequences of their lack of diligence.
- Emphasized cooperation rather than competition. He had forty distinct groups working together on a project, something of a miracle for those who have tried to get even two churches or mission agencies to work together.
- Faced opposition realistically. When the people of other cultures became incensed so that they despised and ridiculed Nehemiah's work force, he responded with prayer and the posting of guards.
- Encouraged his workers. He acknowledged their fears and reminded them of their great awesome God.
- Developed contingency plans. He had half of the people working and the others standing guard. He further arranged for defenders to come at once to the sounding of the trumpet when those at another part of the wall were threatened.
- Confronted internal dissention. When the controversy arose over people from the home country charging the workers interest, he immediately called a large meeting to resolve the issue.
- Did not take the perks. Nehemiah did not lord it over his workers but out of reverence for God did not take even the food to which he was entitled, nor did he acquire any land.
- Kept to the task. Rather than taking the perks, he said, "Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall." (Nehemiah 5:16)

Notice that most of the "how he did it" things were more about his character than they were about techniques for motivating his workers to get the job done. Also note that after the wall was built Nehemiah was not the one to read God's word to the people, but he stepped aside for Ezra to do so.

When did he lead?

Nehemiah did not rush right into action as soon as he heard the bad news, but he carefully took one step at a time.

- Four months after he talked with the delegation from his passport country (the month of Kislev) he spoke with the king (the month of Nisan). During that time he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed.
- He did not leave the country where he was living without permission from the king and letters of introduction, rather like getting visas before international travel.
- He did not immediately call the people of Jerusalem together to get them working on the wall. Instead, before even telling anyone why he was there, he did a secret survey at night to get a comprehensive view of the project.
- Once the project was underway, everyone worked from dawn to dusk. There was no hesitation at that time. (Note that this schedule was for 7.5 weeks, not for a lifetime.)

Why did he lead?

Of course, part of the reason was the kind of person he was. He was a concerned, caring, compassionate person who identified deeply with his people who were hundreds of miles away in his homeland. When he heard of their trouble and disgrace, his response was to sit down, weep, and mourn.

His next responses were prayer and fasting. He went beyond merely empathizing with them and carried their problem to God over a period of several months. All

Christians, including missionaries, should make this prayerful response for people in times of need.

After months of prayer he was convinced that he had to do more about the need, something that involved his personal involvement. In Nehemiah 2:12, he talked about “what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem.” What a clear call from God to a specific task!

Did he succeed?

He succeeded on both counts. He completed the task to which God had called him, and he took care of his people while accomplishing the task. He not only built the wall, but he also brought about changes that would keep the wall in place for many years by restoring to the people of God their identity and giving them a common purpose

Of course, not everyone succeeds in all tasks attempted. Leaders need to be prepared for the frustration of failure even when obeying God completely. Repentance by the people did not occur under the leadership of every prophet.

Transition to a “Lower” level

When someone moves from a “higher” position to a “lower” position, different issues may arise. For example, when competent, long-term field directors who have been supervising missionaries transition back to being missionaries serving nationals, it may be difficult for them to step aside and let the new field directors lead without interfering. Even if they can make the change, it may be difficult for the other missionaries on the field to make the change to the new field director. These missionaries may make comparisons, they may go to the old field director, and so forth. It is usually best for the former leader to transfer to a different field or a different agency—like pastors in the USA transfer to a different church.

Chapter 9

Field and Agency Transitions

Other common transitions are moving from one field to another and from one agency to another. Transitions from field to field are more common than those from agency to agency. A field is most often an entire country, but it may be any area geographically close, such as a metropolitan area.

Each agency has its own subculture, and these subcultures may be quite diverse. They speak their own “language” which often includes many TLAs, “Three-Letter-Abbreviations.” Of course, there are not always three letters, but many things are referred to by some abbreviation, and these abbreviations have to be learned over a period of time. Some agencies put great emphasis on numbers and statistics, while other agencies put an emphasis on organization and flow charts.

In addition, each field has its own subculture within the agency. This refers not to the subculture of the country, but the subculture developed by the missionaries serving with this agency on this particular field. Missionaries of other agencies in the same country will have different subcultures. Some fields put an emphasis on church planting and converting nationals. Other fields put an emphasis on education and humanitarian relief. Just because two fields (countries) speak the same language does not mean that they are similar. Just because residents of Mexico and Colombia both speak Spanish does not

mean that their cultures are the same or even that they are very similar.

When missionaries change fields within an agency, they have to learn only one new subculture, that of the field, because they already know the subculture of the agency. However, when missionaries change agencies, they need to learn two new subcultures. They need to learn the subculture of the new agency as well as the subculture of the new field.

Reasons for Changing

There are far too many reasons to change fields or agencies to list them all here, but following are examples of some of the major categories of issues that may result in a change.

- **Family:** A child with a learning disability needs educational help not available in the host country.
- **Health:** A disease, such as Ebola, is found in some cities on a particular field.
- **Danger:** Insurgents become increasingly brave about attacking people or planting explosives.
- **Ethics:** Disagreements arise over such things as smuggling or paying extortion.
- **Stress:** Missionaries have been living under relatively high stress and several national friends have “disappeared.”
- **Invitations:** Another field or agency has a need which a missionary can fill, and it asks for help.
- **Call:** A missionary feels God calling him or her to move to a different place where a need has arisen.
- **Political:** New leaders emerge in the country, and they have a goal of returning to only indigenous religions.
- **Agency Issues:** The board back in the passport country has decided to require missionaries to each raise their funds rather than hiring them.

- **Ministry Discontinued:** A TCK school is closed, and teachers leave. Travel by air is no longer needed, and pilots leave.
- **Theological Issues:** New guidelines are issued relative to how baptism must be done.

Of course, the list could go on and on. However, two issues are rather common when it comes to transitioning to another agency, another field, or even back to the passport country and quitting. Those two issues are conflict with other missionaries in general, and difficult leaders more specifically.

Conflict with Other Missionaries

No one has to convince missionaries that conflict exists in missions. It has been a part of missions since the very beginning in the early chapters of the book of Acts. Not only has there been conflict, but the basic issues are still the same in that there are cultural conflicts which bring disagreement between missionaries and headquarters as well as conflicts between individual missionaries on the field. Why do we have conflict? What should we do about it? What steps can we take to resolve it? What do we do if you feel like we are attacked? What if it cannot be resolved? Let’s consider some of these questions.

Why do we have conflict?

Conflict is normal whenever people who hold different opinions are in a close relationship. Conflict occurs whenever people who care have different opinions on important issues. The more the people care and the more important the issue, the more intense the conflict. Conflicts are simply a fact of life, and they are destructive only if not handled correctly.

Let’s take as an example the conflict that arose in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas returned from their first term of service to the local church that had commissioned them in Antioch.

They held a mission conference and told about all that God had done through them. Everything went well for a long time until men from the culture in which headquarters was located visited the church in Antioch.

These men began teaching that unless the men who had responded to the message preached by Paul and Barnabas were circumcised, they were not saved. The issue was whether or not this “custom taught by Moses” was a cultural issue or a salvation issue. Thus we have a situation in which missionaries who cared deeply (Paul and Barnabas) disagreed with others on an important question (Salvation). This brought the missionaries into “sharp dispute and debate with them” (v.2).

What should we do about conflict?

The conflict needs to be resolved as quickly as possible. In Matthew 5, Jesus noted that if you are offering your gift to God at the altar and suddenly remember that there is an unresolved conflict with another believer, you should leave your gift there, go settle the conflict, then return to offer your gift to God. We are to settle matters quickly, but we should carefully pick the time and place to be reconciled. Sometimes the conflict is still at a high emotional pitch, and it would be best to wait a while before approaching the other person. If other people are around, it is best not to involve them in the dispute. The important thing, though, is to resolve the conflict soon because the feelings aroused by unresolved conflict soon become established and are more difficult to change.

What steps do we take to resolve it?

Jesus gave a three-step procedure to use in resolving conflict in Matthew 18. In American culture as in much of Western culture where we tend to think linearly, it is usually most appropriate to take these three steps in sequence.

However, if the conflict is with someone of a different culture,

be sure to consult with someone raised in that culture before trying to resolve the conflict. These steps in this order may not be culturally appropriate in that situation, and the conflict may only be worsened if you do all of them in this order. The steps Jesus gave are:

- Approach the person alone. Often the two of you can resolve the conflict by yourselves and your friendship will be stronger than ever before. Of course, you must choose the time, situation, and manner of approach carefully.
- Find a mediator. If a direct approach does not work, or if it is not appropriate in the culture, you should choose a mediator. Again, choose a mediator carefully, one that you believe both parties will see as unbiased and in which both will have confidence.
- Take it to the church. If neither you nor the mediator can bring about resolution, the issue should be brought before the larger body. After the church comes to a decision, both of you are to accept the decision. The church is instructed to treat either party who does not abide by the decision as being outside the church.

Let us return to the conflict in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas were in “sharp dispute and debate” with the visiting teachers, but were unable to settle the conflict alone. They apparently called in mediators there in Antioch, but they were also unable to settle the conflict. So, Paul, Barnabas, and some other believers were sent to headquarters in Jerusalem to settle the conflict.

How do we go about resolving it?

Assuming that the issue is an important one and that you have carefully chosen the time and situation, here are some guidelines found in Acts 15 that will help you resolve the conflict, whether it is two of you alone or it is a whole body of believers.

- Give both sides a chance to present. Paul and Barnabas presented their position, then the Pharisees presented theirs.
- Give time for adequate discussion. This was a crucial issue (salvation) so there was “much discussion.”
- Be quiet. Note that “the whole assembly became silent” as they listened to the discussion. Too often in such situations there is an undercurrent of whispering in the crowd.
- Listen. “They listened.” There is a big difference between being quiet and really listening. Put yourself in the other’s place and really try to hear and understand what the other side is saying. Too often we “turn them off,” let our minds wander, think about what we are going to say in reply, or just doze off in a long discussion.
- Allow others to finish. “When they finished, James spoke up.” Do not interrupt until others have finished.
- Keep to the issue. The issue here was whether or not circumcision was necessary for salvation. Imagine all the other issues that could have been proposed from the books of the law! Also discuss the issue, not personalities.
- Express feelings appropriately. There is no report of verbal attacks or counterattacks during the discussion.
- Apply scripture. There may be differing interpretations, but certainly at least look at what the Bible has to say. James quoted from Amos 9.
- Propose a solution. James said, “It is my judgement, therefore, that...”
- Settle on essentials. They all agreed on several items and wrote a letter.
- Accept the decision. When the delegation delivered the letter back to the church at Antioch, “The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.”
- Reaffirm your friendship. “After spending some time there” for fellowship, they were sent off “with the blessing of peace.”

What if we feel like we are being attacked?

Sometimes you are not the one trying to resolve the conflict and the other side approaches you in an inappropriate way. A good example of this is found in Joshua 22. The Israelites had just finished years of fighting for the Promised Land. Every one of God’s good promises had been fulfilled and they were ready for a time of peace and rest.

As the tribes living on the east side of the Jordan River were going home, they built a large altar on the property belonging to the tribes on the west side. This angered the tribes on the west side and they “gathered at Shiloh to go to war with them.” Fortunately, rather than just attacking, they sent a delegation to talk first; unfortunately the delegation was not skilled in conflict resolution. It was an important faith issue, but Phineas and his group assumed things about the thoughts and motives of those who had built the altar and were predicting what would happen—things that should not be done in conflict resolution.

The delegation started with “How could you.....How could you...” Read verses 16-21, noting how many times “you” and “yourself “ are used. Put yourself in the place of those hearing the accusations and see how they must have felt.

Fortunately, someone on the east side of the river knew about defusing a conflict situation. First he tried to defuse the situation by affirming that they were both completely dedicated to serving the same God, and he did it using “we” “us” or “our” messages rather than “you” messages. These first person pronouns appear 20 times in verses 22-29, an average of more than two per verse. Following the guidelines we found in Acts 15 and refusing to read minds, judge motives, or predict what will happen, and by using “I” messages (One on one, or “we” messages in a group setting), one can defuse and resolve conflicts as shown in Joshua 22.

What if the conflict is not resolved?

Sometimes conflicts cannot be resolved, and the options then are either “agree to disagree,” or part company. Just after the good conflict resolution in Acts 15, we find an irreconcilable conflict between Paul and Barnabas. In planning to go back for another term of missionary service, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. Paul did not, and they had “a sharp disagreement.” Apparently Paul was task-oriented and did not want to take a chance on someone quitting, but Barnabas was people-oriented and did not want hurt feelings.

We are not told how they tried to resolve the conflict, but they were not able to do so, and “they parted company.” Of course, God works in all things to accomplish his purposes. He sent Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus, while Paul and Silas went to Syria. Note that later Paul changed his mind about Mark and asked to have him visit (2 Timothy 4:11). God uses our conflicts to advance his work.

Serving under “Difficult” Leaders

Debbie had spent several years preparing for what God had called her to, teaching in a Christian international school where she could reach nationals and help other third culture kids (TCKs) like herself. However, she was disappointed by what actually happened.

Her principal was very difficult. Although she was new at the school and new to the culture, she had been given most of the problem students as well as a poor schedule. At first she thought it was just her, but she soon found out that other staff found the principal difficult as well. The principal freely gave criticisms but seldom gave compliments. Usually, when there was a disagreement with parents, the principal failed to support the teacher, even when it was obvious that the parents were wrong.

By the end of the first month of teaching Debbie was so discouraged that she began seriously considering giving up and going home, or at least not returning next year. How could it be that such poor leadership was here where God’s work was so vital? What could be done about it?

Who are the difficult leaders?

A poor leader can be anyone who has authority over missionaries. Here are a few examples.

- Principals who supervise teachers and other staff at mission schools.
- Field directors who direct the activities of missionaries over a whole country.
- In the passport country department heads who make decisions that influence the lives of missionaries around the world.
- National church leaders who have authority over the activities of expatriate missionaries.

How did they become leaders?

They became leaders just like the good leaders did—someone thought they would do well. Unfortunately, not all leaders are good at leading. Here are some possible reasons why they became leaders.

- Years of service. People may have been put in leadership positions because they had much experience, rather than because they were good leaders.
- Need. When leadership positions opened up and someone was needed immediately, the best available person may have been given the position.
- Nepotism. A missionary may have been given the leadership position because he or she was related to someone higher up in the agency.

- Peter Principle. Missionaries outstanding in previous positions may have been “promoted” until they reached their level of incompetence, and then they stayed there for the rest of their time of service.

Are there examples in the Bible?

The Bible has two excellent examples of TCKs serving under difficult national leaders in host countries. One such example is Joseph’s service under several Egyptian leaders.

- Sold into slavery. His brothers hated him, were jealous of him, plotted to kill him, dropped him into a cistern, and finally sold him to a passing caravan of merchants. When they reached Egypt, the merchants sold Joseph to Potiphar, captain of the guard (Genesis 37).
- Falsely accused. Although he refused her seductive attempts, Potiphar’s wife accused Joseph of attempting to rape her. He was put in prison (Genesis 39).
- Forgotten. While in prison Joseph correctly interpreted the dream of another prisoner. Joseph asked the man to remember him and mention him to Pharaoh. Unfortunately, the man forgot about Joseph (Genesis 40).

Another example of a TCK is Daniel’s service under four different leaders from three different cultures (Daniel 1-6). Carried off to another culture, Daniel’s ability to serve under difficult leaders began to emerge even as a youth during his three years of higher education. Here are some of the challenges Daniel faced.

- Religious issues. While Daniel was in training, the king declared that students had to eat specific foods. Daniel resolved not to eat foods that would defile him (Daniel 1).
- “Impossible” demands and threats if those were not met (Nebuchadnezzar). The king demanded that Daniel and others do something no one could do. Without telling them his dream, he demanded that they describe and interpret it—or they would all be killed (Daniel 2).

- Poor judgment and rash decisions (Darius). Darius the Mede took over the kingdom and retained Daniel, a man he intended to place over the whole kingdom. Lower administrators persuaded Darius to issue a decree that would result in Daniel’s death if he continued to worship his God (Daniel 6).

What can missionaries do?

Niebuhr’s serenity prayer describes two options, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Joseph and Daniel used both of these options.

The first option is to accept things one cannot change. As a slave and prisoner, Joseph was not able to change anything. He just accepted his situation and served the best he could wherever he was and in whatever situation he found himself. Daniel sometimes chose to do this as well.

- Joseph, when sold into slavery. Potiphar noticed that Joseph, living in his house, was true to his own God and that God blessed him. Joseph evidently chose to serve his master well rather than to wallow in self-pity. He became Potiphar’s trusted attendant and was ultimately in charge of everything Potiphar had (Genesis 39: 1-6).
- Joseph, when accused. Joseph also evidently chose to serve the warden well in prison rather than to wallow in self-pity—he was put in charge of running everything in the prison (Genesis 39:20-23).
- Joseph, when forgotten. Joseph just continued serving in the prison. Finally, two full years later, when Pharaoh had a dream and asked for an interpreter, the man suddenly remembered Joseph. Pharaoh immediately sent for Joseph in the dungeon, asked him to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, and ultimately put him in charge of the entire country of Egypt. Again Joseph served his master well and coordinated preparations for disaster (Genesis 41).

- Daniel, under Darius. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den as Darius said, "May your God rescue you." It is interesting to note that Darius was so distraught he could not sleep while Daniel was with the lions. When God saved Daniel, Darius was so overjoyed that he issued a decree that everyone in his kingdom must reverence God. Daniel continued to prosper the rest of Darius' reign as well as the reign of Cyrus the Persian (Daniel 6).

Paul, an early missionary who also served in difficult situations, wrote about having the serenity to accept them: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances...the secret of being content in any and every situation" (Philippians 4:11-13). He described some of his difficult situations in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.

The second option in the serenity prayer suggests is to change the things one can. Daniel did this when he could.

- Daniel, facing religious issues. Determined not to violate his convictions, Daniel asked the chief official for a food exemption, but the official refused. Daniel then proposed an experiment to the guard who took direct care of him. When the experiment showed that vegetables and water were better than the rich diet, the guard changed their diet, without telling his superiors. Daniel and his three friends graduated at the top of their class and entered the king's service (Daniel 1). This approach may be risky because officials may see such actions as insubordination and become very angry.
- Daniel facing an "impossible" situation. Daniel again showed his ability to serve under a difficult leader. Note the three steps he took in Daniel 2). First, he spoke to the commander of the guard "with wisdom and tact" (v. 14). Second, he asked the king, his difficult leader, for time (v. 16). Third, he asked his friends to pray (v. 18). Finally, God answered, and then Daniel praised and thanked him (v. 19-23). Daniel was made ruler over Babylon in charge of all the king's advisors (v. 48).

Daniel's procedure here is commendable. Using wisdom and tact, he asked everyone involved for permission, he asked people to pray, and then he thanked God.

One option not mentioned in the serenity prayer is for missionaries just to quit and return to their passport countries. Some do that. This may be necessary in some circumstances when false leaders thwart God's call to service. Jesus gave strong warnings about false prophets, false Christs, and false teachers. He noted that there will be many such people and that they will deceive many. Some of these people may be in leadership positions. Jim Jones (People's Temple) had a successful cross-cultural ministry in Indianapolis and was a charismatic leader taking his people to California and Guyana. Unfortunately, his followers all died of suicide/murder in Jonestown Guyana in 1978.

An excellent book about serving under leaders, good or difficult, is *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams* by Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson published by Jossey Bass, 2005.

Field and agency transitions are common. Moving to a different field within the same agency is usually easier than changing to a different agency because only one new subculture needs to be learned. Changing to a different agency means that one has to learn the subculture of both the new agency and the new field. Furthermore, the old agency and/or the missionaries in it may resent your leaving.

Part Four

Between Cultures: Host to Passport

After Jesus had completed all that was needed to bring salvation through his death on the cross, he met with his disciples several times as he was preparing to return to heaven. Sometimes he met one person alone, sometimes he met with two people as they walked along a road, and yet another time he met with more while they were fishing.

Over a period of 40 days he reassured many of them, calmed those who doubted, and reinstated others who had denied him. He told the disciples goodbye and reassured them that soon God would be with them in the person of the Holy Spirit. He would give them power to be his witnesses in the city of Jerusalem, the surrounding area of Judea, and all over the world. This was a clear call to cross-cultural missions. Then they all watched him taken up from them and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Part One of this book presented three transitions that took place before the missionaries actually went to another culture to begin missionary service. They made the decision to go, then they actually transitioned to the agency, then they transitioned to raising funds.

Part Two presented three parts of the very large transition from their passport countries to their host countries. They went through their endings (leaving), were in transit, and went through their beginnings (entering).

Part Three considered three categories of transitions that are commonly faced by missionaries: Family transitions through marriage, being the parents of children, being the parents of adolescents and into the empty nest. These all raise new issues as the offspring become TCKs. Likewise, transitions to a different ministry, field, or agency have unique issues.

Part Four is basically Part Two in reverse. It is the very large transition from their host country back to their passport country. Missionaries going “home” may be surprised to find that “home” has changed, and they have changed so that they no longer feel “at home.” Part Four contains three chapters about this major transition for them, the transition to another culture. These three chapters are about the three stages of Pollock’s model.

- Chapter 10 is about their ending life in their host culture. It is about saying goodbye and separating from what has become “home” for them. They disengage from friends, “family,” and coworkers as they prepare to leave. They are now thinking more about the future than living in the past.
- Chapter 11 is about their moving into the unknown where, to their surprise, they do not know where they fit and how to do many everyday tasks. They physically move back to their passport culture in a day or two and unpack their bags as they settle into a strange house, but their minds may not be completely unpacked for some time.
- Chapter 12 is about their actually reentering their passport culture and beginning to feel at home again. They feel marginalized and uncertain about things and may have difficulty understanding behaviors and signals. They feel vulnerable and find it hard to trust people.

The cross-cultural transition is not over until the missionaries feel at “home” among friends and where they fit into their community, neighborhood, church, and other groups to which they belong.

Chapter 10

Endings (Leaving)

Preparing for reentry begins when missionaries first think seriously about returning to their passport countries. Of course, everyone thinks or dreams about going “home” from time to time, but there comes a time when returning becomes a real factor in one’s life. This leaving stage begins when missionaries first seriously consider leaving and ends when they actually walk out the door on their way to the airport.

The Longest Reentry

The Israelites chafed under the ruthlessly oppressive behavior of the Egyptians and called upon God to deliver them, but the years passed and nothing seemed to be happening. Decades passed after those prayers, but God still did not seem to be doing anything. The Israelites continued on in their familiar, but difficult, circumstances—not really seriously considering returning to their “passport country” which none of them had ever been to. However, during this time God was preparing one of their own, Moses, to lead them back (Exodus 2-4).

We can pinpoint the time when the Israelites entered the leaving stage. Moses and his brother Aaron called a meeting with the Israelite leadership. At that meeting Aaron told the leadership what God had said to Moses and performed miraculous signs right before the people. At that moment the

people believed, and they bowed to worship God. They knew that God was concerned about them; they were actually going to leave (Exodus 4:29-31).

Of course, the leaving stage takes time, and during it people may face many obstacles as seen in Exodus 5.

- Moses and Aaron told the King that God said, “Let my people go...” (v.1).
- The King replied, “I don’t know God and I will not let you Israelites go” (v. 2).
- Moses and Aaron said, “Our God has met with us. Let us go for three days...” (v. 3).
- The King replied, “Get back to your work...” (v. 4).
- The King then ordered the Egyptians to stop supplying straw for making the bricks but not to reduce the quota—to make the work harder (vv. 6-14).
- The Israelite foremen appealed to the King (v. 15).
- The King said, “You’re just lazy! Get back to work” (v. 17-18).
- The Israelite foremen went to Moses and Aaron and said, “May God judge you. You have made us a stench to the King” (vv. 19-21).
- Moses came to God asking, “Why? Why? Why?” Moses pointed out that his obedience had only made things worse saying, “You have not rescued your people at all” (v. 22-23).
- God gave Moses wonderful promises and specific instructions. However, when Moses told the Israelites, they would not listen because of their discouragement (Exodus 6:1-9).

During the next year or so Moses and Aaron, now in their 80s, did exactly what God commanded, and the already discouraged Israelites lived through the period of the plagues, averaging about one a month. The Bible (Exodus 7-12) is not always clear on how much the Israelites were affected by the plagues; however, it does say that God, beginning with the

fourth plague, made a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites on more than half of the plagues: The Egyptians suffered, but the Israelites did not. Even though the Israelites were not directly affected by many of the plagues, it still must have been a stressful time for them.

During the last plague the Israelites had to take specific action to avoid being affected by the plague. They had to kill a lamb, put some of its blood on the sides and top of the doorframes, and eat the roasted lamb and bread made without yeast. When God saw the blood, he passed over that house without harming the firstborn within (Exodus 12:1-13).

In the next verse (v. 14), God tells them to remember this for generations to come, and the Israelites have done so for thousands of years. Closely related to this day of Passover is the sacrament of communion celebrated by Christians for nearly two thousand years.

That very night permission was granted for them to leave, so the Israelites quickly packed for their reentry. They took some of their own possessions and asked the Egyptians for items as well.

- Flocks and herds (v. 32)
- Dough before the yeast was added (v. 34)
- Silver and gold (v. 35)
- Clothing (v. 35)

Then we read that the Israelites “journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children” (Exodus 12:37). Although it sounds like they were at the end of the leaving stage that is not quite the case. Note that ALL of them left together, but that rarely occurs today—you just cannot get 600,000 men plus wives and children on one flight. The Israelites have yet to say goodbye to their teammates, and since they are traveling together that separation does not happen until years later.

Reentry Today

Today most people leave their teammates and other friends as they leave their host country. To do that, you need to build a RAFT as you did when you left your passport country on your way to your host country as described in Chapter 4. This link takes you back to that: [RAFT](#). Please go back to Chapter 4 and refresh your memory on what you did at that time.

When you begin the leaving phase, you start living in “two worlds.” Of course, you are still in your host country, but thoughts of your journey home and of your passport country become more frequent. It may be a temptation to essentially “check out” of what you are doing in your host culture before you actually complete your work there. In addition, as just noted with the Israelites, things may get worse before they get better.

Finishing well

It is important to be sure that you complete whatever is left of your task in your host country in the time you have left. Such completion takes different forms depending on the nature of your task. Sometimes the form is obvious, but at other times it is not so clear.

If you are a teacher, your task is to finish the semester or academic year you agreed to teach and turn in grades. Teachers may continue to meet classes but spend little time in preparation. They may receive papers or tests and just put grades on them without supplying helpful comments for the students. Finishing well means staying fully involved until everything is over; otherwise the teacher is like the student who works hard until the week before the end of the semester then does not turn in the term paper and fails the final exam.

If your task is a continuing one with your agency, such as serving as treasurer, finishing well means training your

replacement for the task. Delegating your work to others is like passing a baton to the next runner in a relay race—your task is not completed until the next person is carrying the baton.

If your task is a one-time thing, such as building something, finishing well means completing what you are building—or delegating that work to others if you have not been able to complete it in the time you have, which is often the case in countries where supplies may not be readily available.

Stress

During the leaving phase stress nearly always increases. One reason for this is that more things demand your attention—you need to make preparations for your return to your passport culture. In addition, something may occur in your host culture to make completing your task more difficult, such as we saw with the Israelites in Exodus 6. They had to make just as many bricks, but with no straw supplied. Then they had about a year of being present when God sent the plagues upon the Egyptians. Many times things get worse before they get better.

Additional tasks such as filling out your agency debrief form and having an exit interview with your director take additional time. You may find that the person delegated to take over your task really has other interests, and you realize that your project may get lost in the change. You may find yourself becoming critical of your replacement and then feel guilty for being critical.

Discouragement

After seeing things get worse and experiencing the stress, people may get so discouraged that they will not even listen to God’s wonderful promises, just as the Israelites would not listen to Moses. As they delegate responsibilities to others and finish their tasks, people may find themselves left out of

discussions about what will be done in the future. Although this is done because they will not be there, some people feel left out, rejected, and unappreciated so they become discouraged.

As people withdraw more and more they may become disillusioned with the whole enterprise in which they have been involved and wonder whether or not their effort was worth it all. This may develop into resentment toward other people or their agency.

Memories

God told Moses to begin a festival that would remind the people of the good things God had done for them. This time of stress and discouragement is a good time to gather things that will bring back good memories. Take some things with you that will remind you and your children of good things that have happened in your host country. These may be small objects that you carry with you, recipes for favorite national foods, recordings of favorite national music, and so forth. If you do this, when your children are asked about moving into a new home, they will be able to say, “We have our home with us. We are just looking for a house to put it in.”

In this digital age, you can carry thousands of pictures and hours of video on DVDs, CDs, and flash drives. Take pictures and video of people, places, pets, and favorite things of all kinds.

Time Orientation

The present is now viewed as somewhat temporary and the future begins to demand more attention. Rather than living primarily for today and devoting your energy to that, you begin devoting more and more of your energy to tomorrow and plan for what you will be doing then.

The further you progress in the leaving stage, the less you focus on the present and the more you focus on the future and what you will be doing then.

Spiritual Characteristics

As you enter this time of change, remember that God is the unchanging anchor of your life.

- I the Lord do not change... (Malachi 3:6).
- He will never leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6).
- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).
- I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:13).

When you sense yourself being overwhelmed with the changes, make a specific point of centering your life in God’s stability.

Social Characteristics

During the leaving stage you are socially separating yourself from the people around you and disengaging from the roles you have been filling. You are closing a chapter in your life and going through ceremonies to bring closure to this period of time. People give recognition for what you have done and make presentations of token gifts that you can take home as memories.

As you loosen ties with friends and coworkers, you sense them withdrawing from you because they now see you as being a temporary person in their lives, one who will soon be leaving. As you are excluded from more and more things, you may feel less and less part of the work going on.

Psychological Characteristics

Though you may have looked forward to less responsibility as the end of your time of service neared, you may interpret what is happening as rejection and come to resent it. You no longer feel needed, but you feel more and more in the way of the action taking place.

You also begin to feel the loss of many things that have been important to you during your time in the host culture. The grieving process begins as you mourn the loss. Finally, as your colleagues take over some of the roles you have been playing, you may feel guilty for adding to their already heavy loads.

This stage is “messy” and filled with conflicting feelings. You are happy as you anticipate seeing family again but sad as you say goodbye to friends; relieved to have responsibility taken by others but anxious about what you will do when you get “home,” and so forth. All of this is normal. Everyone feels this way during the leaving stage, and your ambiguous feelings indicate that you are OK.

If you have children 6-12 years of age, you may find the first six chapters of *We're Going Home: Reentry for Elementary Children* helpful. These chapters discuss home, family friends, thanks and goodbyes. They include activities for the children. *I Don't Want to Go Home: Parents Guide for Reentry for Elementary Children* is written to help parents and is also available. Both of these books are available free of charge at

http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home

If you are returning to your passport country before you had expected to so, you may have some added difficulties, so we turn to them now.

Premature Departure from the Field

Dave and Mary arrived back in their passport country with a sigh of relief. The political turmoil and threat of violence

were over, and their children were safely back in school. They had planned to stay in their host country four years, but their agency required them to come home after only a year because of the danger.

Unfortunately, within a few weeks different stresses were plaguing Dave and Mary. They felt unneeded, sad, and guilty. Other people did not understand, and they really did not fit well back in their home community. Such a premature departure from the field is often much more difficult than a return at the end of a person's commitment.

Premature departures have been occurring for thousands of years, so let us consider some in the Bible. What are reasons for leaving, who is affected, what emotions may arise, and what can people do?

Did this happen in Bible times?

This happened several times for different reasons during the first term of cross-cultural service in the book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to serve, and before they sailed John Mark joined to help. They served across Cyprus and then traveled to Perga, a city in what is now Turkey (Acts 13:1-13). Then the premature departures began.

- From Perga. John Mark left Perga to return to Jerusalem, the headquarters (Acts 13:13). The Bible does not say why he left, and today the official explanation would be given as “personal reasons.” He may have been homesick, tired, or any of many reasons.
- From Antioch. People from their passport country stirred up some nationals in Antioch to expel Paul and Barnabas, so they left the region because they were asked to leave (Acts 13:50-51).
- From Iconium. Again people from their passport country and nationals from Iconium were plotting to harm Paul and Barnabas, so they fled from the potential harm (Acts 14:5-6).

- From Lystra. The same two groups actually stoned Paul and left him for dead. Paul survived. He and Barnabas left Lystra the next day in the face of proven danger (Acts 14:19-20).

Cross-cultural workers have probably always had to leave their host country from time to time. They are not citizens there, so they know their time may be limited.

Why do missionaries have to leave?

In these two chapters of Acts people departed prematurely from their fields because of personal reasons, because they were expelled, because they needed to flee from potential harm or to escape a proven danger. People may leave for many other reasons, and here are some of the most frequent ones.

- Physical illness which makes them ineffective or requires treatment at home
- Psychological problems ranging from anxiety to mental illness
- Problems with children or adolescents who are unable to function in the host culture
- Political turmoil in the host country
- Financial needs which require raising funds in their passport country
- Stress and exhaustion which make staying in the host culture impossible
- Problems with aging parents unable to care for themselves or property needs
- Moral failure which prohibits effective work in the host culture
- Conflict with other cross-cultural workers which cannot be resolved

This is just a sample of the reasons people leave their host countries. The list is almost endless, but the reason for

leaving has an effect on how people feel about their own leaving and how others react as well. For example, if people leave because they have illnesses that need treatment at home, they may feel quite different about it, and others may react differently than if they are caught embezzling agency funds.

What emotions occur?

The range of emotions is as varied as the reasons for leaving. Some may be very positive, at least at first. For example, if one has just returned from a stressful, dangerous, or conflict filled situation, the primary emotion is likely to be a feeling of relief. However, negative emotions are likely to occur as well. Here are some of the most common.

- Grief because of the loss of so many things such as home, friends, work, and social position
- Anger because of having so many things taken from you through no fault of your own
- Fear and anxiety because of the unexpected trauma and not knowing what will happen next
- Concern for the plight of those left behind
- Guilt because you are no longer helping the people you felt called to serve
- Shock because everything was so sudden and you have still not had time to process it all in your mind
- Shame because what you did was morally wrong and it hurt so many people among your family and friends
- Depression and discouragement because you should have known better and things seem so bleak now
- Resentment because people you believed were your friends turned on you

The list can go on and on, but, in general, people tend to have low self-esteem, believe they are misunderstood or forgotten, and feel useless.

Who is involved?

Individuals tend to feel alone and forgotten when having to leave; however, the premature departure has an effect on many other people as well.

- Families, including both the immediate family and the extended family. Spouses and children usually have to depart as well, so their lives are also disrupted. The extended family back “home” is often involved as this part of the family returns.
- Colleagues who are left on the field and have to take on new responsibilities may resent what has happened.
- Nationals with whom the missionary has been working may not be ready to fulfill their roles alone.
- Agencies which have to scramble to try to find someone to take over projects on short notice may be under severe stress.
- People back “home” who do not fully understand what has happened may feel like you have abandoned your calling.

What can missionaries do?

Missionaries who are immediately transferred to a different field face challenges because they are usually entering a new culture even if the language is the same. This is even more difficult than most times when missionaries go to new fields because they have had little time for orientation before going, and often no one is prepared to give them an on-field orientation where they go.

Missionaries who return to their passport cultures also face challenges. Reentry is often a major transition even when it is a scheduled return. Changing cultures is difficult for most people even when expected. A premature reentry is even more difficult for two reasons. First, it is often unexpected and sudden so little time is available to prepare. Second, since it is premature, other people tend to expect an “explanation.” Some

are relatively easy, such as when there is obvious physical illness or dangerous political upheaval. Other explanations are difficult, such as conflict with a colleague or moral failure.

Though transfer to a different field or reentry into one’s passport culture after premature departure is more difficult, the steps are basically the same as after a scheduled one. If it was a sudden, unexpected departure, the order of the steps may have to be changed slightly.

- Face the Present. As soon as possible do whatever is necessary to bring a relatively “normal” structure to your life and the life of your family. For example, you need to immediately get temporary housing, transportation, and anything else necessary for living. If you have children, get them in school or begin home schooling to bring structure to their lives.
- Acknowledge your loss. Leaving early means that you have more losses and less time to grieve than people departing at scheduled times. Take time to grieve these losses whether this means doing it with others who have also had to leave or doing it alone if you find yourself apart from others who left. Remember that you lost your role, your ministry, your plans for the future there, and so forth.
- Close the past. Although you may be able to return after your illness is over, after the political situation is resolved, and so forth, do not count on it. You served God there as he led, and you are not able to continue at this time. You may be able to return as Paul and Barnabas did (Acts 14:21-24), or you may never be able to go back. Have someone debrief you and help you see how your premature departure fits into your life story. Then let the past go—but be ready to return if the opportunity comes again and you feel led to go.
- Move into the future. After you are functioning in the present and have closed the past, you are ready to begin planning and moving into the future. This may be anything from taking a similar position in another country, to starting

a new ministry in your passport country, to returning to your host country, to pursuing higher education, to taking an entirely new course that you believe is God's plan for you and your family.

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- A book for adults about preparing for reentry to be used during the last few months while still on the field at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#before_reentry (Chapters 1-4)
- A book for elementary age children to be used by them during the last few months while still on the field at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home (Chapters 1-6)
- A book for the parents of elementary children that parallels the children's book above at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home (Chapters 1-6)
- A book for adults to use after returning from short-term missionary service at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#shortterm> (Chapters 1-2)

Chapter 11

In Transit

Transit is defined as the act of passing over, across, or through something. Knowing that they are “in transit” and waiting between flights, passengers often look for the transit lounge as they are passing through the airport. The transit stage of reentry begins when you leave your house in your host country and ends when you unpack your mind, not just your suitcase, in your passport country. It may last only a few hours or days, but it may last a few weeks or even longer.

The Longest Reentry

When the people began their transit stage by leaving Rameses (Exodus 12), they had seen God's incredible work in setting them free. Though they were armed for battle, God did not lead them along the shortest route to their passport country because war was more likely there. God said, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt” (Exodus 13:17).

Using the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night, God led them to camp near the Red Sea. When the politicians in Egypt realized anew that their labor force was leaving, they pursued them. When the Israelites looked up and saw the Egyptians approaching, they were terrified and asked Moses,

“What have you done to us.... Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?’ It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” (Exodus 13:11-12).

The ups and downs continued chapter after chapter. When the Israelites saw God’s power in allowing them to cross on dry ground and drowning the Egyptians as they tried to cross, they put their trust in God and Moses again (Exodus 14). Moses and Miriam sang songs of exaltation to God, but three days later the people grumbled against Moses saying, “What are we to drink?” (Exodus 15). God sweetened the water, but then the people complained about food so God gave them quail and manna (Exodus 16). They quarreled and grumbled against Moses about the water, so God had Moses strike a rock at Horeb (Exodus 17). Talk about ups and downs!

In the third month of the transit stage (Exodus 19:1) they camped in front of Mt. Sinai. God had Moses make sure that the people would obey fully, and they said they would. After a special ceremony, he led the people out of the camp to meet with God as God called Moses up to the top of the mountain where he gave the Ten Commandments inscribed with his finger on two pieces of stone (Exodus 31:18). Talk about a mountain-top experience!

Unfortunately, but true to form, in the next verse the people got so tired of waiting for Moses to come down that they asked Aaron (Moses’ brother) to make them gods who would go before them. Aaron took their gold and made an idol in the shape of a calf, building an altar in front of the calf. When Moses approached the camp and saw the idol worship, he threw the stones tablets breaking them at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 32). Talk about spiritual ups and downs!

In the fourteenth month of their transit stage (Numbers 10:11) the cloud started moving again, so the Israelites left Sinai and headed for their passport country. After more ups and downs Moses sent the leaders of each of the twelve tribes to explore their passport country before taking everyone in. These

twelve men spent forty days exploring and came back with a report. At this time the Israelites seemed to be nearing the end of their transit stage.

They began their report by saying that “the land flows with milk and honey” (Numbers 13:27). They were amazed at the prosperity they found and brought back a bunch of grapes that was so large it took two of them to carry it on a pole between them. They brought other fruit as well.

However, they went on to say that the people were powerful and the cities large (Numbers 13:28). They felt overwhelmed by what they saw. Caleb wanted to go in and take over their passport country, but the others pointed out reasons not to go.

- People there are stronger than we are (v. 31). They felt inferior.
- They gave a bad report about the country (v. 32). They became judgmental.
- They said the land devours those living there (v. 32). They were disappointed.
- We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes (v. 33). They had low self-esteem.
- The Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron (14:1).
- We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt (14:2).
- The whole assembly talked about stoning them (14:10).
- Only Moses’ intercession prevented God from striking the people dead immediately (14:13-19).

Though God did not do that, he did say that all over twenty years of age, except for Joshua and Caleb, would die before the group reached their passport country, and their children’s transit stage would be another forty years, the longest in the Bible.

They did not start to enter until we reach Joshua 1. There Joshua, one of the men who wanted to go in and take their passport country, was telling his people to get ready, that in three days they would “cross the Jordan here to go in and

take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own” (Joshua 1:10). Note that God is giving the land to them, but they have to take possession. At this point they are ready for the entering stage.

Reentry Today

Note that the transit stage lasts until you unpack your mind. Unpacking your mind involves considering the good and difficult things that happened during your time in the other culture, and then fitting these experiences into your life story. After you have done this, you are ready to move on with the next chapter in your life. This may be days or weeks after your suitcases are unpacked. It is certainly longer than the time needed to fly to your passport country and drive to your dwelling there. This travel can usually be done in forty hours or less today.

The transit stage certainly includes travel time and the familiar physical jet-lag which takes anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks, depending on how many time zones are crossed. In addition, it includes the time to unpack our minds, kind of a psychological jet-lag not handled with air travel. From the time Paul, Barnabas, and Silas traveled by ship through the middle of the twentieth century, people usually had several weeks at sea on ships to think and talk about what their time as an expatriate meant to their lives. Today people are home in a matter of hours, and they usually “hit the ground running” rather than taking time to process what has happened to them.

The transit stage is a time of emotional high and lows. The Israelites were elated to leave Egypt, and a few days later they wished they were back. They sang songs of exultation to God, and days later they were grumbling and complaining against Moses. One has to be very careful during this time. For example, grumbling and complaining may generalize from people to God and result in your turning your back on him. Or

you may be dissatisfied with your housing, think you deserve something better, and wind up buying a house that is way out of your price range.

Following are several things that may occur as you begin to unpack your mind. You may be overwhelmed and disoriented, feel inferior and lose self-esteem, and become disappointed and even judgmental while you unpack your mind.

Overwhelming abundance

When you return to your passport country, you (like the Israelites) may be amazed at the abundance of things you find there. You may be dazzled and love what you see. You may feel overwhelmed by seemingly simple things such as buying groceries in a store. Some people find it nearly impossible to buy something as “simple” as toilet paper or cereal. For the last few years there were just one or two kinds of toilet paper or cereal, and in their passport country there are entire aisles stacked six feet high on both sides with different kinds and sizes. One person was unable to even buy a jar of ketchup.

You may also find an abundance of things your children are “expected” to do. The church may have something on for children of different ages nearly every afternoon or evening. The community may have Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys Clubs, Girls Clubs, 4-H,.... Even preschoolers are in leagues for soccer, basketball, football, baseball, track, cross-country.... Most elementary kids are taking lessons of some kind after school, such as piano, tennis, swimming, karate....

Poor thinking

We saw God was right in Exodus 13 when he said that if the people faced war they might want to return to Egypt. A general principle here is that one should not make important decisions at any time while in the transit stage. Make those decisions while in the leaving stage or after you enter the

entering stage. You cannot think clearly while in the chaos of transit. At times you may feel disoriented or “lost,” kind of like you are a spectator rather than a participant.

Feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem

The Israelite spies felt inferior to the people they saw in their passport culture. Since your passport culture has changed, you may not know how to do even “simple” things that were automatic when you left. You may not know what to do with your credit card to complete (or begin) a transaction or you may not know the difference between debit and credit cards. You may not know how to unlock your car or to turn the ignition off—the radio just keeps playing after you take the key out. You may feel inferior when you cannot do these things, but you are not—you just have not had the opportunity to learn these changes as they occurred.

People returning to their passport cultures may have low self-esteem because they cannot carry on conversations about recent TV shows, political issues, or humor at “home.” Of course, they feel like fish out of water because they really have been out of their culture for some time. This is normal, not a sign of some character or intellectual defect.

Growing Disappointment

Just as the spies were disappointed in their passport country, you may become disappointed with yours. People there tell you how much they missed you and how good it is to see you, but they only wrote a few times during the time you were gone. They tell you how good it is to see you but have little interest in what you have done. After asking you how “your trip” was, they may listen for a few minutes and then begin telling you about the exciting football game they were at last night.

Judgmentalism

The Israelite spies gave a bad report about their country. You too may be tempted to become judgmental about your passport culture. You may see it as superficial and materialistic because relationships mean so little and people have so much wealth. You may have so much to share about the things you have experienced that have broadened your view, and they are interested only in insignificant things. Be very careful not to become critical, cynical, and dismissive.

Time Orientation

Probably no one really likes the transit stage, so they are oriented toward the future. How many people have you met ten hours into a flight who said, “I sure hate to think that we have only two more hours to go—I wish it would last another ten!” No one likes the normal emotional ups and downs, the fuzzy thinking, the feelings of inferiority, or the disappointment of being in transit. People are just glad when it is over and they can begin to get on with life.

Patience is a needed virtue during this time. No one likes to have a cold, but they know that the runny nose and coughing are “normal” for that time and will go away relatively soon. Likewise, no one likes transition, but people should know that transition will not last forever. Patience during this time shortens the emotional upheaval.

Social Characteristics

While in transit, people are unsure of their status, they simply do not know where they fit in the society. In a sense, they have no status. They feel clueless because they do not seem to fit anywhere in the social structure they have “returned” to. Social groups have all changed, and they do not “belong” to groups they remember leaving.

This is a time of chaos, a time of ambiguity and misunderstandings. People feel isolated. It only seems logical that people would reach out to you and make you feel at home, but you find that you have to initiate relationships. It is often a very lonely time. Again, this is normal. Remember that life has been moving on for others while you were gone, and people are busy. Patience is again the key. You were the one to leave, and you are the one who will probably have to take the initiative to reconnect. It would be nice if others invited you, but the fact is that you may need to invite them.

Spiritual Characteristics

During the leaving stage you re-centered your life on the unchanging God. During this transition stage, with the chaos going on all around you so that you are overwhelmed and cannot think clearly, now is the time to emphasize remaining (abiding) in him. Jesus discusses remaining in John 15.

- He commands remaining in him (v. 1).
- Those who do not remain are destroyed (v. 6).
- Meditating on his word leads to remaining (v. 7).
- Obeying his commands leads to remaining (v. 10).
- Answered prayer is a result of remaining (v. 7).
- Bearing fruit is another result of remaining (v. 4).

As always, the best way to “remain” is to have a daily devotional life, especially in this time of chaos. In John 15 Jesus emphasizes

- study of the Word,
- obeying his commands,
- prayer.

In addition it is helpful to have a team of people praying for your reentry so that the enemy does not keep you from remaining.

Psychological Characteristics

The most characteristic emotions of being in transit are anxiety and depression. People have left one culture and have not even begun entering another yet. They are literally people without a culture, not belonging to any group. They are still grieving the loss of leaving their host culture and do not have the sense of being a part of their passport culture.

As mentioned earlier they feel overwhelmed, know that they are not thinking clearly, are disappointed, feel inferior, and have low self esteem. Fortunately, this stage is usually only a few days or weeks, and then they begin entering their passport culture.

Stuck between Chapters

You may have brought the previous chapter of your life to a close, but you have still not really started the next chapter. Sometimes writers get “stuck” between chapters; they have trouble getting started on the next one. They sometimes feel frustrated because they want to get on with their book, but they just cannot get going.

An athlete on a trapeze wanting to switch to the next trapeze has to let go of the current one to reach the next one. For a few seconds the athlete is just suspended in air with nothing to hold on to. When you leave the culture where you have been serving a term and start home, you also find yourself in the same position. You have left one place, and you are not yet in another. You are not where (and who) you were, but you are not yet where (and who) you will be. There is nothing to hold on to, and you may feel confused and disoriented.

You may think that this is happening just because it is your first time to reenter your passport culture, but even experienced missionaries may feel that way. We see the apostle Paul at the end of his third term of service in Acts 20:36-21:1. He describes his goodbyes as including that he:

- Knelt down.
- Prayed.
- Wept.
- Embraced.
- Kissed.
- Grieved.
- Tore himself away.
- Put out to sea.

Although your body may have arrived in your passport country, your “mind” may still be “out to sea,” not mentally unpacked yet. Part of unpacking is leaving behind the things we talked about in the last chapter. Another part is bringing out the old “rules” of your passport culture that you packed away months or years ago. They include everything about how to do things at “home,” including everything from what to wear to how to make a purchase. You expect to experience jet lag when you cross several time zones quickly, and you expect to take about a week before the systems of your body are once more synchronized so that they are functioning in unison. What you may not expect is a psychological “jet lag” during which you may feel confused or disoriented, like you got lost on a detour on the way home and cannot find your bearings.

At the end of his “grieving goodbye,” Paul “put out to sea.” During his trip he had at least two or three weeks to transition, to unpack his mind. He had to sail 400-500 miles followed by a week’s layover in Tyre as well as “a number of days” in Caesarea (Acts 21:1-15). With today’s airliners we would “hit the ground running” in Jerusalem two or three hours later, having little or no time to unpack our minds.

Perhaps you need to just take some time while you are “out to sea” to consider some of the following.

- Changing cultures means that the rules have changed in your “game of life.” How have the rules changed for you? Perhaps while you were gone some of the rules changed in your passport culture, so consider those as well.

- When you do not understand the rules, you may feel like things are out of control. What can you do to learn the rules so that you can stop feeling like you are at the mercy of others?
- Genesis 1:2 notes that the earth was “formless and empty, darkness was over the surface....” If your life seems to be formless, empty, and dark as you are between chapters, remember the rest of the verse is “... and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The Creator may want to create something new in your life out of the chaos you feel. What might He want to create in you now?
- Write those ideas down. If you do not, you will probably forget them when you again get caught up in the rat race of life and your old defenses return. Write them down even if they seem to be impossible.
- Try something new. This time of transition is a great time to experiment instead of saying “I can’t do that,” or “I’ve never done it that way before.” List some passing thoughts you have had during this time of transition. These may be about what you might do, where you might go, changes you might make in your life, etc. Remember that these may be from the Spirit hovering over you in this time when life seems dark, empty, and formless. God sometimes speaks in reentry

You are excited about going “home” to the country and church that sent you to another culture as a missionary. Of course, you will miss the people you have been ministering to while you have been in your host country, but you begin to daydream about what it will be like to be greeted by friends and family when you arrive home.

This is usual for everyone who has been away from home a while. However, many times missionaries’ expectations are so high that they experience high re-entry stress. When you get “home,” you may find yourself feeling lonely, isolated, disillusioned, misunderstood, depressed and irritated with people back home as well as with your “own” culture.

Leaving Good things

We seem to live our lives in “sections” with transitions between these sections. We go to preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, university, and then to work. In our work we may flip burgers a while, teach a while, preach a while, then serve as missionaries a while, etc. We may think of these sections as being like chapters in a book. Some people actually write their autobiographies as chapters in journals or diaries. Other people just have them “written” on the pages of their mind and grouped together in one section of their memory.

When you come to the end of a chapter of your life and are ready to transition into the next one, it is often helpful to review what has happened in the chapter you just completed. This is a good time to see how the most recent chapter fits in with the overall story of your life and bring that chapter to a close. You started the chapter review when you filled out your debrief form as you responded to items about your ministry, your colleagues on the field, your family, nationals, your field director, etc. Now is time to bring that chapter to a close and begin to anticipate the next chapter in your life.

People may find it difficult to close one chapter to go on to the next. If they cannot emotionally leave the things of one chapter behind, such people may have trouble getting into the next chapter. They may carry things over from one chapter to the next and never get closure. Taking time to reflect on what has happened and talking things over with others who have similar experiences often helps lift the emotional fog so that one does not continue with baggage from the previous chapter. Reflection also helps with grieving the loss of your host country and culture.

Now you are in transition, the reorientation process already taking place within you as you adapt to the change that has taken place. Your transition probably began several weeks or months ago as you made plans to return. A good way to

continue that transition process is to consider some of the good things that have happened to you. Paul and Barnabas must have done this when they returned from their first term of service because their friend, Luke, recorded some good things in Acts 13-14.

- Paul preached a marvelous message of encouragement in Antioch (in Pisida) (13:16-41).
- The sermon was so good that as he was leaving, he was invited back to preach the next week (13:42).
- At Iconium he spoke so effectively that many Jews and Gentiles alike believed (14:1).
- That message was confirmed by miracles (14:1-3).
- In Lystra the healing was so dramatic that people thought Paul and Barnabas were gods (14:8-12).

Even as an experienced missionary at the end of his third term of service Paul reviewed many of the good things he had done. While talking with the elders of the Ephesian church, he mentioned more than a dozen things in Acts 20:19-35.

Go to the top of Paul’s list to the Ephesian elders and check off the ones that you have done yourself in your most recent term of service. No one will have done them all, but you will have probably done some of them. Then actually write down other good things that you have done. Here are a few examples.

- What were some of the most satisfying things that happened during your term? Why were they so satisfying?
- How have you grown during this term?
- What has God done in your life this term?
- How do the above fit with the rest of your life story, with previous chapters in your life?
- How do you see God using these good experiences as stepping stones into the next chapter of your life?

Leaving Difficult Things

In addition to all the “good” things you just considered are the “bad” things that came into your life. Even though we want to leave these things behind, sometimes we have difficulty doing it. We may want to forget about some, but events keep occurring to remind us of them. We may feel ashamed of others, and we keep reminding ourselves of those. To continue the transition process and really leave them behind us, we usually have to recall them, think about them, and place them in the perspective of our whole life story.

Paul and Barnabas talked not only about the good things that had happened but also about the difficult things. Luke also recorded some of these difficult things right along with the good things.

- While they were in Perga (in Pamphylia), John Mark left them to return to his passport country (Acts 13:13) before they moved on to Antioch (in Pisidia). Since they were shorthanded, Paul and Barnabas probably felt overworked and abandoned, and later they had some relationship problems about this. Paul had not yet left it behind.
- Still filled with the Holy Spirit, when they were deported from Antioch (in Pisidia), they shook off the dust from their feet in protest and went on to Iconium (Acts 13:50-52). Paul and Barnabas knew the pain of being rejected by the very people to whom they had come to minister.
- In Iconium they found out about a plot to harm them, so they fled to Lystra (Acts 14:5-6). Paul and Barnabas experienced danger, fear and evacuation.
- In Lystra Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead (Acts 14:19).

You may have been to your “Antiochs,” “Pergas,” “Iconiums,” and “Lystras.” Paul wrote in more detail about these times in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. How many you have experienced yourself. Add additional ones you have experienced.

Sometimes it is difficult to close a chapter and leave such things behind emotionally, but it can be done. Paul had done this by the time he wrote Timothy. Paul wrote about his life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings all in one sentence—good and bad alike. In fact he specifically mentioned the difficulties he endured “in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra” (2 Timothy 3:10-11). He finished by saying, “Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”

Take time to go back a second time through Paul’s list as well as the items you have added. Circle all those that still bother you. This is a good time to bring closure to them. If you do not do it now, these items may follow you into the next chapter of your life and become stumbling blocks there. Go back to the circles you made to consider some of the same questions you did about the good things in the last chapter.

- How did these difficult things lead to growth in your life?
- How did God use the difficulties in your life?
- How do these difficult circumstances fit with the rest of your life story, with previous chapters in your life?
- How do you see God using these difficult experiences as stepping stones into the next chapter of your life?

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- A book for elementary age children to be used by them during the last few months while still on the field at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home (Chapter 7)

- A book for the parents of elementary children that parallels the children's book above at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home (Chapter 7)

Chapter 12

Beginnings (Re-entering)

The entering stage begins when your mind is unpacked, and it lasts until you are fully involved again. Just crossing the border into your passport country does not mean that you are really back into your passport culture. It takes time and energy to reenter the culture, get updated, and become a part of social groups again. In the last chapter we saw that the Israelites were to “take possession” of their passport country which “God was giving” them. God was giving it to them, but it was not theirs until they took possession of it. It took them several years to do so.

The Longest Reentry

In preparing Joshua to help the Israelites enter their passport country, God gave him several wonderful promises in the first five verses of the book. He followed these up with several commands.

- Be strong and courageous (v. 6). Be strong and very courageous (v. 7). Be strong and courageous (v. 9).
- Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you (v. 7). Be careful to do everything in it (v. 8).
- Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night (v. 8).

- Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged (v. 9).

The Israelites had seen God's power displayed as they left Egypt by walking on the dry ground at the bottom of the Red Sea (Exodus 14). They saw it displayed again in a similar way as they entered their passport country by walking on the dry ground at the bottom of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17). God had them build a memorial from stones taken from the river bottom so that their children would remember it forever (Joshua 4:20-23).

God told Joshua, "I have delivered Jericho into your hands"—and then told Joshua what he had to do for the next seven days to actually take the city (Joshua 6:2). It was a "done deal"—as long as he obeyed. Joshua obeyed and reminded the people about keeping away from the "devoted things" that were to belong only to God, and they had a wonderful victory as they took the city. Unfortunately, Joshua 7 begins with, "But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things." The ups and downs continue during the entering stage as well.

Of course, the Israelites did not receive a warm welcome when they moved onto the west bank. In fact, most of the people there prepared to go to war with them (Joshua 9:1-3). Likewise, you may be disappointed in the welcome you receive in your passport country—though war is not likely.

One thing that happened to the Israelites was that a group of people deceived them. Those people pretended to be from far away and spoke favorably about God. The Israelites made a peace treaty with them without consulting the Lord and later realized they had been tricked. You may well be disappointed in people back home even if they do not deceive you.

Again and again Joshua comes back to what God told him at the beginning. "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous" (Joshua 10:25). This is a great verse to remember as you go through the entering stage yourself.

Reentry Today

Though it took the Israelites about seven years to enter their passport culture, it usually takes about a year, a full annual cycle. Keep in mind that many things have changed while you have been gone. You have changed, as have your friends, your family, your church and your culture. It takes time to reenter the culture. Of course, things are never the same as they were, but if you remain long enough, they reach a new state of equilibrium where you are again be "at home" in your passport culture.

You have changed

Living in another culture and learning another language makes you realize that people view the world in different ways. Though you may have thoroughly disliked your host culture as you went through culture shock while becoming part of it, you now may find that you dislike things about your passport culture, things that you thought were good when you left. You may find that you do not "feel at home" when you get "home" and view it through your new framework.

Your friends have changed

You were so much looking forward to picking up where you left off with your close friends, but you may not be able to do that. You see familiar faces, but not familiar people. Just as you have been changed by your experiences overseas, so they have been changed by their experiences at home. You may be unable to "be yourself" and relax around them, and neither can they around you. You get together with a group of old friends and find out that the social network of the group has changed, and different people are now best friends in the group. You just aren't able to break into the group or even carry on a lengthy conversation because you have so little in common.

Just as the Israelites were not joyfully received in their passport culture, you may not be enthusiastically welcomed in yours. Though war is not declared on you, you may find the welcome home more polite than joyful, and you may be disappointed in your underwhelming welcome. You have to be the one to initiate relationships rather than waiting for others to do so. Invite people over for dinner or table games. Suggest that you all go for a hike or some other activity together. Doing this several times will likely result in connecting with new friends or reconnecting with old ones.

Your family has changed

When you meet family, you realize that the middle aged members are heavier, the retired ones are grayer and aged ones are feebler. In addition to the obvious outward changes, some have also changed inwardly. Just as you have been changed by your experiences, so have they.

Some members of your family may no longer be alive; you miss them, and you realize that you have never really grieved for them, but everyone else is past that. Others in your family may have married since you left, and you now have new in-laws as part of the family, people you do not really know.

Your church has changed

You really loved your church when you left, but you are disillusioned by it now. People in it have such narrow perspectives. It seems like members are just apathetic and there is little spirituality there. You have a new pastor and the governing board of the church has new members. Long-time members of the church are gone. You want to share in a service, but the pastor will not allow you to since you did not serve with the denominational mission. You may find yourself becoming judgmental of the church and even developing disappointment, resentment, and bitterness against God.

Your culture has changed

Elections held while you were gone may have put new people with new policies in power. Moral standards may have changed so that you are appalled at what you see on television and see on magazine covers at the checkout counter. Underlying philosophical changes may have taken place that change the way people think as they make decisions. You may notice more wealth and materialism. You may notice how superficial many relationships are. Of course, some of these “changes” may really be changes in you.

Time Orientation

During the entering phase, you begin to change from the future orientation of transit back toward an emphasis on the present. As you do this you realize that the confusion and loneliness of the early part of the entering stage is temporary, that you will ultimately be able to live in the present again.

Social Characteristics

You may find yourself a marginal person on the edge of groups, observing more than participating. Your relationships are mostly superficial since you are not sure exactly where you fit, and you are not quite sure how to interpret nonverbal behaviors when you interact. No one is quite sure how long you will remain where you are since you are new, so acceptance is tentative and relationships are often viewed as temporary. You would like to find a “mentor” to help you break into the social network, but the ones most interested in befriending you seem to be marginal persons too.

Spiritual Characteristics

The commands of Joshua 1 are as relevant for reentry today as they were thousands of years ago. While obeying these specific commands, here are some other things to be aware of as you enter your passport country and take possession of it.

- The Israelites were not to ignore God's Word but to "meditate on it day and night." In the chaos of transit and the busyness of entering people are tempted not to have their daily devotions, a big mistake.
- In addition to meditating on God's Word they were to obey it all, to do everything it said. God speaks through his Word as you meditate on it, and your responsibility is to do what he says.
- People who give God's Word priority in their lives are less likely to be discouraged or terrified and more likely to be strong and courageous. They realize that they are not facing life alone, but as a child of a loving heavenly Father who will guide them.

Psychological Characteristics

You may tend to feel rather fearful and vulnerable, not sure what is going to happen and not wanting to do something offensive. Mainly you feel lonely and somewhat confused. At times you are rather miserable and even depressed. Of course, you know that sometime you will find your place, but you hope it will be sooner rather than later.

Pitfalls to avoid

You will face many difficult situations. Here are some of the most common.

- Frustration. Things will be different, and some of those differences will be very frustrating. For example, while

overseas, your family may have been closer because there was no TV and you home-schooled your children. Back home TV, school activities, many church activities, sporting events, club activities, etc. will separate family members.

- Disillusionment. You return home all excited about what you have been doing, but everyone at home seems so apathetic. As one person put it, "They are comatose and don't even know it."
- Judgmental. It is very easy to become critical, condemning others in the face of their apparent apathy. You may confuse the narrower functions of the mission agency (outreach and training for most) with the very broad functions of your local church.
- Bitterness and Hostility. If you let these things progress far enough, you may become bitter inside and let that express itself in hostility toward the very people who supported you financially and with prayer.

Suggestions for avoiding pitfalls

Pitfalls can be avoided, or at least made less disruptive to your life and witness. Here are some suggestions.

- Grieve your losses. If you have not taken time to grieve during leaving or traveling, take some time to do so after you arrive. Although time will be at a premium, set aside a few minutes each day (perhaps during your devotional time) to fully grieve what you have left behind.
- Be honest. Do not let pride (spirituality?) keep you from sharing your struggle with someone. Find someone (another missionary, a close friend who will keep a confidence, a counselor who understands missionaries, etc.) who will mentor you in adjusting to life back home.
- Adjust to changes in ministry. Most likely you will not be doing the same kind of ministry that you were on the mission field. What you do may seem quite mundane in comparison. However, all avenues of service are pleasing to

God, and you can find a way to be a servant in any local church.

- Thank your supporters. Even if you are not given the chance to speak to all the people in your church during a service, find some way to thank those who have helped you. Perhaps you can invite them over for a meal you learned to prepare while in another culture and share what God did in and through you.
- Reach out to people. Whatever you do, continue to reach out to people as you did on the field. As you reach out, people will see how you have changed and perhaps want to experience the same changes in their lives.

Debriefing

You may say, “I already know about debriefing because I’ve been through it several times. As I left for home, the field director asked me to rate the adequacy of my housing, whether or not I felt overworked, how my kids got along in school, how many people came to Christ under my ministry...” Then I did nearly the same thing again at headquarters with someone there.

That is one kind of debrief, an organizational debrief. That is necessary for the agency to gather information, and it is done primarily for the good of the agency. However, even more important is a personal debrief, one done primarily for your own good. This debrief may be done individually or as part of a group of people who have been through similar experiences, such as a traumatic experience or returning to your passport country. It is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of personal experiences as well as changes within yourself and your family.

Personal debriefs should not be done immediately after you have arrived in your passport country. You will be unable to think clearly and process all that is needed until after you have gotten settled where you are going to live, greeted friends and family and your life is in order—as much as it ever will be.

Jonah, an early cross-cultural missionary, had just been part of a city-wide revival in Nineveh, but he was filled with anger. God himself debriefed Jonah, asking him, “Do you have a right to be angry?” Jonah apparently did not reply but went off to sulk a while. After more things went wrong, God again asked, “Do you have a right to be angry?” This time Jonah finally let all his anger out so that God and he could deal with it together.

Of course, debriefing is also good after a great experience. When the 72 returned from their evangelistic campaign (Luke 10:17), they were filled with joy and enthusiastic that even the demons had submitted. At this point, Jesus cautioned them not to get carried away with the power they had experienced, but with the fact that their names were written in heaven.

Why Debrief?

This personal debrief is particularly helpful in times of crisis or transition to help bring closure to an earlier chapter in your life and to help you leave behind any emotional “baggage” that accumulated during that time. The debriefing time helps you do three things.

- Verbalize. Expressing your thoughts and feelings verbally clarifies both. As you talk with others, you may find that you do not like what you hear yourself saying.
- Normalize. Whether in a group or with someone who understands your situation, you are likely to find that you are not alone in what you think and feel. You will come to realize that such thoughts and feelings are normal, that others have the same ones.
- Contextualize. A good debrief helps you put your experiences into the context of your life. You can relate those experiences to earlier events in your life and see how God is using them to prepare you for the future.

You may not be angry like Jonah was, but your experience may have left you frightened, discouraged, exhausted,

emotionally drained, or any number of things. Here are several questions that will help.

Where are you?

God asked this question of the man in the garden in Genesis 3:9. Since God knew where the man was, why ask the question? To get the man to express where he was—not where he was geographically, but where he was psychologically and spiritually. Note that the man answers by telling what he experienced (heard God), what he felt (was afraid), and what he did (hid).

Ask yourself the following BASIC questions.

- **Behaviorally.** Are your actions what you want them to be?
- **Affectively.** Are you satisfied with your feelings, your emotions?
- **Spiritually.** Is your relationship with God alive and growing?
- **Interpersonally.** Are your relationships with your family and/or colleagues positive?
- **Cognitively.** Can you concentrate, thinking clearly and logically?

What have you done?

God asked this question of the woman in the garden in Genesis 3:13. As with the man, God knew what the woman had done. However, he wanted her to say it, to confess. She did, but she blamed the serpent for her wrong actions. If you have done bad things, God wants repentance, not rationalization or projection.

In Luke 9:10 we find the apostles returning from their first short-term evangelistic assignment and reporting to Jesus what they had done, good things. Again, Jesus did not stop them from reporting what had happened because it was good for them to talk, to verbalize it. It was also good for them to hear what

the others had to report as well, to normalize their own experiences.

After the first long-term cross-cultural missionary assignment, Paul and Barnabas told their sending church and other churches they visited on the way to Jerusalem about the conversions taking place under their ministry (Acts 14:27; 15:3).

Where have you been?

An angel asked Hagar, “Where have you come from?” (Genesis 16:8). The angel was not puzzled about finding this woman along a road in the desert and was not simply wondering what village she was from. The angel wanted Hagar to know where she had been emotionally, and Hagar realized that.

Hagar replied, “I am running away from...” Sometimes missionaries run away from people who mistreat them when they try to help. In fact, it is often those you help the most that turn on you and hurt you the most.

After you have talked about it, you may find that sometimes God wants you to shake the dust off your feet and leave, and at other times he will say, “Go back....and submit,” as the angel told Hagar. However, God always wants you to verbalize (confess) it and submit it to him.

As you think about where you have been, consider how these past events fit in with your life story. How is God using them to make you into the person he wants you to be?

Where are you going?

The angel went on to ask Hagar, “Where are you going?” (Genesis 16:8). Hagar did not even attempt to answer this question. However, the angel told Hagar where she should go and what she should do. Hagar obeyed.

At the end of Acts 15 Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return to the towns they had visited on their first term of

missionary service to see how their converts were doing. Paul had some ideas about who to take, where to go, and what to do. However, as you know, the future was dramatically different. He took Silas, went to Europe, and planted more churches.

It is good for us to think about where we are going and make plans for the future, but we must remain open to other plans God may have for us. If he wants us elsewhere doing other things, he will stop us. Then he will send us to a different place to do something different. In chapter 16 the Holy Spirit stopped Paul from going particular places and gave him a vision of where he was to go.

What has God done with you?

This question is not one we find directly asked by anyone in Scripture, but it is a question we find returning missionaries answering to particular groups.

- When Paul and Barnabas returned to their sending church at the end of their first term of missionary service, they “reported all that God had done with them” (Acts 14:27). During missionary service God works in people’s lives and changes them. The Greek word “meta” is used hundreds of times in the New Testament and is the simple word for “with.” Just as Jeremiah talks about what the potter does with the clay, we need to become aware of what God has done with us. (Unfortunately, a few modern translations have translated “meta” as “through,” but it basically means “with.”)
- When Paul and Barnabas reached Jerusalem, they again “reported all that God had done with them” (Acts 15: 4). They had seen God work and were firmly convinced that anyone could be saved by grace, even without following all the Jewish customs.

Note that Paul and Barnabas reported this to their sending church and to the leaders at headquarters, but they did not report this to the people in the churches they visited along

the way. Some things are better shared only with others who understand what God does with people who serve him in other cultures.

Take a break!

Finally, a time of rest is important at the time of the debriefing, whether after a crisis or during a time of transition.

- When the apostles came back after their first evangelistic assignment (Luke 9:10), Jesus and the apostles withdrew by themselves a while. Writing about this Mark noted that after they had reported to Jesus what they had done, the crowds descended on them all. They were so busy that they did not even have time to eat. So Jesus told them to come with him to a quiet place and get some rest (Mark 6:31).
- Likewise after they had reported to their sending church, Paul and Barnabas “stayed there a long time with the disciples” (Acts 14:28).

Such times of rest around the time of debriefing are very important. Give yourself time during the transition or after the crisis to get the rest you need. Today, as in New Testament times, many things will come up that will put demands on your time. For your own good and the good of the Kingdom, make getting away to a quiet place and getting some rest a high priority.

Several books about reentry are available free of charge on www.missionarycare.com. All of these contain not only information about reentry but also thought-provoking questions that help missionaries process what is happening.

- A book for adults about preparing for reentry to be used during the last few months while still on the field at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#before_reentry (Chapters 6-7)

- A book for elementary age children to be used by them during the last few months while still on the field at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home (Chapters 8-11)
- A book for the parents of elementary children that parallels the children's book above at http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#going_home (Chapters 8-11)
- A book for adults about processing their reentry to be used a few weeks after returning to their passport countries at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#reentry> (Chapters 1-6)
- A book for adults to use after returning from short-term missionary service at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#shortterm> (Chapters 3-6)

Part Five

After One Gets Back

When Jesus returned to heaven, he knew that he was going to return to earth at some time, a time that no one knows—even Jesus himself did not know at the time he was talking with his disciples. At the second coming, the final judgment will be made when rewards and punishments are given to believers and the wicked (Matthew 24-26).

Missionaries may return to their host country after a while in their passport country during which they raise financial and prayer support as mentioned in the next chapter. They may also have returned to retire and make their final transition to heaven themselves as noted in the last chapter.

Some missionaries continue their lives there in their passport countries after they have reentered. They do not continue being missionaries in another culture, so they find work that will supply their needs, and their children go to schools there. They now feel at home in their passport country, and they go on with life. There are still some cross-cultural times, but they have fully joined their culture again.

However, other missionaries may have a different reentry. Chapter 13 is about those who want to continue missionary

service, so they begin to prepare for another term of service, and they repeat Parts Two, Three, and Four several times.

Chapter 14 is about those who have reached the age of retirement

Chapter 15 is about the final transition, that of passing away and transitioning to heaven.

Chapter 13

Another Term?

From the beginning of modern missions until the middle of the 20th century, most missionaries expected to spend their lives as missionaries, and they referred to themselves as career missionaries. Many intended to return to their passport countries before they died, but during their “working years” their ministry was to be in another culture.

When they returned to their passport countries every few years their time there was referred to as a “furlough.” Furlough meant a vacation or leave of absence, particularly for the military. However, the missionary furlough included raising funds, often driving thousands of miles to find people who would support them with prayer and money, and was often called “deputation.”

More recently this time in one’s passport country between terms of service has been called “home ministry assignment” or HMA. This makes it clear that the time is not a vacation but a time missionaries are assigned to for the purpose of raising funds and raising prayer support. Missionaries who do this find that they never completely enter the country. They have uncompleted transitions. That is, during the time they are reentering their passport country from one term of service they are also preparing to leave their passport country for their next term of service.

Talking about her director, a missionary said, “He has never lived on the field for more than a few weeks at a time. Even when he is here over a summer, he’s back and forth on weekends shuttling groups.”

She continued, “One thing that is adding to my problem is the fact that we seem to travel back and forth to the USA about every two-three months ourselves—so we never quite get used to one thing when we are doing an entry/re-entry type of thing.”

Though these comments could be said about many missionaries today, they would have rarely been said before the latter half of the twentieth century, and never said at the beginning of it. Earlier missionaries simply did not change cultures as frequently, so they got used to things and felt at home wherever they were.

Changes have occurred during the last couple of centuries that have led to many uncompleted transitions, to people changing cultures not knowing whether they are both coming or going—because they are coming AND going. Some of the changes have affected those serving cross-culturally.

Completed Transitions

The earliest missionaries took months to cross oceans or continents to reach many other cultures. Ships under sail, wagons drawn by animals, and walking were slow enough to make it impossible to go home for a few days or weeks. So when people went, they stayed for years in their host culture. They did the same when they returned to their passport cultures. Their transitions were completed.

When William Carey and his family sailed nonstop from England to India in 1793, it took five months. Little had changed from the times the apostle Paul served in the eastern Mediterranean (Acts 21).

Missionaries often went expecting to return many years later, if ever. The threat of disease was so great that some

people packed their luggage in coffins, expecting to remain there until they died. They were not even thinking about coming home when they went.

Uncompleted Transitions on Return to the Passport Country

The invention of engines to power ships on the ocean and locomotives on railroads made crossing oceans and continents possible in weeks instead of months. Missionaries could return to their passport countries for a “furlough,” and they did, often staying for about a year. Soon it was common for them to serve four years in their host country, then spend a year in their passport country, and repeat this cycle for the rest of their lives.

Since it takes about a year to complete the entering stage, and the missionaries were planning to return to their host country all that time, they were entering and leaving at the same time. They were simultaneously in the entering and leaving stages, not knowing whether they were coming or going. The transitions into their passport countries were truncated. They never fully reentered. Coming “home” for a one-year furlough was quite different from coming home to stay.

Uncompleted Transitions into the Host Country

The invention of jet airplanes made it possible to cross oceans and continents in hours instead of weeks or months. Short-term mission trips a week or two long became common. The people leaving had no intention of fully entering the host country because they remained in “vacation mode” while they were there.

Even “career” missionaries anywhere in the world knew that they could get “home” in hours, and they sometimes did. Some still fully entered their host cultures and returned to their passport countries only for special events such as weddings,

funerals, and graduations. Others never fully entered their host countries but lived in their two worlds successively, coming home every summer for several weeks or months. They were never quite full time in either host or passport country, but part-time in each.

Living in Two Worlds Simultaneously

The invention of the telegraph and telephone made communication possible, but it was quite expensive, not available in many places, and of relatively poor quality. However, the digital age came about the turn of the 21st century, and its amenities were available most places missionaries served, inexpensive, and of excellent quality. It made communication with people back “home” commonplace. Some popular options became available.

- Email allows one to send written materials and images to someone’s computer where it is available whenever the person checks the mail.
- Instant messaging allows two people to send and receive written messages to each other live, while both are online.
- Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) allows people to converse orally while both are online, and they can even simultaneously see each other visually if they both have webcams and a fast enough connection.
- Facebook allows people to post written information and images on their page and allow their “friends” to access it.
- Twitter enables people to send short text messages to whoever wants to receive them, often items about everyday life.

Today it is no longer necessary for people to travel back to their passport cultures to keep up-to-date (even up to the minute) on what their friends are doing back there. Information is posted on Facebook, in an email, or even available as twitter on cell phones. No transitions need be completed because

people can live simultaneously in two or more cultures. This has both advantages and parallel disadvantages.

Advantages

1. Living in two cultures is advantageous for projects involving “things” such as constructing buildings, installing radio stations, and cataloging library books.
2. It is a plus for being available for assistance on making decisions, and supplying information.
3. It is an asset for in-and-out projects that do not involve learning the language and the culture. People do not have to put in the years it takes to learn these, so they can accomplish more in less time
4. It is good for people who can keep up on issues in their passport culture so that changing cultures on reentry is not as much of a shock as when they had no contact with it for several years.

Disadvantages

1. Such a lifestyle is a hindrance for projects involving people, such as building relationships, discipling, and mentoring.
2. It is a minus for not letting someone get a time of rest from problems while on assignment elsewhere. Furthermore, field directors who complained about decisions by people far away making decisions without really understanding may find themselves doing the same thing.
3. It is a liability for people who do not understand the culture because they may offend nationals by something as simple as using a gesture which is a sign of approval in one culture but obscene in another.
4. It is difficult for people who find themselves marginalized in both cultures, not really fitting in with either. For years we have referred to TCKs as growing up between cultures.

These people are living between cultures with lack of a clear identity in either.

Conclusion

Uncompleted transitions have good and bad points. They may not only give people more of a sense of accomplishment for what they do but also give them a feeling of a lack of identity because they don't fit anywhere.

Chapter 14

Retirement?

Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and their companions never planned for retirement or made the transition into it. They simply kept working until they died. Retirement for the masses is an invention of our modern western culture. Never before in history have the majority of people had enough money to be able to quit working with 20-30 years of their lives remaining.

If Jesus were telling the parable of the rich man in Luke 12 today, he would probably talk about the missionary getting on-line daily to check his retirement portfolio, thinking about diversifying, perhaps by a strategic rebalancing of stocks, bonds, and real estate. This modern rich missionary may still say to himself or herself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19)

Retirement can take many forms from a delightful, freeing experience to a traumatic, depressing one. A major factor in determining which it becomes is the planning one has done. Most people make some sort of financial plan for it, if nothing more than knowing that Social Security (or similar benefits) will be available. However, people need to think about where they will live, if they will have enough money, what they will do, and who will be in their circle of friends.

This planning should begin early, but at the latest, early in the last term of service before retirement.

Where will I live?

Unlike people who remain in the country of their birth, many missionaries do not own homes where they can live in their passport country during retirement. Some of the options might be:

- Early in their careers some missionaries do buy a home in their passport country. They live in it while on home ministry assignment and rent it to other people while out of the country. The rent pays the mortgage payments, maintenance, insurance and taxes. Of course, to make this work, one has to plan decades in advance—and have a reliable friend to manage the house.
- Missionaries who do not own homes at retirement have a variety of options:
 - Buy an existing house, if they have enough savings set aside and can find a suitable one where they want to live.
 - Build a home if they have the finances and can find suitable property.
 - Lease or rent a home.
 - Enter a retirement community. Many agencies and churches have these with many different plans for becoming part of the community.
- In addition to the house, missionaries who do not already have one will also choose the community where they live. Again many options are available:
 - In or near to community where they grew up.
 - Near the agency headquarters.
 - Near a supporting church.
 - Near family, either near parents if they are still alive or near children if they have homes of their own.

- In the host country. Be sure to check on agency policies about this because some do not allow you to return to your host country and remain part of the agency.

Will I have enough money?

Many retired missionaries have sufficient income from retirement plans and investments to live adequately, and some also continue to work at least part time. Depending on how you have planned, many sources of income are available:

- Benefits from governmental retirement plans, such as Social Security in the USA, are available to those who have paid the taxes over the years. This income provides a base, but not enough to live on.
- If your agency has a retirement or pension program, you have that income as well.
- Your investments in tax-deferred plans or Individual Retirement Accounts can be used as income after age 59.5 in the USA.
- If you own your own home, you can receive income from a reverse mortgage (You keep living in your house, and the bank pays you mortgage payments.)
- Increasingly people continue to work part-time after retirement at such things as fast food, retail sales, or a mission agency.
- You may become a consultant in your area of expertise, such as business affairs, church planting, etc.
- Paying a qualified financial planner a few hundred dollars may save you many thousands in the long run.

What will I do?

Missionaries vary widely in answering this question. Some of the options are:

- “Take life easy, eat, drink and be merry” as the rich man said in Luke 12:19.

- Continue working as before. Some agencies have age limits, so when people retire from one agency, they may move to another agency that has different age limits.
- Continue working, but in their passport country, such as pastoring a small church.
- Volunteer work in many capacities:
 - In the host country on short-term engagements among familiar people.
 - In another country where your agency has a work.
 - At the agency headquarters.
 - In your passport country among those of the same people group living there.
 - In settings unrelated to missions, such as hospitals and nursing homes.
- Join a group such as Finishers. These groups were created to enable people who had retired early in their passport cultures to have the opportunity to serve several years after their retirement. Missionaries can continue serving through some group such as this.
- Start something new, such as:
 - An interesting hobby.
 - Reading in a totally new field.
 - Writing memoirs, stories.
 - A new skill (computer, piano).

Who will be my friends?

Finding a place in a social group may well be the most difficult task you have in retirement. Having lived in another culture for many years, you may find that your values are quite different from the people your age in your passport culture. You may have changed so much that you feel like you do not fit anywhere, even among those who were your closest friends.

However, some contexts make it more likely that you will find a compatible social group with similar values.

- Retirement communities sponsored by your own agency may be best for this.
- Retirement communities sponsored by other mission agencies are also good.
- Retirement communities sponsored by churches.
- Missionaries living in a community or neighborhood of a larger city sometimes meet monthly in prayer or interest groups.
- Check to see if your agency has some mechanism for keeping you connected with the agency and other retirees.
- Most agencies have an annual conference or convention, and some agencies have special meetings to which retirees are invited.

Enjoying freedom

Although there is no particular age at which people in our culture are considered to be “old,” retirement is often the time when people begin to be treated as older, as “aging.” Retirement often begins when people are in their 50s, increases in the early to mid 60s, and a large majority of people are retired by the time they are 70 years old.

Most people find that the early years of retirement are wonderful. After an initial adjustment period in which either or both spouses may say something like, “I married you for better or worse, but not for lunch,” couples find that they enjoy the freedom from set schedules and the time of being together. These people are often called the “young-old,” a time defined by attitude and activity rather than by chronological age. With Social Security, pensions, and other benefits they usually have enough money to do things they want. As long as they have their health, they are involved in life

During this phase, they have few responsibilities other than to cheer them on through the 10, 15, 20 or more years it lasts. Some people may need a little help finding a “vocation,”

something they feel called to do. However, most become involved in such things as volunteering, becoming involved with grandchildren, or even becoming a “finisher,” involved in missions. If they have not already done so you may encourage them to do the following:

- Make a will.
- Appoint a health care surrogate.
- Make a living will.
- Appoint durable power of attorney.

Make funeral arrangements

Special Considerations.

Some things arise that may surprise retirees. Here are a few that occur rather frequently.

- Aging parents. As people live longer and longer, the chances of retiring and finding yourself responsible for the care of parents unable to care for themselves increase. Remember that if you retire at 65, your surviving parents may be in their late 80s and need help.
- Health care. As you get older, health care becomes much more expensive. If you are retiring before you are eligible for governmental health care (Medicare in the USA), be sure to check to see if your agency policy continues to cover you. Check how much you will have to pay yourself. What about a medical supplemental health benefit policy?
- Depression. Missionaries may experience “making-a-difference” withdrawal when they retire. On the field, they have made a life and death difference to many people, but back in their passport culture, they feel like their lives make little contribution to anyone.
- Agency policies. Be sure to read carefully the policies your agency has about your retirement activities. Then make your plans about retirement taking these policies into account. Being asked not to return to a field may be devastating.

- Pass the baton. Remember that the missionary enterprise is like a relay race. You carry the baton for years or decades, then you pass it on to the people following you. Your place then is to cheer that next generation on as they continue to carry out the Great Commission.
- Finish well. After you have passed the baton to the people who have replaced you in the race, refrain from interfering with their running the race. Each generation does things differently, and when you are tempted to be critical, remember how you felt when the old missionaries told you what to do. Your students, parishioners, disciples, etc. have now become the leaders. Let them lead.
- Give yourself time. These issues take some time to resolve and may seem overwhelming if faced all at once. They can be more adequately faced if you give yourself four or five years.
- Remember God’s promise in Psalm 92: 12-14. “The righteous will flourish...They will still bear fruit in old age. They will stay fresh and green.”

Aging Parents

As you move toward middle age and your children become adolescents, you may find yourself as part of the “sandwich generation,” sandwiched between your parents and your offspring. Although your culture holds you legally responsible for your offspring, it may not hold you legally responsible for your parents. However, you may feel some responsibility for your parents. After all, they cared for you as a child, and it seems reasonable that, in return, you care for them when they need you. In addition, the Bible commands us to honor our parents.

People who do not cross cultures and travel to another continent face this same issue, but they are not as far away from parents as you are. They are also much more likely to be personally involved. Although some people have always faced

the question of determining their responsibility for their aging parents, only in the last century has the majority done so. Not only do more people face this issue, but it also remains an issue for a much longer period of time as life spans increase. Newly retired people commonly have responsibilities for parents who are in their 80s and 90s.

Although there are no easy answers to the questions arising about aging parents, knowing what to expect can help you give some forethought to what you might do. Following are some of the usual phases people move through as they age in western culture. Some people pass through all these phases with years spent in each; others may skip many of them due to accident or sudden serious illness. Here are several possible phases.

Beginning reflection

Sometimes this phase comes suddenly, such as with a serious illness or financial loss. However, it more often occurs internally, with no one else even being aware of it, such as when people realize that they really aren't the men or women they used to be. It may occur when a close friend or a sibling dies so that people face their own mortality in more personal ways.

During this phase even very successful people may begin to think that their lives have been worthless, and they may become depressed. Just when they most need to talk about it with others, they may begin to withdraw.

Unfortunately, many parents and children have never engaged in serious conversation about this. If you have not done it before, this is a good time to begin talking about important questions and issues in life. You can be of real help to your parents in opening up these areas by

- Visiting with them.
- Bringing news about others.
- Asking tactful questions.

- Encourage life review by
 - Asking for autobiography.
 - Asking about old photographs.
 - Having them draw pictures of places they have lived.
 - Asking about their spiritual journey.

Losing a Spouse

There is nothing more devastating than losing a spouse. This loss phase requires more readjustment than any other event in a person's life. It is often more difficult for men than for women, primarily because men do not socialize as well.

Since most married couples do not die at the same time, you may face the loss of one parent yourself as you help the other parent work through his or her grief. Since this is the greatest loss anyone faces, it usually takes many months, even years, to be ready to "get on with life." Be patient.

During this time you may have to help solve various problems that arise.

- Can your mother maintain home and car?
- Can your father cook and clean?
- What if the survivor sells the home?
- What about remarriage?
- What about entering a retirement community?
- What about moving in with you?

These questions, and many more, will need answers. You, your spouse, your children, and your siblings and their families will all be impacted by the answers.

Reversing roles

If the surviving parent does not die suddenly, the day will probably come when you go to visit, and he or she will have a list of things for you to do. You switch from being the

one being helped to the one giving the help—and your parent switches to the one receiving the help, often very difficult to do.

Both of you want the aging one to be as independent as possible and make as many decisions as possible. As you increasingly become the caregiver, it is good to repeatedly ask yourself several questions.

- How much should I do?
- How much can I say?
- Am I doing any good?
- What about my spouse and children?

In the three phases previously considered, there was always something you could do with the hope that things would get better. As your roles reverse, more and more you realize that things are not going to get better. They only get worse. One thing to remember is that no matter how you answer the questions above as things get worse, you are likely to feel guilty, even though you are not guilty of anything. If you are in your passport country caring for your parent, you are likely to feel guilty. If you are overseas, you are as likely to feel guilty.

Probably the most important thing you can do during this phase is to help your parent answer such questions as these:

- What good am I?
- How can my life have any meaning?

As you do this, remember that our society has no good answer to these questions. These questions have answers only in a thoroughly Christian world-view. Our modern problem-solving approach to life comes up short, but meaning is found in God and his love for us as persons he made in his image.

Becoming dependent

When role reversal is complete, you may find that your parent is now dependent on you for help with such routine maintenance functions as getting into and out of bed, bathing, dressing, and eating. When this time comes, the goal of

independent living is out of the financial reach of most families, especially missionary families.

Whatever is done next is best as a family decision with the parent and all surviving children present. This meeting should have a mechanism for everyone to be able to express his or her position. All possible options must be considered. If the family has enough money, the person may be able to stay at home, with someone hired to care for him or her at all times. However, if that is not possible, there are several options:

- Some move in with the parent.
- The parent moves in with the family of one of the children.
- Some move to a home in a retirement village where people are on call to give assistance.
- Others choose an assisted living facility where the person does some care for himself or herself in a room alone, but where meals and medications are prepared by professional staff.
- Still others move to a nursing home where skilled nursing care is available 24 hours a day.

By this stage Alzheimer's and other dementias are rather common, and the parent may not even realize what is happening. During the last few years of her life my own mother was cared for by her children and grandchildren, but she referred to them as "the people who work here." Though she did not want to be put in a nursing home and was cared for by family, her Alzheimer's was at a stage where she did not even realize it. One must not let guilt feelings reign in such a situation.

Saying Goodbye

This last phase is usually a short one. People often find that facing death in a few days or weeks is quite different from facing it in the abstract "future." Most people prefer to die at home with friends and family around them. Some want to talk about their impending death.

This is the time of facing the final enemy, and no one wants to do that alone, sick, and tired. This is the time for all to be available, gather around, and say goodbye.

Chapter 15

The Final Transition

Bob is 78 years old and has served many years in Asia with his wife Kay. Although he retired more than a decade ago, he is still active in missionary work. He and Kay own a home in the USA, but they continue to serve in various countries around the world. He is now teaching and preaching on an island in the Caribbean, and after a few weeks here in the States, he and Kay are going to Asia for several months. He still sends his prayer partners email whenever he and Kay feel the need of such support.

Joe is 68 and has served many years in the Caribbean with his wife Mary. Joe retired a year ago and would like to go back where he served, but his agency has a policy that retirees cannot return to their country of service. He spends most of his time puttering around the house and yard, and worries much about his health, fearing that he may die of cancer like his father did. He seems to have little zest for living and is quite unhappy. He just sent his previous supporters a Christmas letter saying that it was the last one he and Mary would send.

How can this be? Joe is a decade younger than Bob, but he acts like he is a decade older! Joe is old-old! As noted in the last chapter, Bob is one of the “young-old,” a time defined by attitude and activity rather than by chronological age.

Young-Old vs. Old-Old

There are obvious differences between people at the beginning of retirement and those nearing the end of their lives. Typical people who retire at 62, 65, or 67 years of age often enjoy their retirement, have good health, and have adequate funds to live comfortably and do things they enjoy. They are old as defined by retirement and Social Security, but they are young in attitude, behavior, and thinking. However, at the other end of the spectrum are people who no longer seem to enjoy life, they have poor health, and no longer have much money—and that can happen at any age—including the 60s.

A century ago when life expectancy was between 50 and 55 years of age and retirement had not yet been invented for the masses, only a small percentage of people lived to be 75 or 100 years of age. There were a lower percentage of people living who were over 65, and most of them were working to make a living. However, today with life expectancy nearing 80, the majority of people retire by 65 and they have an average of 15 more years to live, and an increasing percentage will live another 30 years. There is little agreement on how to divide these into categories; however, in this chapter we will consider just the young-old and the old-old.

Many things can move people into the old-old category, but the three most common are the following.

- **Loss of health.** The longer people live, the more likely their illnesses will be chronic and degenerative. Younger people are more likely to die suddenly of something catastrophic, but when a person gets a diagnosis of cancer or circulatory diseases, it often makes them feel old. In addition, dementia becomes more and more common at this age.
- **Loss of finances.** The longer people live, the more likely they will run out of funds. This may happen when their savings run out because of inflation, when the “investment” they made was really a scam, when their chronic illness is not fully covered by their medical insurance, or when their

compassionate gifts for people back in the host country drain their funds. Of course, any of dozens of other causes may deplete their funds.

- **Loss of spouse.** The research discussed in Chapter 7 showed that life satisfaction rose greatly during retirement until the death of the first spouse. After that life satisfaction declines. William Bridges, the most read writer on transitions, found that all he had been teaching about making transitions did not work when it came to the death of his spouse. He even quit teaching about transition for many months. This transition is particularly difficult, especially when a man loses his wife.

Deciding How to Live

When most missionaries retire from serving overseas, they choose to live in a house, a condominium, or an apartment. If they purchased a home while on the field and have been renting it, they may move into it now. If they have been saving to build a house when they retired, they may build it now. If they have not made any of these kind of plans they may rent a house or apartment.

When they become old-old, they may not be able to continue living in that housing. At that time they may have to consider different housing. The best information available on this is the book by Carol Levine, *Planning for Long-Term Care for Dummies*. Published with AARP, this “dummies” book devotes four chapters to choosing one’s living situation including these.

- **Modify the present house.** For example, install ramps or a stair lift, replace cabinet knobs with pulls, install universal design faucets that have one lever (not two knobs), install a higher commode (or a raised seat), install a louder doorbell, or widen doors for a walker or wheelchair (very expensive), replace door knobs with door levers, etc.

- Independent living in a community. People may buy or rent a unit or patio home in a community that charges a monthly fee for mowing lawns, shoveling sidewalks, plowing drives, repairing things inside, and so forth. The people provide their own meals and transportation.
- Assisted living in which food, shelter, and assistance with such daily tasks as bathing, dressing, getting around with a walker, managing medications, shopping are provided. Cooking is possible if the residents want to cook.
- Other options for group living, such as independent living for seniors, affinity communities, cohousing arrangements, house sharing, and group homes (Levine's book has website URLs for more information) exist.
- Multigenerational living in which different generations of the same family live together. In 1940 a quarter of all Americans lived in households with at least two adult generations living together.
- Nursing home which offers skilled care by professionals such as nurses, doctors, and therapists. They can give intravenous injections and give physical therapy to help people regain or maintain function. They may have a medical director onsite or a doctor may be on call.

Preparing for after you are gone

Though these legal and financial matters should already be in place, this is the time to check them to make sure they are up-to-date and see if you want any changes made. Of course, if you do not have them, now is the time to make them. Again the best information available on this is the book by Carol Levine, *Planning for Long-Term Care for Dummies*. Published with AARP this "dummies" book devotes three chapters to legal and financial matters including these.

- Wills. Your will gives you the opportunity to leave anything you have to anyone you want. This includes money, property, family heirlooms, and your personal

treasures. If you do not have a will, your state has one for you that divides everything you have among whoever the law in that state determines. Things that friends or family members would treasure may be given to people who just discard them.

- Trusts. A trust lets you give possessions to people over time rather than in a lump sum at your death. There are many kinds of trusts, but some people establish a living trust that they manage and that will be managed by someone they choose if they become unable to do so. This trust is a private document, easy to change, and avoids probate after death.
- Power of Attorney. If you want someone to take care of your financial affairs you can grant them power of attorney. A conventional power of attorney does that while you are competent, but ends when you become legally incompetent. A durable power of attorney continues even after you become incapacitated, such as being in a coma or with dementia.
- Advance Directive. "Advance directive" is the general term for any document which tells healthcare providers what kinds of medical treatments you want—or you do not want. Although there are several kinds of advanced directives, two very important ones are having a living will and having a healthcare proxy.
- Living Will. A living will sets out your wishes in writing. You can use a general legal form for your state or write a more complete statement of your wishes. It is best to discuss this with your physician so that he or she will know exactly what you want if it is not clearly stated.
- Healthcare Proxy. Choosing someone to make healthcare decisions for you when you cannot do that yourself is a very important decision. You need to find someone you trust to do what you ask regardless of his or her own feelings, someone who can think clearly and ask direct questions in times of crisis.

- Funeral/Memorial services. You may want to specify things you would like, or not like, relative to your funeral or memorial service. Some missionaries request that flowers not be sent, but that donations be made to their agency or church. Some request that favorite songs be sung, that a particular pastor or friend preach, and so forth. Getting these things in writing is most helpful to those left behind.

Levine does not mention it, but some missionaries want to donate parts of their body or their whole body for medical services. Organ donation may be done as easily as signing the back of one's driver's license and being put on the registry of organ donors. Donating an organ does not mean that one cannot have an open casket funeral because all incisions are sewn up. There are many more people waiting for organs than there are donors.

Body bequeathal is a little more complicated, but is easily done. Simply contact a nearby University/Medical school to learn their process and carry it out. They will send you forms to fill out and sign. Usually the only cost involved is to have someone get your body to the university when you pass away. Your body may then be used in medical research or in the education of future physicians. When that is done, they will cremate your body and return your ashes to anyone you request. Though few family members object to organ donation, they may disapprove of donating the whole body. Be sure to talk with your entire family before doing this. Again, a person may have an open casket funeral if they wish when specific procedures are followed in embalming.

Dying

At the middle of the 20th century many physicians, including psychiatrists, thought that dying individuals did not want to talk about their impending death. However, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross was teaching in medical school when some students questioned what people were thinking during the time

they were dying. So they decided to talk to dying patients. To their surprise, they could not find any “dying patients”—none of the first group of doctors would admit that their patients were dying. Finally, they found some dying people to talk with, and they found that those people were eager to talk about it.

After many interviews and much criticism from some people for talking with these people, Dr. Kubler-Ross determined that dying individuals often went through five stages. Of course, some Christians do not go through these stages because of their hope in the resurrection.

- Denial. When they are first told they are dying, they refuse to acknowledge it. They say that the medical tests must be wrong, that their results must have been mixed up with someone else's, and so forth. They just say that it cannot be so.
- Anger. When they accept the fact that they are dying, they become angry. They often ask, “Why me?” They may feel envy about the health of the people around them. They may go into a rage. They may make it difficult for friends, family, and medical personnel, often over petty issues.
- Bargaining. Anger does not work, so they begin to bargain with the illness, with God, with anything or anyone they think of for more time. They may ask the illness to let them live until their grandchild is married or ask God to let them live until they have completed some project. Of course, the bargain is not successful for very long because the illness continues.
- Depression. Dying people then begin to mourn their own impending death. As they think of the loss of everyone and everything they have found meaningful and realize that their dreams will never be fulfilled, they may become depressed.
- Acceptance. Finally, they begin to accept the fact that they are going to die and face it with a degree of quiet expectation. They are usually tired and weak so they don't struggle against death but make peace with it. This is not a happy stage, but it is one of resignation.

Further research has shown that people do not necessarily go through all of these “stages” in this order, or even through all of them. They may go through some and then go back and repeat some, or any combination of these and other things. However, these are common reactions to being told one has a terminal illness.

Death

As death gets nearer, two options are available for people with very serious illness: palliative care and hospice. These are related, but slightly different. Both are covered by Medicare and Medicaid in the USA.

- Palliative Care. Palliative care is practiced by specially trained medical people, such as physicians and nurses, as well as those interested in mental health such as social workers and clergy. This improves how individuals function in everyday life as they are being treated for a serious illness (<http://getpalliativecare.org/whatis/>). The emphasis is on relieving pain, controlling symptoms, and improving quality of life even while undergoing unpleasant treatments such as some types of chemotherapy.
- Hospice. Hospice is essentially palliative care but different in two ways. First, people in hospice must have short life expectancies, usually six months or less. Second they must stop further treatment intended to cure them. So it is for people who are not being helped by active treatment or whose treatment is such a great burden that they want to quit. People in hospice may live at home or in a facility such as a nursing home or assisted living.

Resurrection

After death Christians will be with Jesus in heaven. Jesus told the thief on the cross next to him, “Today you will be

with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Of course this is the hope of all Christians, to be with Jesus in heaven.

The resurrection of Jesus is a central theme of the New Testament. It is recorded at the end of each gospel and Paul wrote about it often in his letters. Because of this event, Christians know that they will also be resurrected at some time in the future. Though we know little about what these resurrected bodies will be like, Paul wrote a lengthy passage about it in 1 Corinthians 15. After writing about different seeds, animals and humans, birds and fish, sun and moon, one star and another, he noted that our natural bodies and spiritual bodies would be different in the following ways.

- Sown perishable but raised imperishable
- Sown in dishonor but raised in glory
- Sown in weakness but raised in power
- Sown a natural body but raised a spiritual body (verses 42-43).

In that same chapter Paul goes on to say the following:

- The perishable will be clothed with the imperishable.
- The mortal will be clothed with immortality.
- Death will be swallowed in victory (verses 53-55).

The book of revelation gives us other glimpses of what comes after death in heaven.

- Never again will they hunger (7:16)—no need for humanitarian workers to provide food.
- Never again will they thirst (7:16)—no need for engineers to provide water
- No more sorrow (21:4)—no need for pastoral care.
- No more pain (21:4)—no need for missionary doctors and nurses.
- No more death (21:4)—no more need for morticians or grave diggers.

There will be no more need for missionaries bringing the gospel to the lost because the lost will not be there. Death will be swallowed up in victory.

The final transition of life here on earth is over!

Other E-Books by the Author

<http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm> contains a dozen E-books by Ron which can be downloaded free of charge by anyone, anytime, anywhere. These books may be downloaded as .doc, .pdf, and .zip, files to be viewed on a computer or as .mobi or .epub files to read on a Kindle, Nook, or other e-reader. They may also be distributed to anyone as long as they are given to others free of charge and unchanged.

- *Missionary Member Care: An Introduction* is written in a question/answer format and is useful for missionaries wondering about doing member care or in using it.
- *What Missionaries Ought to Know...: A Handbook for Life and Service* is a compilation of many of the brochures about missionary life.
- *Psychology for Missionaries* which considers implications of general psychology for missionaries.
- *Missionary Marriage Issues* is a compilation of many of the brochures about married life on the field.
- *Missionary Singles Issues* is a compilation of many of the brochures about single life on the field.
- *Before you get "Home": Preparing for Reentry* is written for use several months before returning.
- *Coming "Home": The Reentry Transition* can be used as preparation for debriefing in a group, when being debriefed, or to debrief yourself.

- *Reentry after Short-Term Missionary Service* is for people serving from a week to a couple years.
- *We're Going Home: Reentry for Elementary Children* is a story and activities for children 6-12 years of age.
- *I Don't Want to Go Home: Parent's Guide for Reentry for Elementary Children* is a companion book written specifically for parents to help them assist in their children's reentry.
- *Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations* is written specifically for adolescent TCKs but is also applicable to other adolescents.
- *Understanding Adolescence* is a companion book written specifically for parents of adolescents.
- *Missionaries and Bribes* is written to help missionaries decide what they should do when facing a situation that seems like bribery.

The following two books are not by Ron, but they are relevant to missionary member care, are out of print, and are available free of charge on the same website.

- *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers* was edited by Joyce Bowers and first published by ACSI in 1998.
- *Bribery and the Bible* was written by Richard Langston and first published in Singapore by Campus Crusade Asia Limited in 1991.

...about the Author

Ron and his wife Bonnie taught for 35 years in Christian colleges as well as in public and Christian elementary schools. Bonnie taught elementary school as well as teacher education at the college level, and Ron taught psychology at the undergraduate level in college. Our three children are all married and have families of their own. As member care consultants with GO InterNational of Wilmore, KY, we are now retired and, as volunteers, we provide member care for missionaries. We are not licensed health care professionals, but we emphasize care, encouragement, growth, and prevention of problems rather than treatment of severe problems. We provide such care to anyone, anytime, and anywhere at no charge for our time, usually providing our own transportation to the nearest airport and asking that those we are helping provide ground transportation, lodging, and food. Rather than working as professionals for pay, we provide member care as amateurs in the original sense of the word—out of love rather than for money. We have a mailing list of about 175 prayer supporters as well as about 55 financial supporters. We do whatever we can to help missionaries. We do not belong to any sending agency but help others as someone with no official connection to their agency. Listed below are things we are currently doing, but we are always open to new ways to help. Let us begin with the most general forms of help, continue with helping missionaries through their years of service, and end with specific ministries.

Websites. We have two websites, www.missionarycare.com and www.crossculturalworkers.com.

Both websites contain brochures and books which people anywhere in the world can visit to read, download, print, copy and distribute the information free of charge to anyone who can use it. www.missionarycare.com freely uses the term “missionary” and is easily found when people search for missionary care. www.crossculturalworkers.com never uses the term “missionary” so that anyone working in a culture where accessing material on missionaries would endanger their ministry can visit freely.

Brochures. Both websites contain 94 “brochures” on topics relevant to living in other cultures and working as missionaries. These brochures may be downloaded as .pdf files and distributed to anyone as long as they are given to others free of charge.

E-books. Both websites contain a dozen E-books which can be downloaded free of charge by anyone, anytime, anywhere. These books may be downloaded as .doc, .pdf, and .zip, files to be viewed on a computer or as .mobi or .epub files to read on your Kindle, Nook, or other e-reader. They may also be distributed to anyone as long as they are given to others free of charge and unchanged.

Database. A database with more than 900 references to published material about missionary member care is on www.missionarycare.com. Those visiting this database can find reading lists or annotated bibliographies on any of more than 100 topics. They can also find lists of materials published by particular authors.

Orientation. In an effort to decrease attrition, we participate in the training of new missionaries. We have made presentations on expectations, generational differences, moral purity, and conflict resolution. Of course, during our time at

orientation we are available to talk privately with any missionary candidates who want to see us.

Seminars. We present information on various topics to a variety of missionary groups. We have done seminars on third culture kids, leadership, generational differences, conflict, anger, adolescence, maintaining mental and physical health, maintaining sexual purity, and psychology from a Christian perspective. We have made these presentations to groups as varied as the entire missionary force of one agency, missionaries on a field, seminary students, university students, field directors, national pastors, retirees, and appointees.

Missionaries in Our Home. Missionaries have stopped by our home to discuss issues that concern them. We have talked with individuals and couples about a variety of topics ranging from grief to interpersonal relationships to debriefing when they return to the states. These are often people who have met us in larger group settings such as conferences, retreats, orientations, seminars, or perhaps discovered us on our web page.

Missionaries on the Field (from Our Home). Missionaries serving on their fields are unable to stop by our home, so we have communicated with them in a variety of ways. Of course, telephone conversations are always helpful, and long distance rates between most countries are now quite reasonable. E-mail is free, but the time between sending a message and receiving a reply may be rather long. Skype is free and instantaneous.

On-Site Visits. At the invitation of missionaries, we visit them on the field to help them cope with various issues. We do this only if everyone involved wants us to come, and we have the blessing of the mission agency. At these times we have talked with individuals, couples, and groups of

missionaries. We are not sent by the agency, but go only when invited by the missionaries themselves.

Care of Missionaries in a Geographical Area. We want to provide care for missionaries from several different agencies in a given place. We go on a regular basis to the same missionaries so that they will get to know us and feel free to talk with us, rather than just going to help in a crisis situation. We visit Bolivia whenever invited, usually talking with 30-35 missionaries from about five different mission agencies each time.

Reentry. We facilitate reentry retreats for missionaries in transition as they return to the USA. This includes a group debriefing as we talk for two days about where they have been, are now, and are going.

Missionary Kids. Since we live near a college that has a rather large number of TCKs, we were very involved with them while we were teaching at the college. Of course, now that we are retired and travel more, we are unable to keep up the same active relationship. However, we do let them know that we are available to help them however we can, and they contact us for everything from taxes to borrowing things to personal problems.